Equitable Practices in Online Teaching

Make a Welcome Letter or Video

SET THE TONE: EQUITY STARTS ON DAY 1

Consider creating either a welcome letter or a welcome video (or both!) that students will read/watch in the first week. A welcome letter or video helps foster a classroom culture that is inviting and friendly. Compare this to an instructor who only posts the syllabus and/or a list of course policies that outlines all the things students should NOT do – which class would you rather take?

Asynchronous vs. Synchronous

CONSIDER STRUCTURING YOUR COURSE ASYNCHRONOUSLY W/ BUILD-IN SYNCHRONOUS OPTIONS

This way, students with work/family obligations can work at their own pace but can also engage with you in real time if they need to. For synchronous classes that have regular required Zoom class meetings, try to be flexible with students' attire, posture, etc. Some students don't have access to private work spaces, and if the only place they can focus on your class is while sitting in bed in their pajamas, is that really a problem? Also, consider recording your lectures for those who can't attend/want to re-watch a lesson.

Reasonable Tech Expectations

SOCIAL MEDIA SKILLS =/= TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

Don't assume your students are tech savvy just because they are young, or that their Snapchat/Instagram skills are somehow transferable to the online environment. Make sure that you have embedded tutorials in your course that explain everything you will require students to do (e.g. How to post an Assignment in Canvas, How to Take a Quiz in Canvas, etc.) and also provide students with linked resources in the event they need further tech assistance.

Accessibility of Course Content

IS YOUR CONTENT ACCESSIBLE ON A SMART PHONE?

In addition to making sure your course materials are accessible for hearing and visually impaired students, make sure your materials can also be viewed on a smart phone. We can discourage this behavior all we want, but a resourceful student who cares about turning in assignments on time will use their phone if they do not have access to a computer, and the Canvas app does allow students to submit work directly from their phone. As such, it's a good idea to get the Canvas app (if you don't already use it) and see what your course materials look like in that medium.

Late Work

CONSIDER OFFERING STUDENTS A "GRACE PERIOD" FOR MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS

A "grace period" is a period where students can submit the assignment late with no late penalty and no questions asked. Students often have legitimate issues that can prevent them from completing your assignment by the due date. A grace period can allow these students to still be successful without having to beg their instructor for an extension. You could also give bonus points to students who submit assignments early; this can help motivate students as well as more evenly spread out your grading load.