

**(Modified from a document prepared by the Humanities Division).**

## **Remote Teaching and Learning**

### Some Rules of the Road

- The primary criterion for all our courses, according to the University's accreditation status, is that they provide regular and substantive instructor-student interaction appropriate to the credits given for the course. For most of our courses, which are valued 100 units of credit, this amounts to 27-30 hours of in-person instruction per quarter. In a remote learning environment not all instruction is necessarily synchronous or in real time. Asynchronous instruction can, therefore, be calculated as actual contact hours. However, instructors need to provide systematic instruction (synchronous or asynchronous) as well as regular and meaningful interaction with their students, amounting to the equivalent of 27-30 hours of class time. Similarly, instructors need to provide regular assignments and administer full assessment feedback on students' coursework.
- All portions of a course that are offered synchronously or in real time must be offered during the originally scheduled days and times. Otherwise, students may run into time conflicts that will be difficult to resolve under the current circumstances.
- While the College's policy to hold regular office hours is still in effect in the remote learning environment, it recognizes that conducting them real time via, for instance, Zoom might not be feasible. Traditional office hours may thus be substituted with other modes of regular and responsive interaction, such as chat, email, discussion boards, etc..
- Instructors need to be attentive to the students' circumstances, as they are performing their coursework remotely. Students might not have good internet access, might be in a different time zone, or need accommodations that make using some features of digital media difficult. Instructors are urged to find out what their students' situations are, either individually or as a group, and work with them. All instructors should have a clear policy that offers alternatives, if students cannot complete assignments due to technological or other limitations.

### First Some Guiding Principles

- You will want to start with the premise that the move to a remote learning environment will profoundly affect all aspects of your pedagogy. Reflect on how the technologically mediated teaching will affect your learning goals and your strategies of achieving them. In other words, simply telecommunicating what we normally do in the classroom, whether conducting discussions or lecturing, is a recipe for frustration. Instead design your teaching to contend with the limitations as well as to exploit the opportunities of the chosen pedagogical technologies.
- Consider realistic goals for teaching remotely: As you think about moving instruction online, consider what you think you can realistically accomplish. Do you think you can maintain your originally designed syllabus and schedule? Do you hope students will keep up with the reading with some assignments to add structure and accountability? How will you keep them engaged with the course content?
- Keep the technology simple, but the pedagogy sophisticated. For a host of reasons (some of which are mentioned below) the University encourages its instructors to resort primarily to its supported software platforms: Canvas, Zoom, Panopto, Voices, etc.. If you are considering other platforms, please keep in mind that students tend to be familiar with Canvas and Zoom. They may find it difficult and anxiety-provoking to have to learn multiple forms of new technology in a time of emergency, and Academic Technology Solutions cannot advise them on non-supported platforms. Similarly, you will not want to try out too many tools at once. It will confuse the students and invite technical problems.

- Anticipate technical problems and pedagogical misfires. The circumstances are forcing this move to an unfamiliar learning environment on us with minimal time for adjustment. Nobody is expecting that your teaching will be perfect right away, least of all the students. In fact, you might want to make involving the students in the functioning and success of the course part of your pedagogical strategy, facilitating a more active learning experience. In other words, allow for experimentation on the part of everyone involved in the course.
- Finally, keep the personal situation and psychological state of your students in mind. You are doing more than communicating knowledge and teaching skills. You are providing form and meaning in a situation where the structures of everyday seem to be disintegrating. Your teaching also cultivates a sense of community and belonging just as they have been uprooted from their college life. Since many of our students are far from campus and Hyde Park, you and the intellectual world-making you are doing by teaching represents much of their educational experience at the University of Chicago for the Spring Quarter. Finally, they are looking to you as their teachers for orientation, counsel, and compassion. So be kind, positive, respectful, and engaging, by projecting care and enthusiasm.

### Planning and Designing your Course in a Remote Learning Environment

- Your first decision will be whether to teach your course synchronously, with the class meeting “live” at its regularly scheduled time for lectures and/or discussions, or asynchronously, with students able to access recorded lectures, online discussion boards, or other forms of instruction, assignments, or assessment at other times. These two approaches may also be combined. The choice may also be made for you, depending on the technological capabilities and domestic conditions of your students at their remote locations. Therefore, you need first to survey your students in order to determine what you can and cannot do. Since both modes of instruction have different strengths and weaknesses, I would recommend combining them so that they can productively complement each other. Bear in mind that synchronous elements of the course will build camaraderie between you and your class, and between classmates. It will to some extent make the students feel that they are still at the University of Chicago, rather than taking an online training course. However, you should develop robust asynchronous modules that ideally support the synchronous components and are available for students with technical limitations.
- Similarly, you will want to rethink the role of **course assistants**. If you are trying to minimize the amount of instruction delivered synchronously, then you might want them to moderate a discussion board or provide feedback on students’ work.
- Consider breaking up your lecture with question sessions, using either the Zoom conferencing capabilities or the chat function that lets students type questions for you to answer.
- In remote teaching it is even more important to articulate clear learning goals and expectations and to communicate them repeatedly to the students. Redundancy is your friend! It can also be helpful to facilitate a conversation with the students about the content of the course to make sure that they all understand how the class is working and what they are expected to do, and to engage their questions. In fact, since a remote learning environment lacks many of the channels that give you clues about the efficacy of your pedagogy, soliciting frequent and explicit feedback is extraordinarily important.

### First Things to Do

- Request your Canvas Course Site immediately! Students will receive a notification that they have been enrolled and that the course is going forward which sends a positive message.
- Reach out to your students as soon as possible, introduce yourself, the course, your preferred mode of communication, etc., and ask them about the technological capabilities and

- personal situation at their remote location.
- Give thought how your students will obtain or access the necessary course materials, such as textbooks, papers etc.
- Plan to attend a Workshop on Teaching Remotely with Zoom and Canvas either organized by your department or program or directly offered by ATS.
- Do at least one practice session on Zoom with colleagues, graduate students, friends, etc., for the synchronous component of your teaching.

#### Some Technical and Logistical Advice

- Make sure your computer operating system and anti-virus software is up to date.
- As a basic security measure, don't recycle your CNET password when you sign up for software platforms that are not supported by the University.
- Please be aware of the FERPA rules around sharing student information and assume that unsupported platforms may not be FERPA compliant.
- Consider archival issues with unsupported platforms. Data entered into these systems is often designed to disappear in short time frames. Any content created in unsupported platforms should be downloaded or transferred to a supported system so that it can be referred to after the fact.
- For the aforementioned reason, I recommend that you use the Announcement function in Canvas for your communication with students rather than emailing directly or using the rapid mail function in your class roster.