



Remote Teaching Updates & Resources

1 message

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Inclusion. Learning-Centered Empathy. Self-Care.

By Betsy Barre on Mar 21, 2020 10:17 pm



Today's post is a guest post by [Megan Regan](#), Visiting Associate Professor of Economics

I am redesigning my courses with three priorities. This semester is teaching everyone new lessons about the world we live in and the fragility of human built systems; we will be called on to support our students and colleagues, our faith and our living communities and our families and ourselves. This can be melded into how we proceed with our courses in ways that prioritize inclusivity, learning-centered empathy, and self-care.

Inclusive: I have spent the last many days much like you: talking with colleagues at Wake Forest and other institutions, reading articles and blogs, and surveying my students. Students are stressed and unsettled, just like many of us. Some are not able to go home, some serendipitously had their laptop break just before spring break, some are unwell, some are less safe. While we

are wrapping our heads around many people becoming physically ill, mental illness effects are already setting in for many students. When considering inclusivity, consider both physical and mental illness disruptions; include students with different learning abilities and the inability to have appropriate accommodations and access. Inclusivity also means considering resource constraints – when reviewing survey results, they do not all have internet access at home. Some of them are called by their families or communities to contribute during this uncertain economic time. Some students are actively looking for work right now to stabilize losses at home. And the economic stress will surely increase. Current students came of age during the Great Recession. Many come from families that have not recovered from the Great Recession. Some are about to see their families get hit harder during this crisis than the Great Recession. Some will have their job offers rescinded before they graduate.

Learning-centered empathy: I teach economics, a subject that dovetails into the current crisis. I will bring it into class as a way to process current events and affirm the magnitude of the crisis. Learning-centered empathy means that most decisions about how classes proceed will be on-field audibles. I am going to adapt to student needs and constraints, which will evolve (and devolve) over the remainder of the semester. Learning-centered empathy also means that grading will be different, on par with a pass-fail type grading system. For me, it seems the only pragmatic way to proceed given so many uncertainties and hindrances to learning as usual.

Self-care: And then there is self-care: I too need courses to be inclusive and offer learning-centered empathy. In addition to teaching courses at Wake Forest, I am newly homeschooling a preschooler and kindergartner and have an active role in caring for elders in my family. We are teaching students both disciplinary subjects and life-skills; as faculty-scholars and advisors, we support our students holistically. Self-care and personal responsibility should be obvious themes to students from faculty.

Bringing the three together: I taught a purely online course for professional students for 9 years, so I am seasoned in pre-recording lectures for streaming.

I am going to offer asynchronous video lectures 15-20 minutes each (longer will not work well for internet and attention-span bandwidths) and each lecture will have a worksheet following up. I set up a home studio with an adhesive white board, good-enough microphone, and adjusted lighting (brought a lamp in from another room and hung a blanket over the window for glare). I plan to use Top Hat to post streaming lectures and likely for exams, mostly because I had been using Top Hat this semester so it is something students already “know.” As for the seminar in Global Trade and Commerce which has only graduating seniors, the syllabus is in the dumpster fire. The current crisis will be our case study for the remainder of the semester and discussions (primarily one-on-one with a few in their existing small groups) will be focused on processing how this crisis is affecting their identity as soon-to-be college graduates.

I will continue to reach out to students individually to offer Zoom conferences, phone calls, and remind them of their value as a member of the Wake Forest University community. Through trying to be inclusive and offer learning-centered empathy through a disciplinary lens, teaching self-care during a crisis is the primary learning objective for the remainder of the semester.

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