



Remote Teaching Updates & Resources

1 message

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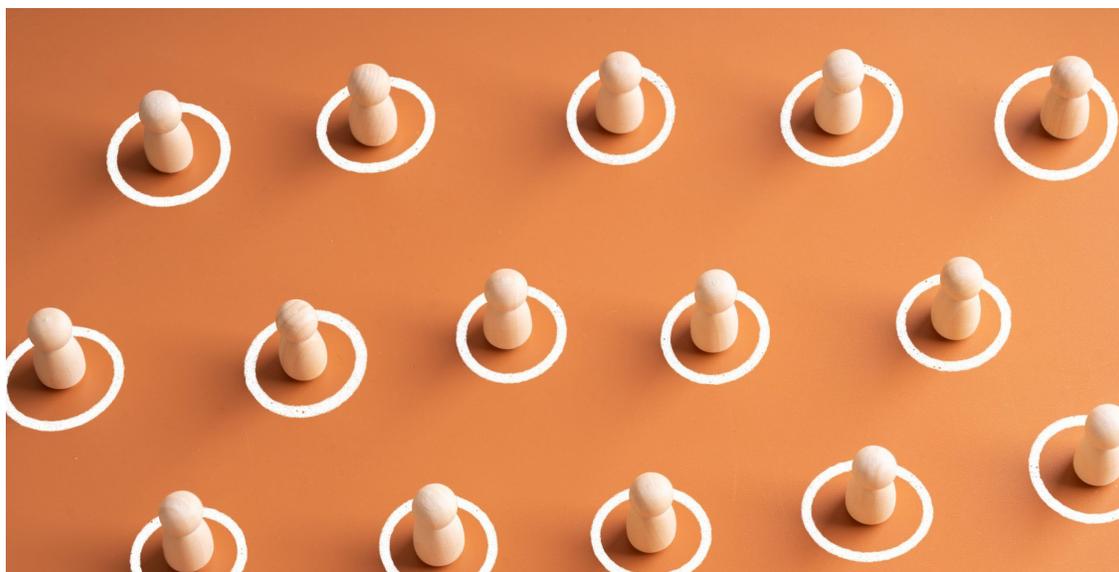
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Personal Reflections on Course

Modality

By Betsy Barre on Jun 18, 2020 01:52 pm



At the end of this week, Wake Forest Faculty will be making decisions about their preferred course modality for Fall 2020. As we approach the deadline for decisions, I decided to share some reflections in a semi-public social media post. At the request of those who have read it, I am making those reflections more public. Please note that this is not an official endorsement of the CAT, but rather my thoughts as a fellow educator who has spent her summer thinking a lot about what teaching will look like this fall.

Wake friends:

I know a lot of you will need to make choices about what course modality you are going to adopt in the fall over the next few days. To the extent that you care what I think, I offer a few thoughts for you to consider as you make this important decision.

First, if you need to stay away from campus or the classroom, then teach online and know that this fall you'll do your best teaching that way.

Likewise, if you feel the need to teach in person, you feel safe doing so, and your course is not required or otherwise essential, your choice is easy.

There are a number of tricky cases beyond these two (e.g., those who want to teach a required class fully in person), but the trickiest is for those of us (yes, that includes me) who would feel safe coming back to the classroom with appropriate protocols in place, but who just think a socially-distanced classroom isn't going to be great for learning. I've shared with some of you privately that I think online activities are going to be far superior at producing significant learning than what we can do in a socially-distanced classroom.

You might think the above means I would recommend that those who feel safe opt for fully online courses for purely pedagogical reasons. I may have thought that at one point, but as I've reflected on it more, I've changed my mind and would recommend a blended modality.

The primary reason I've changed my mind about this is that I've realized how important it is to take our student's desires to be together (with us, and with their peers) into consideration. Now you might be thinking "it doesn't matter what students want if it's not safe!" If that's you, I'm addressing you in #2 and you should really stay home.

Others might be thinking "it doesn't matter what students want if it's not pedagogically valuable." Anyone who knows me knows that I am on board with this principle. But I am only on board to a point. And that's because motivation is at the heart of all learning, and motivation is *significantly* influenced by what our students want and value. We can certainly force a student to learn in an environment where they are not feeling much intrinsic motivation. But all teachers everywhere know that learning is accelerated when students are happy and excited about the learning experience. So "making students happy" shouldn't be the end of our teaching (or at least not the only end), but it is certainly an important condition for achieving the end of learning.

And I think that, in this situation, where students are feeling so much isolation, having some time when they can simply visit with one another each week (or perhaps every other week) could be a HUGE boost to their wellbeing and, by

extension, their participation in our class. Sure, they may not learn as much formal material in those moments, but the emotional impact could be substantial, priming them to better engage in the online activities the rest of the week.

So this was long, but I just wanted it out there so that those of you on the fence consider the possibility of teaching a blended class that is, in substance, fully online, but that retains some time to be physically present together to decrease student anxiety and increase their motivation to learn.

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