



## TRANSCRIPT

### Connection and Community in Remote Teaching

Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning

June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020

#### COVER SLIDE

Hi everyone, and thanks so much for joining us for this session on Connection and Community in Remote Teaching. Before we begin, can I ask everyone to take three steps to help make sure the technology works as smoothly as possible: Please (1) Mute your microphone to reduce background noise and feedback during the session; (2) Turn off your video so that we can avoid glitches and “freeze-ups” during the session; and (3) Close all of your other computer applications, which will help the session run more smoothly on your end.

We will also be recording this session, and so it’s important for you to know that before we begin. If you’re not comfortable with that, please let me know, and you can keep your microphone off. We’ll share the recording as well as a transcript of the session for those who would like to refer to it later or who were not able to attend the session today.

My name is Julie Temple, my pronouns are she and her, and I’m an Educational Developer with CITL (as of one month ago), and I’ve also been teaching as a per-course instructor in Gender Studies and in Sociology for the past six years. My colleague who has collaborated on this session is Senior Instructional Designer, Daphne Crane. I also want to send out a special thanks to Catherine Shortall, who is an Educational Accessibility Specialist here at MUN, for sharing her expertise and providing feedback on this session. She wanted me to let you know that you can contact her any time for support in ensuring that your course is accessible to all of your students.

Begin Recording.

This session is a ‘Conversation’ session, and so it can be as interactive as we make it. You’re welcome to ask questions or join in with your own ideas via the Chat feature, which you can open up as a sidebar in Online Rooms. You can also turn on your microphone if you want to ask a question or chime in via audio, and we’ll make sure to pause throughout to give you an opportunity to join in.

#### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Before we begin, we would like to respectfully acknowledge the territory in which we gather as the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk, and the island of Newfoundland as the ancestral homelands of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk. We would also like to recognize the Inuit of Nunatsiavut and NunatuKavut and the Innu of Nitassinan, and their ancestors, as the original peoples of Labrador. I live and work in this territory as a white settler from the island portion

of this province, and I recognize the immense work that lies ahead for us to work towards true reconciliation.

## **AGENDA**

In the Conversation today, we'll cover 9 main areas:

1. Connecting in a Pandemic: Starting with Empathy & Compassion
2. Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion
3. Community of Inquiry
4. Make yourself available
5. Begin with connection
6. Build interactive activities
7. Provide guidance remotely
8. Bring the outside in
9. MUN Resources/External Resources

## **CONNECTING IN A PANDEMIC: STARTING WITH EMPATHY AND COMPASSION**

First, let's begin with compassion for yourself. These are difficult times. We are working under difficult conditions. Many of us are drained. In many ways, instructors are the face of the university. We are talking about creating connection and community for students, but this is also an opportunity to start with making a plan for setting boundaries for yourself about how much you are comfortable with and able to connect with students. Clear guidance on boundaries for communication will make your course community more comfortable for you and for your students. And none of this has to be perfect. In many ways, we can role-model for students that teaching and learning doesn't have to be done perfectly in order to be valuable and meaningful.

Are there any ways that you have found helpful to take care of yourself around connecting with students during remote teaching?

## **EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY, AND INCLUSION**

There are wide differences among students' and instructors' access to:

- WiFi
- Bandwidth
- Computer
- WebCam/Microphone/Printer, and other technology

There are also wide differences in the ways this pandemic impacts students' and instructors':

- Cognitive overload
- Mental Health
- Parenting/caregiving workload
- Private/Quiet Space

## **WHAT PRACTICES DO YOU USE TO BUILD EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN YOUR COURSE COMMUNITY?**

Equity and inclusion are both a set of practises and an intended outcome of course design and instruction. What types of practices can help build an atmosphere of equity, inclusion, and mutual respect? It can be quite simple.

For example, we began this session by sharing our pronouns and doing a land acknowledgement. Correct name pronunciation is also important, and we know that many international students in particular end up going through their entire university careers having their name mispronounced.

In terms of designing your course, this could also mean providing:

- alternate formats for assessment (examples, Twitter discussion alternates; alternate role in presentations)
- create a weekly schedule so that students know what to expect and when
- flexibility with deadlines

## **COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY**

The Community of Inquiry Model is the work of Randy Garrison, Terry Anderson, and William Archer and started in about 2000, but has been updated several times since then.

To have a high quality learning experience, 4 conditions must be met, 3 involving the student.

Learner to learner interaction: Learners learn from each other and we need to provide a space for this through the discussion forums

Learner to content interaction: Learners need to do more than read the content, they need to respond to the content either through the discussion board, self reflections or interactive objects such as those created by H5P, a program that is available to the university community.

Learner to instructor interaction: The instructor needs to be involved in the discussion forum, as probing questions, let students know you are reading, use their interests or experiences in examples. A major motivator for an online learner is a personal email from the instructor.

The fourth, and lesser talked about, condition is instructor content interaction and this is usually content selection, although in personalized learning students too can be involved in this.

## **MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE (WITH BOUNDARIES)**

Relationships are the very basis of teaching and learning. Students are more comfortable learning, participating, and sharing when they are more comfortable with you. As the instructor, you establish the tone of the course community through communication with your students. What are some ways that you can personalize your course remotely?

You can establish the tone of the community through class correspondence, discussion board replies, and assessment feedback. You can let students know something personal about yourself – for example an anecdote about your weekend or a link to something you found interesting.

To communicate with you through remote learning, you can choose to go ahead with office hours by using the Online Rooms feature in Brightspace. However, there are also lower-tech options. You could use the Brightspace chat feature instead of video office hours. You could create a discussion forum on Brightspace for student questions, so that all students can see the questions asked and the answers you give. This also cuts down on individual questions from students that are often repetitive. Office hours can also be offered by phone or text, which some instructors have used successfully by very strictly limiting the hours when these can be used. And finally, e-mail or course mail communication can be used, with the advantage of Course Mail being that it keeps all communication with students within Brightspace and out of your no-doubt already very full e-mail inbox!

- Consider uploading a photo with your Instructor Bio, and you could encourage students to do the same, or to create an avatar.
- Office hours through Online Rooms, by phone or text (with limited hours)
- Create a Discussion Forum on Brightspace for student questions
- Consider using closed-captioned 'Video Notes' when you post announcements in the course shell

Has anyone found any other methods of communication useful?

## **BEGIN WITH CONNECTION**

- In a synchronous session, depending on class size, you can begin a lecture with a check-in, connection exercise or icebreaker.

Does anyone have any other icebreakers that they've found useful?

- In an asynchronous session, you can provide a space for introductions: e.g. a Discussion Forum in Brightspace. You can include your own introduction and can ask questions to

encourage informal connections. Students can share a picture, video, or music from their phone that they think best represents them.

## **THE SYLLABUS AS A TOOL FOR CONNECTION**

We don't often think of the Syllabus as a tool to connect, but an accessible layout, a clear guide on how the course builds, specific learning outcomes, and a variety of assessment formats all communicate clearly to students that the course is a community where their learning process is valued.

- The syllabus can have resource links embedded and used as an ongoing reference tool.
- Interactive Activity: have the class develop the value statement to be added to the syllabus

### **Sample Value Statement:**

#### **Classroom Respect and Equity**

Mutual respect is essential in the university classroom. Students are expected to engage with one another and with the professor in a respectful manner, and to respect differences including those related to gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, religion, and ability. Please feel welcome to notify the professor of your pronouns and/or your name, if it differs from university records.

## **BUILD INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES**

In the classroom, students can interact side-by-side. To have students engage remotely, you can use similar forums to what we discussed for instructor-student communication. Instructors have also found these strategies helpful:

- Discussion Forums in Brightspace
- Chat feature in Online Rooms – you can create meetings in Online Rooms for students to use as breakout spaces, and then can use in the Instant Chat feature to have real-time conversations. These can also be copied and saved if you would like the discussion submitted.
- Twitter Discussions can also be used. Brightspace has a widget that allows you to evaluate students' participation in a Twitter discussion using a hashtag that you create for your course. I use this regularly now for my Intro to Gender Studies

students, and I've found it very successful in having students engage with one another much more so than they did in Brightspace.

- Ask students to collaborate in groups (via e-mail, text, or an online space of their choosing) to summarize readings or to create a final exam review guide.
- Send out discussion prompts and students can have discussions in online chat spaces of their choosing. They can submit the transcript of the discussion.

Are there any other activities you've used for student collaboration?

### **PROVIDE GUIDANCE REMOTELY**

In the classroom, we provide a lot of guidance and nudging. This is something that students can really miss the benefits of when they are no longer in the classroom. However, there are many ways to continue this type of guidance remotely:

- point out important elements,
- highlight things to focus on,
- provide questions to guide their learning,
- explain how content builds,
- pop in to facilitate discussion forums

### **BRING THE OUTSIDE IN**

Online courses isolated from the wider campus community. In our courses, we need to remind students that they are a part of large campus culture. You could post announcements about events happening on campus, and even assign attendance at webinars and live-streaming events for course credit.

- Encourage students to take part in remote campus events or webinars.
- Explain how to access student supports and resources.
- Share links to media pieces relevant to course materials (using the Announcements tool or Discussion Forum)

Has anyone else found ways to bring the outside into a remote learning community?

## **STUDENT RESOURCES**

<https://www.mun.ca/student/>

<http://www.mun.ca/aro/>

<https://www.mun.ca/international/>

<https://www.mun.ca/student/RemoteStudentExperience.php>

<https://www.mun.ca/studentwellness/>

<https://www.mun.ca/volunteer/>

[https://www.mun.ca/student/equity/gender/trans\\_gender\\_diverse\\_guide.php](https://www.mun.ca/student/equity/gender/trans_gender_diverse_guide.php)

<https://www.mun.ca/blundon>

## **MUN RESOURCES**

<https://blog.citl.mun.ca/technologyresources/brightspace-how-tos/communication/using-the-discussion-tool/>

<https://blog.citl.mun.ca/technologyresources/brightspace-how-tos/communication/online-roomsvideo-assignments/online-rooms-quick-guides/#section7>

<https://blog.citl.mun.ca/technologyresources/brightspace-how-tos/communication/using-the-news-announcements-tool/>

<https://blog.citl.mun.ca/technologyresources/brightspace-how-tos/communication/using-the-groups-tool/>

## EXTERNAL RESOURCES

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/how-forge-strong-community-online-classroom>  
<https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/creating-positive-learning-environment/inclusivity-accessibility-and-motivation/building-community-large-classes>

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