Reflections from Multicultural Instructors: Connecting with students in a disconnected semester

Stephanie D. Baumann, MS MA, Melinda Reed-Morrice, MA, & Ciara Smalls Glover, PhD

Georgia State University

GeorgiaState University | COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Connecting with students in an online format

- "Utilizing weekly virtual meetings - I split the class into 4 groups so that I meet with groups of 4-10 students for 35min a week."
- "I do check-ins where I ask students to share a thorn and a rose from the past week."
- "I use exit surveys where I ask "connecting" questions, like "what is one good thing that happened this past week." I then follow up sometimes with quick emails based on their responses."

Helping students connect to material online

- "I have included a lot of videos with first person perspectives (TED talks, etc.)"
- "I try to include more interactive activities, like an IAT, so that they are not just watching videos."
- "I break up my lectures into pretty small pieces (no longer than 15 minutes) and put discussion prompts in between these videos so that students have to take a moment to reflect on what they just heard."
- "I collect student questions and then do a big "Q&A" each week answering individual (anonymous) questions."
- "I have started a "So you want to know more" section at the end of each module where I list out a bunch of other resources (APA, empirical articles, op-eds, TED Talks, books, etc.) for them in case they want more information beyond what I was able to address in class."

Creating engaging and supportive discussions online

- "A lot of my questions as students to apply course material to their own life experiences. So their answers are a mix of explaining class material and sharing events from their own life."
- "I find that when one student discloses, the rest of the group tends to follow suit."
- "A mix of small groups to moderated discussions."
- "I try to limit the number of discussion questions that I provide, so that they almost have to engage with each other."
- "I try to check in on the discussion boards 1x a day and respond to students occasionally so that they know that I am also an active participant in the discussion."

Quotes come from the experiences of the authors of this poster.

Creating a safe classroom space online

- "During the first discussion group I taught the differences between debate and dialogue. Afterwards, we decided on discussion group ruled together. These rules were posted on iCollege at the top of discussion posts."
- "I start the class by creating a class contract. As a result, if needed, I can refer back to the class contract if any conversations need to be moderated."
- "I have students do several FlipGrid/Video posts, including an introduction at the beginning, so that they are no longer just names, but others can see their faces and that they are real people too. This seems to create additional levels of respect and understanding because they recognize others as real people instead of just keyboard warriors."

Connecting activities that did not work

- "Originally, I tried grouping students to try and create a smaller, more intimate environment. But I found that students connected and responded LESS in this way, because everything is asynchronous and the timing often didn't line up well. Now I allow all students to see all responses, and as a result there is a lot more discussion content for them to interact with."
- "I found that presentations to small groups were difficult and resulted in a lot of lost face-to-face time. This semester students will be pre-recording instead of presenting live."

Leveraging technology to keep students engaged

- "Using Panopto, I have inserted some survey questions directly into my lectures."
- "I use FlipGrid as a way of allowing students to show their faces and record answers."
- "I use Factile as a Jepoardy review game."
- "My documentary review paper utilizes films housed on a variety of sources (they get to pick one) from Netflix, Hulu, YouTube, Amazon Prime, etc."

Guiding student self-reflection

- "Students take a survey during the first and last week of class. They then compare their responses and write a paper discussing the ways in which their answers did (or did not) change over the semester."
- "All of my papers include self-reflection and connecting or comparing/contrasting identities to their own experiences."
- "I have a full reflection paper at the end of the semester as an opportunity to reflect on what they've learned in this course and how they might take it into their future personal and professional lives."

New assignments/adaptations that you've created for an online Multicultural Psych course

- "Group discussions that follow written assignments to allow everyone equal time to think about diversity topics before being asked to speak about them. This also helps create a more equitable space for those for whom English is not their first language."
- "I created a Documentary Review and a Multicultural interview that collectively allow students to learn about other cultural identities and think about how they compare to their own identities to replace the in-person immersion experience."
- 'I have adopted a flipped classroom model. Lectures are pre-recorded. Our time together is dedicated entirely to questions and in-depth discussions about specific topics from lecture.'
- "Instead of doing an in-person immersion I asked students to pick 4 people on social media with different perspectives on an issue. The students follow these individuals online for 6 weeks before completing a paper where they compare their posts and reflect on the points of view expressed."