

their thesis projects. Moving those weekly meetings to Zoom was seamless, with screenshare turned on in both directions.

The ISS course, a three-hour seminar limited to 20 students, is required of all undergraduates as the culmination of their general education. Learning outcomes are set by the General Education Committee, and all ISS courses must meet the same objectives regardless of topic. My ISS course examines where humans fit in the natural world by asking “Are we of it or against it?” to encourage students to think about their actions as part of a larger process—the proverbial “Circle of Life.” In person, the ISS course includes rich discussions of readings as well as documentary and theatrical videos. Discussion and regular weekly writings formed the bulk of the course assessment, along with a short video story capstone project.

A three-hour synchronous Zoom class would be difficult if not impossible to accomplish effectively. Although I did not poll students, I knew that they all were stressed seniors concerned about the rapid shift in their educational environment and uncertainties about the last few months of their education. The in-person syllabus required students to complete (1) 14 weekly writing assignments (750 words each) responding to a set of open-ended questions on the required learning materials for the unit (several of which had to be replaced with new materials that were more readily available); and (2) eight biweekly writing assignments (450 words each) in which students could introduce new readings, video, and other content and then discuss the connections to any theme from class. All of the weekly essays were posted on the Sakai Learning Management System. Revising the ISS syllabus entailed rethinking the writing assignments and replacing the in-class discussions. To ensure that discussions continued, I realigned the writings to focus on the weekly prompted essays. I eliminated the biweekly essays; students already had completed three or four before the transition. They completed their weekly essay with a Monday due date and then had two responses in lieu of the biweekly essays: responding to three fellow students’ work (200–250 words each) and replying to any comments received on their own weekly essay (50 words each). The number of weekly essays remained the same with six weeks of responses, increasing the net writing by 250–500 words per week.

To continue building on the rapport established when the class was in-person, after we moved online I commented on every student’s weekly essay and on at least one peer comment. This served both classroom-social and cognitive-presence obligations. I also built rapport through weekly but optional virtual meetings at the beginning of the regularly scheduled class time. The first week, most but not all students (i.e., 14 of 20) joined the optional meeting to discuss the revised plans and the need for further adjustments (e.g., subsequent meetings averaged 10 students). My initial planning for the switch included more flexible due dates for the weekly essays and responses. In online meetings, students wanted more structure to ensure sufficient source material for their comments and responses. We mutually revised the schedule to better fit class needs. Overall, the transition to online allowed students to perform as well or better (based on student grades) than the previous semester’s face-to-face courses. Finally, students in both online meetings and emails expressed appreciation for the thoughtful transition process and the effort to maintain our learning environment, albeit differently.

Moving to a virtual environment requires intentionality to keep students focused on the learning environment and the

educational experience. As Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (1999, 89) noted, “cognitive presence is a vital element in critical thinking.” Maintaining that cognitive presence online requires adaptability and a student-centric approach to building a community of scholars engaged in thoughtful and meaningful dialog. The intentionality of the process is critical. Any course can transition to virtual if the instructor is willing to thoughtfully consider how to adapt it to students’ needs and, most important, to learning outcomes. ■

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## TOWARD AN ETHIC OF CARE AND INCLUSIVITY IN EMERGENCY E-LEARNING

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The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about rapid and dramatic changes to higher education. In this article, I reflect on the transition of a graduate seminar composed of 30 students from more than a dozen countries. A third of the way into the semester, and with only a few days’ notice, faculty were instructed to move teaching from on-campus seminars to fully online. With my colleagues, I worked to provide a new model of education built on inclusivity and care. It would be easy to lament the problems involved in this transition. Instead, I focus on what we can learn from the experience and the new possibilities that emerge.

I highlight two interrelated lessons that have long-term relevance. First, emergency e-learning presents an opportunity to take stock of advancements in politics teaching and to actively reconsider the pedagogies, strategies, and tools through which we teach and learn. Second, to address inequalities in our classrooms—which are accentuated in online learning—it is important to foster collaborative, nonhierarchical, and reflexive scholarly communities. Both of these lessons highlight the need to cultivate a culture of care and inclusivity in our classrooms—regardless of how our courses are comprised, whether face to face or online.

### Learning from Emergency e-Learning

When I reflect on my experiences, it is clear that the shift to e-learning provided important opportunities that conventional “business-as-usual” teaching models could not. I had to reassess

my course material as well as my mode of teaching and learning. I also had to consider how virtual learning tools could foster critical analysis, self-reflection, and scholarly rigor in graduate scholars.

The move to e-learning was an opportunity to use innovative techniques and develop new analytical skills. I replaced on-campus seminars with a mixture of prerecorded “mini lectures,” blogs, and virtual Zoom seminars. Lectures were made available at the beginning of each week. This provided flexibility to view them, asynchronously, before the online seminar later in the week. Key also was to ensure that the new learning activities corresponded to a similar workload. I kept lectures short, making them appealing and allowing time for other activities. Seminars then were conducted via Zoom, all students together and in breakout groups. In these seminars, I used “Padlets” to facilitate discussion. These are web-based applications that can be populated with text and images simultaneously by teachers and students; that is, a type of virtual “whiteboard” to summarize key points and assign tasks before or during discussion.

My students and I were forced to learn new software and technical skills: video-based lectures, Padlets, blogs, and feedback software such as survey tools (e.g., Survey Monkey). Technical options will continue to change and improve, which entails effort to remain current. However, these tools also open up new possibilities for collaborating and relating to one another. I sought in particular to use tools with a distinctive cooperative, nonhierarchical spirit. The aim was to promote a culture of self-reflection, mutual learning, and contingency, emphasizing a type of collective journey that often mirrored the ethical topics covered in the course.

These changes made me acutely aware of one crucial factor for effective e-learning: communication. Without the ability to clarify issues through dialogue in a classroom setting, communication between faculty and students assumes far greater importance. It distilled in me the need for a clear and constant line of communication, particularly in written form.

These changes also brought exciting results for students. The necessary reassessment of course-delivery techniques meant that students also engaged in more regular written communication than previously. Their analytical skills improved as the course progressed—more so than usual, I believe, in a semester. Technical

the accentuation of structural inequalities in student cohorts. Inequalities, of course, always exist: they emerge from differences in gender, race, culture, class, sexual orientation, and a range of other factors. In the case of online learning, these differences manifest in new ways. Not all students have equal access to fast, reliable Internet or a comfortable place to log in and safely participate. Moreover, not all students feel as secure and relaxed online as they do face to face (Casey 2020).

Given the inevitability of inequalities, I sought to develop an ethics of collaboration, inclusivity, and care. This involved being explicit and upfront about structural challenges and including self-reflection as part of the learning process. We collectively discussed our privileges, our limits, and our disadvantages.

Key to accomplishing this was the establishment and cultivation of a sensitive and reflexive learning community. In this context, I perceived myself less as an instructor and more as a fellow learner whose key task was to set up a safe, collective online space—and, in doing so, elicit the best from the inevitable differences that exist in classrooms. In my case, this involved students from several different cultural contexts. It entailed providing the opportunity for them to draw on and share their own experiences so that we could all be challenged and enriched. This aligns with the type of nonhierarchical and student-focused learning that excites and prompts students to “transgress” conventional analysis and create new, transformative political ideas and practices (hooks 1994).

Finally, an ethics of collaboration, inclusivity, and care requires more than a performative teaching technique or strategy to recognize and work through inequality. It also entails logistical aspects of teaching: it demands flexibility and sensitivity, for instance, with course feedback, deadlines, and individual learning needs of students.

### Looking Forward with Emergency e-Learning

My two takeaway points from orchestrating a rapid transition to online learning, then, are largely positive. They question the business-as-usual model of conventional learning and create learning possibilities that go beyond what has been termed a “pandemic pedagogy” (Smith and Hornsby 2020).

*...emergency e-learning presents an opportunity to take stock of advancements in politics teaching and to actively reconsider the pedagogies, strategies, and tools through which we teach and learn.*

tools and activities provided another way to create an innovative learning community, despite the distances among us. Although these innovations are predominantly virtual, they offer important lessons that will remain useful even when teaching eventually returns to university campuses. They demonstrate the so-far-untapped potential of flexible course-delivery modes and education tools, which not only enhance the learning and analysis of politics but also bring together disparate individuals and scholarly communities in new ways.

### Cultivating an Ethics of Collaboration, Inclusivity, and Care

In addition to opening up new opportunities, the shift to e-learning confronts us with challenges. Central among them is

First is the obvious but important point: online teaching forces instructors to rethink teaching and learning pedagogies and tools. This involves assessing our courses and our learning aims and acquiring new technical skills, from video-based lectures to online seminars and other supporting software. Many of these rapidly changing techno-pedagogical opportunities are not relevant only to online learning but also can be used in future teaching activities, regardless of how our classes take place.

Second, faculty must be conscious of and work to address structural inequalities in our classrooms. These inequalities may become accentuated in an online setting; however, emergency e-learning provides opportunities to consider and foster more self-reflective and inclusive learning environments. We can

reimagine our politics courses in ways that not only engage and excite graduate students but also recognize them as fellow scholars with unique experiences—both privileges and discriminations—and thus often unique needs. Doing so will have benefits that far outlast the rapid and improvised shift to online learning.

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### WHEN GOOD ENOUGH IS GOOD ENOUGH: DEPARTMENT CHAIRING DURING COVID-19

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Emergencies are unexpected and dangerous, and they require quick action. They also are, admittedly, opportunities for "securitization" (Murphy 2020) and fraught with additional difficulties. When I took over as chair of my department in 2019, I had no idea we would be experiencing a pandemic in 2020. My philosophy as a department chair during this pandemic then and even now (because the United States as a national community has utterly failed to confront the pandemic effectively and safely) is to simply get by and do a good-enough job. It is the same philosophy of the NCAA basketball tournament: survive and advance. We hear the phrase that "perfect is the enemy of the good," but I would amend that by saying the "good is (also) the enemy of good enough."

I ground my understanding of "good enough" by following Schick's (2012, 129) Gillian Rose-inspired book. Schick's approach

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is "agonistic," one that "does not assume that we can take linear steps towards a better future, but it does not retreat from action... knowing that any such action will need to be revisited and revised in the light of its inevitable unintended consequences." The temporal horizon for this approach is clear, not a long-term resolution but rather a "good enough" one "in the here and now" (Schick 2012, 129). In this article, I share both what this good-enough approach looked like in my own emergency experience and takeaways for those in leadership positions regarding the benefits and drawbacks going forward.

In early March 2020, with the increased pace of universities worldwide shifting to online, my advisory team and I began

planning for the possibility—and then the likelihood—of doing the same for our department, courses, and students. When the university announced that we were transitioning to online, I sent an email to our department to provide all of the information I had at that time. I emphasized from the beginning that their priorities should be centered around their own health and the health of their family. If they got sick or they had family members to tend to, we reassured our colleagues that we could assist them in covering their classes. I was reminded of my own vulnerability to the virus one week into the online switch when I filled out a "succession" form to name who would assume chair duties if I became incapacitated by or died of COVID-19.

After we transitioned, I sent a weekly department email throughout the spring to summarize the highlights from the wave of emails we received from various offices and leaders at the University of Utah, as well as "leaders luncheon" "town hall" meetings for chairs with central administration.

Our department handled the transition effectively. Leading up to the pandemic, I had worked with our graduate director and graduate adviser to hire our technology-proficient graduate students to assist instructors, including Seth Wright and Zach Stickney as "tech TAs," in the transition. Our fairly collegial unit also includes instructors who are adept at online teaching. In addition to the two tech TAs we provided, our tech-savvy colleagues including David Carter and Marjorie Castle proved to be great resources for the department whenever an instructor with a recently "flipped" course had a question.

Still, some colleagues had questions about the broader impact of the pandemic; others had administrative questions regarding classes. I took most of these one-on-one conversations on the phone (to alleviate Zoom fatigue) usually when I was walking my dog in the afternoon. Considering the financial impact of the pandemic on state revenues, colleagues were anxious about their job security; others were concerned about tenure clocks. To handle the former, I tried to relay information from central administration as clearly as possible in the phone conversations without promising with certainty what the road ahead might entail. The latter concern was addressed by central administration in a helpful decision to extend junior faculty clocks by a year—on request, no questions asked.

The challenges of the spring semester were daunting but proved to be manageable. Students responded favorably to instructors—our course evaluations were the best on record. By early May, faculty, students, and administrators were turning their attention to the fall semester and to the question of whether a return to campus would happen.

Such uncertainty consumed the summer of 2020. The university has increasingly expanded the criteria for instructors who want to teach remotely while also being attentive to the importance of student preferences for in-person teaching. The latter shapes enrollments, important for the financial health of the university. All of this has only led to further uncertainty.