Tools for Online Teaching: A Quick Reference

Below is a quick reference resource for those beginning the process of building an online or hybrid course. Many of these methods correspond to face-to-face teaching methods. But be on the lookout for new ways to teach that are made possible by internet communication or interaction!

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<th>Possibilities</th>
<th>Tools</th>
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| Asynchronous Discussion | D2L’s Discussions toolset provides message board or “discussion forum” functions specifically for classes. Professors often use this for weekly discussions, with basic deadlines for students’ initial posts, and a round of replies. But there are many more ways to use discussion topics. See COLI Guide, Module 4 or this article for just some variations.  
You needn't write instructions from scratch! COLI has sample text. |
| Synchronous Discussion | Zoom. This is the closest replacement for the classroom experience: a scheduled web-conference where students must attend at a given time, but via the web. It can be a seminar-style class session, or even host a lecture, including slide-sharing. Meetings are recordable in common video file formats for subsequent posting or sharing. |
| Lecture (capture) | Powerpoint has a Video Export feature. If you record narratives, animations and slide timing as you lecture at your computer, you can create a common format video file (.mp4) for posting or sharing via the web.  
Screencast-O-Matic allows you to capture your voice, screen actions, or even webcam as a video. This is useful for content outside PowerPoint, such as in MS Excel.  
A Webcam, with a variety of software, can capture anything for digital video. For example, this can be you using a whiteboard, a traditional graphic calculator, or a scale model to describe a process. |
| Translate Lecture into Interactive Web Resources | Google Sites is a simple website builder that's great for building multi-page interactive lessons incorporating text, video, audio, or even clickable diagrams.  
Use quiz tools or course surveys to create "lean-forward" activities that help keep students engaged while watching or listening.  
• Pre- and post-quizzes so students can gauge their own learning.  
• Surveys so students can get a sense of where they lean on a controversial topic. (This might be followed by discussion.)  
Short writing assignments that are easily gradable, but foster student engagement.  
• CATs are always welcome on the internet.  
• Metacognitive, or reflective writing. |
| Procedural messaging | Audio and video clips using screencasting or webcam.  
Careful, standardized instructions that can be used across courses. |
| Exams and quizzes. | D2L's quizzes engine is useful for quiz- and exam-style assessment at any scale.  
Short quizzes, even acting as worksheets, can encourage reading. D2L can grade multiple-choice or true/false questions, so you don't need to.  
Online Exams are more complicated, but equally valuable. Obviously they serve a different philosophy than traditional exams, where students are sequestered from available sources. (But with the information revolution, maybe it's time to rethink traditional exams anyway?) |
| In-Class Student Presentations | Students have access to quality recording equipment that had no consumer-grade equivalent even a decade ago. They may produce video or podcasts on their own. Even if they do not own recording hardware, they can borrow it from the Canisius College Media Center.  
3-5 minute "explainer" videos are similar to having a student demonstrate a procedure or concept to their peers. If they can explain it, they have learned it. |
| Offering Feedback to Students | Various. D2L provides the most direct ways to communicate text (and grade score) feedback to students. But D2L also allows quick three-minute videos, and for more extensive feedback you may consider video such as lengthier webcam or screencast videos. |
| Traditional Reading or Composition Assignments | These may be moved as-is into your online or hybrid class. Textbooks, supplemental readings, and assigned videos can be standard in any course format. Written analysis, papers, mock plans or proposals are equally relevant in F2F, hybrid or online courses.  
However, while you are changing course format, consider how you may experiment with new variations on these. For example, might students discuss some aspect of textbook readings in asynchronous discussions? Could you have students present a proposal as both a text document, and a short summary video? |

To begin experimenting, we suggest:

1. Try recording a short lecture as a video. PowerPoint for Windows is probably the easiest for this, but any screencaster can do this and many are easy to use. Later, you can experiment with other, and more sophisticated systems but screencasting a lecture is a great start.  
2. Experiment with asynchronous discussions. Consider how you may use this medium to encourage students to participate in analysis through text-based correspondence.
3. Build a short, simple quiz in D2L featuring 4-7 multiple choice questions, that might encourage students to do readings.
4. Draft assignment instructions for an exercise where students record short explainer videos, demonstrating some aspect or procedure of course content.

See the following options for faculty development:

- Online Faculty Development Course
- COLI Guide to Teaching Online
- Additional Resources