Online Teaching in the Humanities

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Available online at
https://teachingresources.hcommons.org/a-guide-to-online-teaching-in-the-humanities/

This guide was conceived as a way to use the collection Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities as a resource for conceiving and delivering online or hybrid humanities courses. The pandemic has forced us all to rethink our pedagogies and our teaching strategies, while also bringing the issues of inequity in higher education to the forefront. We could no longer ignore the unequal access our students' have to stable housing, food, reliable internet connectivity and technology.

And now we can no longer ignore the racial injustices and inequalities, either. Not that we should have been, after Fergeson, Black Lives Matter, and other protests around police violence towards African-Americans and Indegenous peoples in particular. But as we are already shifting and rethinking our courses, our pedagogies in light of the uncertainty around how the upcoming fall semester will look, it is equally an opportunity to look at *what* we are teaching alongside *how* we are teaching it.

This is not a primer on online courses in general. I would strongly recommend the book *Teaching Online* by Clare Howell Major, as well as *Small Teaching Online* by Flower Darby with James M. Lang and *High-Impact Practices in Online Education* edited by Kathryn E. Linder and Chrysanthemum Mattison Hayes. The center where I work has produced a number of resources to help prepare for Fall 2020, including guide books and tip sheets. Other excellent resources include ones created by Vanderbilt, Plymouth State, and Online Learning in a Hurry. University of Texas at Arlington at Arlington has a self-paced open course on pivoting your course to an online format.

This guide then, is about how to approach teaching the *humanities* online.

First step, whether you are teaching online or not, is to take this opportunity to decolonize your course (read a moving story of why this is important). If you are looking for digital resources to help you fill your syllabus instead, look at the entries for Indigenous, Queer, Social Justice, Race, and Intersectionality.

Always design for accessibility, and remember that online spaces heighten already-existing inequities. Keep the digital divide at the forefront of your planning. Issues of Gender, Disability, and Interface can impact the learning experience of your students. Think about how you will foster community, engage in networked learning, how open your course will be.

Start from a space where you are not lamenting what is lost, but begin to embrace the possibilities of *what can be gained*. Being online means we have to fundamentally rethink how

we engage with our students and how we engage with the materials and discipline, be it [fiction](), [poetry](), [history](), [rhetoric](), or [language learning](). Engagement doesn't just have to be sitting in a room facing each other; we can engage with the materials and each other through [blogging](), [mapping](), [annotating](), [curation](), [field work](), and [storytelling]() ([among many, many others]()). Even how we [read]() can be fundamentally shifted in online spaces, using [text analysis](), [video](), and [visualizations]().

[Assessment]() no longer has to be limited to papers and exams: we can rethink [collaborations](), create [public-facing projects](), value [iteration]() and [prototyping](), embrace [play]() and [multimodality](). This is an opportunity, an invitation to rethink your pedagogy, your course, your assignments, how you engage with your students, with the materials, with the world. Talk about [failure](), because it is inevitable but also essential to learning.

The hardest part of moving online isn't the planning and the building, but what Amy Collier describes in her contribution, [Online](), as "[being] willing...to step into the messiness and "not-yetness" that accompany emergent models of digital learning and that resist templated approaches." Templates are fine to get you started, with modules for each week or unit, built with an Intro-reading-watching-doing-submitting-conclusion format, in the same way our class time was built on similar structures or templates, even if we didn't call them that. Our students need predictability, but they also need space and freedom to explore, to engage, to create, to connect.

Build something using the building blocks in [Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities](). They're there to get you started, to inspire, to inform. Ultimately, it is up to you to take these materials and make them into something meaningful with and for your students.