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LTC & AT Resource: Planning for asynchronous discussion

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LTC & AT Resource: Planning for asynchronous discussion

We are strongly encouraging all faculty to plan for their courses to be mostly asynchronous. This requires a bigger shift in your thinking as you plan, but also will make the course more robust should there be issues with internet performance, which is likely given the immense demands being put on infrastructure.

Benefits of asynchronous discussion?

- Build community around the course content -- either full class or small groups
- Allows engagement across time zones and better accommodates those who have internet connectivity issues.

Considerations in designing asynchronous discussions:

- Clearly explain what the goals are for student engagement via asynchronous discussion. To do this, make sure you have carefully crafted your prompt/assignment.
- Structure engagement to ensure engagement between all participants. If the engagement isn't structured, the students who respond early only interact with other early responses, and students may not see or engage the contributions of late responders.
- Clearly articulate your expectations for participation in each discussion.

Models for structuring asynchronous discussion engagement:

Option 1: Original response + additional responses

Everyone responds to original prompt by Date 1.

Everyone responds to 2-3 other people's responses by Date 2.

Option 2: X number of original contributions (responding to prompt or to others)

Everyone responds at least X-2 times between Time A and Time B.

Everyone responds 2 more times later between Time C and Time D.

Option 3: Generating prompts as a group

Stage 1: Every student (or group of students) suggests their own discussion prompt/question.

Stage 2: Instructor or the students curate the list and select a smaller subset of prompts/questions to respond to.

Stage 3: Students respond to X number of the curated questions/prompts.

Option 4: Rotating student discussion leaders

Students contribute in an unstructured manner.

After all have contributed, discussion leaders highlight particular contributions and summarize key elements.

Tips for a successful asynchronous discussion

- Develop ground rules for discussion engagement (In addition to the ground rules you might think about, you will want to consider things such as will you allow ALL CAPS or **boldface** responses)
- Provide guidelines that address:
 - Writing style (e.g., formal/informal), tone
 - Number of posts/frequency
 - Length (e.g., number of words)
 - Content (e.g., elements that constitute “value added”)
 - Citation (e.g. responses of previous discussants or text references, whether [formal](#) or informal).
- Be present. Provide feedback and coaching to help students understand the type of engagement you are looking for. You would never start a class discussion in your face-to-face classroom and then just leave the room for the remainder of the discussion. Similarly, remain engaged with asynchronous discussion, but set limits.
- Leave sufficient time for asynchronous interaction. You can't expect that students will respond in a small time window (either because of technology issues or personal circumstances).

Tools to use:

- Moodle discussion forums
- Hypothesis -- communal text annotation tool
- Wordpress blogs