Humanizing Your Online Instruction - The COVID-19 Version

What is Humanizing?

Humanized learning increases the relevance of content and improves students' motivation to log-in week-after-week. When students relate to their online instructor as something more than a subject matter expert and begin to conceive of themselves as part of a larger community, they are more likely to be motivated, be satisfied with their learning, and succeed in achieving the course objectives (Picciano, 2002; Rovai & Barnum, 2003; Richardson & Swan, 2003).

Facilitation

Be Present	Embrace Empathy	Be Aware
Don't be a robot.	See things through your students' eyes.	Know your students.
- Create a short video that greets students each session--even if the material is primarily asynchronous. - Offer synchronous online meet-ups/office hours. - Offer opportunities for interactions. - More than in-person class sessions, online instruction relies on making connections with students. Share something interesting about yourself and encourage your students to do the same.	- Be approachable. - Send individual emails to students to show your investment. - These are challenging times. Students are struggling with concerns about their academics as well as their personal lives. Being cognizant of these challenges is critical. A student with an impacted friend or family member will have focuses other than your class/course content. - Be consistent in your messaging and set clear expectations.	- Low-risk, fun 'ice breakers' help you connect with your students and can bring much-needed relief and change of pace during tumultuous times. - Foster discussion groups that allow students to share both their understanding of the content as well as some personal aspects (that they choose to share) of their life. - Vet what you post/say to minimize panic, distribution of misinformation.

Course Design

While the following design best practices tend to be geared towards semester-long courses, they are easily adapted for one shot sessions. Mindfulness of these is always good course design.

CHOICE

Options increase intrinsic motivation.

Allow students to:
- express themselves through writing, voice, and video.
- provide format and topic options for projects.
- have agency in deciding how to demonstrate their understanding of content.

CHALLENGE

Get students out of their comfort zones.

Encourage students to:
- to try new things with low/minimal stakes
- demonstrate their understanding of concepts through the creation of peer-evaluated such as instructional videos, 'how to' guides, etc…
- harness online learning tools to foster technological development.

CONTROL

Involve students in decision-making.

Allow students to:
- organize groups for projects.
- create and teach class content in a 'flipped' approach.
- suggest ideas for assessments.

COLLABORATE

Empower students to inspire one another.

Facilitate interaction through:
- having students peer teach, design, and develop material.
- host chats and discussion forums.
- connect across the miles through small group/break out rooms.

CONSTRUCT MEANING

Have students discover real-world connections.

Harness technology to:
- facilitate learning videos, simulations, virtual museums.
- encourage students to be builders of videos, images, links that demonstrate examples of concepts.
- transform real-life events into learning opportunities.

CONTINUITY

Design projects that last longer than your class.

Preserve learning by:
- turning students into legacy content creators.
- having students share work with peers and/or in the public web.
- fostering a 'scholarship is a conversation' mindset by having work become part of a larger body of research.