AGHE Teaching Brief

Teaching Tips for Online Instruction

On April 23, 2020, 50+ AGHE members gathered online for AGHE Connect Live. These tips came in response to members’ requests for teaching resources to share. If you have more tips to share, please post them on the GSA Connect, AGHE Community pages.

Getting Started with Zoom
Jennifer Mendez, Wayne State University School of Medicine, jmendez@med.wayne.edu

Overview: If you are going to use Zoom, check out this tutorial for breakout rooms, polling students, and other activities. And be flexible as you design and implement activities, as not all learners are up to speed with online platforms. View this Tutorial
See also: Tips & Tricks: Teachers Educating on Zoom

Using Breakout Zoom to Provide Tailored Project Consultations
Su-I Hou, University of Central Florida, su-i.hou@ucf.edu

Overview: I have enjoyed using Zoom for real-time class meetings during COVID-19. For my doctoral mixed methods research (MMR) course, students worked in small interdisciplinary teams on various real-world evaluation projects with community partners. I integrated Zoom in several ways:

1. I used the breakout Zoom function to assign students into their project teams.
2. Students joined their breakout Zoom group and discussed various project issues with their team members.
3. Students called for my help if they have questions, and I joined one breakout Zoom at a time, and provided tailored project consultation based on student needs and issues raised.
4. If another team call for my help while I’m still in consultation with the current team, I sent a note to them telling saying that I’ll join them as soon as I can.
5. After I’ve joined all breakout Zoom groups and resolved or clarified all project issues, I sent broadcast message to cue everyone return to the main zoom.

We had LOTS of fun with our Zoom and breakout Zoom meetings! It can keep instructor-student interactions close with high quality. Both students and I have enjoyed our virtual interaction very much this way. Learn more about the breakout Zoom function.
Chatting Up the Chat Box in Zoom
Maria Claver, California State University, Long Beach, Maria.Claver@csulb.edu

Overview: The chat box in Zoom is a valuable resource for encouraging participation among all students throughout a lecture. If monitoring the chat box while lecturing involves a bit too much multitasking for you, you can assign a student each class session to be the "chat box monitor" for that session whose task is to encourage chatting among students. You can check in with the chat box monitor from time to time to see if there are any questions from the class or any themes appearing in the chat comments.

Inviting Guest Experts into the Virtual Classroom
Nina M Silverstein, University of Massachusetts Boston, nina.silverstein@umb.edu

Overview: The virtual environment presents a great opportunity to invite guest experts nationally or even globally. I have invited guests in three ways:
1. "Ask the Expert" sessions where students prepare questions in advance that I share with the expert
2. Special topic presentations by experts
3. Discussants for students' final presentations

Try This - Video Discussion Boards
Kara Dassel, University of Utah, kara.dassel@nurs.utah.edu

Overview: For the past year, I've been having students video record their discussion board posts. It helps create a more engaging and interactive online community and I feel like I get to know the students better than through reading through their written posts.

Starting Off Your Class: Demonstrating Care, Concern and Compassion for Students’ Needs and Wants
Robert J. Maiden, Alfred University, fmaiden@alfred.edu

Overview: As an ice breaker, each year I ask the students in my classes what did a professor do last semester that was especially helpful or supportive? This gives the students an opportunity to give their favorite professor a "shout out." Also, it provides me with the opportunity to learn what students' needs and wants are. I have learned that the students appreciate it when a professor connects with them in a personal way and shows interest in what's going on in their life. Sometimes, it is a small thing like granting extra-time to complete a project, or a chance to improve a grade, or noticing that they had been missing class lately. Other times, it may be a major undertaking--like spending many hours helping students complete a project, poster, or PowerPoint. Or, it might be the professor took time to spend several hours with the student to become more acquainted to write a more powerful letter of recommendation. Or, it might be simply to advocate, to be their champion. The willingness of a professor to go the extra mile is something that is indelibly remembered and prized by the students forever. I cannot tell you how much I respect my colleagues who do these things year in and year out.
Opening a Class Session: Be Authentic
Jessica King McLaughlin, University of Denver, jessica.king@du.edu

Overview: At the beginning of each class, I check in with my students about how they are doing. This is a tough, strange time for all of us and acknowledging the difficulty that they may be experiencing and the stressors in the world seems to engage the students more. This humanizes me as a professor and lets my students know that I care more about their wellbeing than their achievement right now. I believe students have better buy-in when they see their professors as compassionate and someone else trying to live in the world right now.

Using Real World Assignments
Lisa Hollis-Sawyer, Northeastern Illinois University, l-hollissawyer@neiu.edu

Overview: Whether online or face-to-face instruction, I encourage students to apply their knowledge in the classroom by analyzing their social world (e.g., the workplace) and submitting an assignment or doing a discussion board post regarding a personal observation of a real-world situation with an application(s) of concepts from the course. I also often ask students to engage in “break out” small group discussions online related to a current social issue (e.g., need for aging-in-place services/products) and then we come together in the virtual classroom to share ideas and present “solutions” in some form (e.g., creation of a product, like a pictorial plan of an age-friendly consumer product or a "business pitch" PowerPoint presentation, etc.).

Transforming Group Work in the Age of Covid-19
Christine Thurlow, Research College of Nursing, christine.thurlow@researchcollege.edu

Overview: In the Older Adult Health course I teach in a nursing school, we have a Group Process Forum where a group of six students discuss selected questions related to course content. Each student in the group has a role (leader, note taker, summarizer, researcher, forward thinker, and presenter) which rotates whenever the Forum is held. The group is responsible for producing products (answering compare/contrast questions, synthesizing information, developing a concept map, scenario, or PPT, etc.) that is turned in at the end of the session. Since the pandemic, everyone is online. From trial and error and student feedback, we re-invented this teaching strategy. The revised groups have gone from six to three, making it easier for students to get together. Zoom, Google docs, FaceTime, etc. are used to discuss the required activity. They assign roles and write up the portions for which they are responsible. Most students will have more than one role since there are fewer students in a group. They develop the products needed to fulfill the Forum tasks. Each student submits their product to the instructor by way of studio in Canvas LMS, Word document, PPT, voice over PPT, or drawing. This activity occurs during an eight-hour day on the scheduled day that class would have been held. Faculty are online and available during this period for questions or concerns. Most concerns have been about the slowness of downloading their products into the LMS.
Information Sharing with Videos
Lisa Borrero, University of Indianapolis, borrerol@uindy.edu

Overview: Something that has worked well in my online courses when it comes to assignments that involves any kind of information sharing is the use of student-generated videos. To give students (and me) some respite from written discussions and assignments, I have students submit videos. For example, I've had students submit video reflections about service-learning experiences; book reports; screencast PowerPoint presentations for a final project; and present their reflections on an interview with an older adult. Students can record their videos using their smartphones or software/web applications like Screencastify, Zoom, or Google Meet (there are others). Uploading their videos will depend on the capabilities of your LMS, but I find that it's easier if students upload a link to their videos rather than the video files themselves (which are often large). To obtain a link, they can upload their videos to YouTube (setting them to "unlisted" so that only people with the link can view them) or to Google Drive (they will have to give you permission to view). You can work with your IT Department about the best ways to do this within your LMS.

Flipped Classroom - Best Practice Strategies
Pamela Toto, University of Pittsburgh, pet3@pitt.edu

Overview: The “flipped classroom” existed before online learning became a recent necessity. I have used this model in combination with in-person lab activities for 2 years with my gerontology course with great success. In a flipped classroom student are introduced to the learning material before class (via homework assignments and activities) with classroom time then being used to deepen understanding through discussion with peers and problem-solving activities facilitated by the instructor. Best practice strategies for this model do not include simply moving your live lecture to the computer. There are several evidence-based strategies for making this model even better than traditional lecture-based teaching. The flipped classroom model considers strategies such as:

- Modifying the length and format of lectures
- Increasing active learning activities
- Providing consistency in formatting to maximize student engagement and self-efficacy
- Using multimedia approaches to maximize learning retention

Background:
If You’re Zoomed Out – Try a Self-Paced Module Approach
Joann Montepare, Lasell University, jmontepare@lasell.edu

Overview: When I transitioned to an online format, I thought about context in which students would be working and navigating this course alongside others that would vary dramatically in their format, ease of navigating, and complexity of logistics, along with all that was likely happening on their home fronts. With these issues in mind, I opted for a self-paced module approach to streamline students’ work and give them flexibility. I developed weekly modules on different core topics (e.g., work and career paths, crossing and connecting generations, friendships across the lifespan, etc.). Each module was described in one brief PPT slide presentation (about 6 slides that included an overview, a reading assignment, an activity such as completing a measure or watching a TED talk, instructions for a brief reflection paper guided by questions, and a final slide with an “inspirational” note).

Each PPT had the same format to facilitate understanding and readability. Each module had a deadline, but students could work at their own pace and complete the modules ahead of deadlines to save time and space for managing their other course work. Students received a complete list of the modules in advance so they knew where they were headed. Reminders were regularly provided, questions were encouraged, feedback was given on all reflection papers, and papers received a grade. Students reported that they liked and appreciated this format a great deal.

"Training Wheels"- Helping Students Do Well in Digital Multiple-Choice Exams
Lyn Holley, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Imholley@unomaha.edu

Overview: Multiple choice exams are familiar, but "unnatural" for most students. Wording of answer choices is often difficult to contextualize, and students who have studied and are familiar with course content may struggle to identify which answer choice is correct. The vocabulary of the question or answer choices may be awkward (or even unfamiliar to students for whom English is a second language). Students also can find the online "view" of exam questions segmented, with each question and its answer choices isolated from the topic studied. To help students overcome these challenges and do their best on tests, three "laws of comfort" seem to work: familiarity, early success, and consistency. Familiarity can result from clear and complete information about the format, content covered, timing, and grading of exams. Early success can be achieved by adding an introductory "mini exam" early in the course. The mini exam looks just like the other exams; however, it has "training wheels". It has only ten or twenty questions covering only the first- or second-week’s material. As a class, students review the results of the mini-exam and discuss the content and thought processes used to arrive at answers. Consistently, each of the other exams looks exactly like the mini-exam; however, there are more questions to be answered about more content. This approach is especially useful for first- and second-year college students who are taking survey courses. Mastering the challenges of taking multiple choice digital exams then can benefit them throughout their college careers.
Use Learning through Testing for Your Quizzes and/or Exams
Laurinda Reynolds, American River College, reynoll@arc.losrios.edu

Overview: Learning through testing is a quiz/exam strategy based on retrieval science confirming that answering questions is effectively reinforces encoding into long-term memory. Using flashcards is a common example of its effectiveness, but most students do not have the time or motivation to make them. Every LMS is different, but the quiz settings in most can be setup similar to flashcards, e.g. let students take the quiz unlimited times and allow students to see the correct answer after submitting the quiz. For my Psychology of Aging quizzes, I use the textbook's full 50 question test-bank per chapter and randomly pull 20 questions per attempt. Student only have 10 minutes per attempt, to prevent them from looking up the answers and to keep them aroused (Yerkes-Dodson Law). The short time limit is not anxiety provoking because they can take it over. If students take the quiz three times before the due date and score at least 75%, their score is bumped to 100%. They don’t get the bump if they take it after the due date. My chapter quizzes never close, because although it is ideal for students to stay on schedule, life happens, and I would rather have them take the quiz late and learn, than give them a reason to skip learning. My setting prevents students from moving on to the next module until they earn at least a 60% on the chapter quiz. My exams have more traditional settings, but I do set up a practice exam using learning through testing settings.

Considering Ageism & Elderspeak
Andrea Zakrjsek, Eastern Michigan University, azakrajs@emich.edu

Overview: In an online seminar associated with a gerontology practicum, I have students consider the language they use (and might hear others use) when working with or on behalf of older adults. Following a discussion on ageism, we explore the use of "elderspeak" with the student learning objective of: Reflect upon the language used with older adults by understanding the concept of “elderspeak” and how this style of communication can be overcome/avoided.

Readings:
• “Elderspeak” is used to describe the style of communication “based upon stereotypes that older adults are less competent, so younger partners simplify their communication, attempt to clarify communication, and alter the emotional tone of the messages when communicating with older adults (Williams, Kemper, & Hummert, 2004).
• In order to understand the concept of elderspeak more, please read this article from AARP, entitled “Don’t Call me Sweetie.”
• Also, please read about a communication training program that significantly reduced the use of elderspeak in a nursing home setting.

Reflection: How might you manage a conversation with someone whom you observe using elderspeak?
Raising Awareness about LGBT Aging

Allyson Brothers, Colorado State University, allyson.brothers@colostate.edu

Overview: Individuals age from all different backgrounds and experiences. In this activity, we examine issues relevant to those aging who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), or gender non-conforming. First, we watch a full-length documentary, and then engage in a small-group online discussion to discuss pressing issues around equality, sensitivity, and inclusion.

Your university library may be able to gain free access for students through Kanopy online streaming.

Supporting Background Information: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Aging

Potential Discussion Questions:

- How have stigma and discrimination played a role in the lives of individuals in LGBT communities?
- What unique challenges do LGBT individuals face with regard to long-term care, end-of-life choices, and home health care?
- How has resilience developed among LGBT individuals as a result of past experiences?
- How is aging different now that people are living with HIV as a chronic condition, due to medical advancements in the 1990’s?
- How can we better prepare the gerontological workforce as a whole to be sensitive and informed professionals when it comes to working with individuals in the LGBT community?
Aging Themes - Scientific Memes
(adapted from project created by Diana Riser, Ph.D., Columbus State University)
Elizabeth Bergman, Ithaca College, ebergman@ithaca.edu

Overview: I've recently started assigning this project and students have enjoyed quite a bit of success with it. Students are required to create a scientific meme(s) as a way to practice applying gerontological research and improving critical thinking skills. Memes are prevalent in our online and social media culture. Sometimes they are meant to be funny; sometimes they send a message about politics, life, and other topics. The difficulty is, sometimes these messages are impactful and capture our attention, but may be totally devoid of scientific accuracy.

Instructions: For this project, you will create and post a meme to social media.

Step 1
- Identify one important message (relevant to some aspect of our course) that you would like to "clear up" & provide scientifically accurate information on. Next, create a meme for the message. (A meme for this class will entail an appropriate image, with a brief accurate message & a small notation of the source at the bottom.) Your source should be a scientific article that is widely available to the public through a link.
- Write a paragraph (at least 4-5 sentences) outlining the following: (a) explain the major finding or article data & how it relates to your meme, (b) tell me why this meme matters (i.e., how is it important to you?).
- Submit your meme and paragraph to me. I will review your work and send you feedback. You may need to respond to the feedback by revising your meme or I may simply "approve" your work.

Step 2
- Once your meme has been approved, you may share it to Facebook or Instagram. Posting Instructions: (a) Include a statement sentence (brief description of your meme, what the research says, why it is relevant, etc.) and your link to a resource in the narrative that goes with your photo. (b) You need to use the hashtags (#agemattersmeme & #correctmemesmatter) on every post. Put it with the words & reference. This will give us all a way to track and see how far these memes travel on the internet & what the feedback is. (c) You need to set your post to "Public" so it can travel further & get more feedback. (d) Share a link to where you posted your meme (or a photo of it posted) as evidence that you completed this step.

Step 3
- Write a paragraph (at least 4-5 sentences) describing the response you received on social media and the insights you take from the response. Include a copy of the meme below the paragraph so I can easily identify what paragraph matches what meme.
- Bonus points for demonstrating effective and thoughtful responses to comments on social media (e.g., if someone says something inaccurate and you correct them thoughtfully and accurately).