

Strategies and Tips for Teaching Hybrid and Remote Courses

Williams College

A stylized landscape illustration featuring a dark purple mountain range in the foreground, with a bright yellow sun partially obscured by a mountain peak. The background consists of lighter purple, wavy mountain ranges under a dark purple sky.

Synthesized and prepared by Teach Summer 2020

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The purpose of this guide is to synthesize and share the best strategies, ideas, and tips generated from the various Teach Summer events, recently published pedagogical articles, and course simulations practiced around campus. It is not meant to be a comprehensive manual for teaching a hybrid or remote course, but rather a source of inspiration, with plenty of nuggets of wisdom and encouragement to make everyone excited to teach this Fall. Adopt whatever suggestions you feel are best for your course!

This guide is intended to be as succinct and accessible as possible. Each description could serve the basis of a long and fruitful discussion. Therefore, feel free to reach out to any member of the Teach Summer 2020 team for questions, comments, feedback, or even to use as a sounding board for thinking about your upcoming courses. We are happy to chat! And don't forget about the resources and postings on the Teach Summer 2020 [Glow Page!](#)

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Different models of teaching a hybrid course

The term *hybrid course* refers to a course that can accommodate both in-person and online students. In practice, there are many different models for teaching a hybrid course, each with advantages and disadvantages specific for the particular course, class size, professor, etc. All models must allow for flexibility between in-person and remote options—for example, at any point during the semester, an in-person student may need to temporarily or permanently transition to remote learning. Furthermore, all courses will be entirely remote for the last three weeks of the semester, and the College may transition to remote learning earlier depending on the progression of the pandemic. To ensure optimal experiences for both in-person and online students, consider designing a course centered on remote instruction first, and then adapting the course for in-person instruction.

Below are six distinct models for teaching a hybrid course, which can be blended to suit the needs of a course:

Simultaneous classroom instruction for both in-person and online students. In this model, an instructor teaches to in-person students while using a camera, microphone, and videoconferencing technology so that online students can fully see slides, blackboard/whiteboard writing, and potentially other students in the course. Online students can also participate and ask questions. The main advantage to this model is it allows an instructor to teach as close to a “normal” class as possible, while allowing online students to participate in the exact same session. The main disadvantage is the need to constantly monitor technology and attend to the needs of online students during class sessions.

An in-person course is recorded, and video is posted online afterwards for online students. This option allows an instructor to teach as close to a “normal” class as possible without needing to monitor internet technology or attend to the needs of online students during the class session. However, online students have a diminished experience, as they do not get to participate in the course in real-time, nor do they contribute to class community. Instructors should ensure that there is ample opportunity for online students to ask follow-up questions after videos are posted.

An in-person version of a course and remote version of a course are taught separately. This model allows an instructor to design a course to meet the needs of in-person and online students, optimizing instruction in each format. The disadvantages are that the instructor essentially needs to teach two sections, and will need to allow for in-person students to transfer to the online section due to illness or quarantine. For synchronous instruction, this model also necessitates arranging a meeting time with online students outside of the scheduled course time.

All students are synchronously taught online over Zoom or Google Meet, and a minimal number of in-person experiences are offered for students on campus. This model essentially treats all students as online students, yet allows students on campus to have some in-person meetings and experiences that do not disadvantage off-campus students who cannot take advantage of those options. For example, a course could be conducted online except for lab sections, performances, etc.

Everyone is taught asynchronously online via prerecorded lectures or narrated slides, and scheduled class time is used for discussions or problem solving. This “flip the class” model allows all students to learn the fundamental course material in the same way. During scheduled class sessions, the instructor would use Zoom or Google Meet to integrate online students with in-person students. This model would require considerable work to create recorded/narrated course content for students, yet this content could be useful for future iterations of the course.

A small group, “tutorial” model in which students are divided into small pairs or groups of 2-8 and meet with the professor individually (in person or online) throughout the semester. This model is obviously well-suited for traditional tutorial courses, and would allow students to be organized in pairs or groups for in-person or online meetings. This model is also optimal for discussion-based or problem-based courses in which students do much preparation outside of class and then meet with the instructor once or twice throughout the week. The potential disadvantage is that the instructor would need to schedule several meetings throughout the week, depending on the size of the course.

Thoughts on teaching in a socially distanced classroom

Most faculty/staff who have experienced or participated in a simulation of a socially distanced classroom have commented on just how different the atmosphere feels compared with a regular class environment. The dynamics between the instructor and students, the ability of students to have small group conversations, and the sound quality throughout the room is much different than normal. However, many students are yearning for any sense of normalcy in their courses. Below are some considerations for teaching in a socially distanced classroom and suggestions for optimizing the classroom experience.

Social distancing is socially awkward. Students spread out and wearing masks makes the classroom more impersonal. Therefore, in the first several classes, empathize with students and comment on the classroom environment, as opposed to teaching as if nothing is abnormal. Additionally, it is important to deliberately take steps to form community and camaraderie outside of class. See page 5 for suggestions on increasing class community.

Wearing a mask inside for long periods can become tiring and irritating. Consider breaking a class into segments and/or allowing students to take turns leaving the classroom for brief periods to refresh.

It is more difficult to communicate while wearing a mask. Not being able to see faces limits natural communication that normally occurs via facial expressions, movement of the lips, and other visual cues. People rely on visual communication cues more than they realize. Therefore, instructors should be more deliberate about using physical gestures and boardwork to communicate information. If a student asks a question during a class, consider repeating the question for all students before answering it to ensure that everyone can hear.

Instructors may also be interested in obtaining a clear face mask which allows people to see the mouth while continuing to cover the lower face. Clear face masks can be obtained from Matt Sheehy and are also available online. Note that these clear face masks are more difficult to clean than standard cloth masks, and should be sprayed down between classes.



Small group discussions among students are more challenging. In a normal classroom, it is often useful to ask students to form small groups to talk about the answer to a prompt or to work on a problem. Small group conversations are much more difficult in a socially distanced classroom, not only because of the need for students to sit six feet apart, but because of the background noise of the room. Some suggestions: (1) Groups of 2-3 students can hear each other better than groups of 4-5 students. (2) Students in the corners of a room experience less background noise than students in the center of a room. Therefore, be mindful of the potential higher background noise experienced by students sitting in the center of a classroom. (3) Consider replacing small group discussions in class with brief, small group homework assignments outside of class, so students can already discuss material prior to arriving. (4) Do all group work online.

Paper handouts/exams require more forethought. Distributing anything printed on paper requires deliberate thinking to ensure social distancing guidelines. To distribute handouts or printed exams, place single copies on desks before students arrive. Consider asking students to submit all exams and other assessments as electronic documents online. Grade assignments/exams using a stylus on a tablet, or scan in assignments/exams graded with a pen and paper to return to students electronically.

Teaching a class outdoors is possible but requires a bit more forethought. Especially in the early Fall, teaching outside will be tempting to reduce background noise and make group work easier. However, everyone will still be required to wear masks and socially distance. Therefore, if there is high ambient noise outside, it may be harder to project voices and hear others compared to staying inside. If your class meets outside, think ahead about locations and seating options that will reduce noise and distractions.

Strategies to help students manage and become comfortable with online courses

Taking a course that meets entirely or partially online is completely new for most students. The skills they have developed over their entire lives are suddenly not reliable, potentially causing anxiety and obstacles to learning. Consider adopting strategies to help students develop confidence in managing an online course.

Simplify the technological requirements to a minimum. Use the lowest level of technology possible to achieve your educational objectives. Each new tool is a potential barrier to learning, and using multiple applications/tools (in multiple courses) can potentially be a distraction from the ultimate goal of thinking and learning.

Deliberately teach students how to use the technology and software you employ. Consider designing brief modules and assignments in the beginning of the semester with the explicit purpose of giving students experience using the main technical tools used throughout the course. For example, if students will need to routinely use Perusall and Glow Quizzes throughout the semester, design a low-stakes assignment during the first week in which students can gain experience and comfort with these tools before using them for actual instruction.

Go out of your way to convey structure. Virtual classrooms will naturally seem more amorphous than in-person classrooms. Therefore, be very deliberate about conveying the structure of an entire course and each individual class session. Throughout the semester, continually remind students about how what they are learning/discussing relates to the course as a whole. For any individual class session, begin by stating the goals of the day, going over each agenda item one at a time, and concluding a class by summarizing what was covered/discussed, or the key take-home points/conclusions. You may feel repetitive, but providing a sense of structure is incredibly comforting to many students.

Try to maintain a regular, weekly structure for all of the requirements within a course. Students will become more comfortable and accustomed to a course if there is a natural rhythm from week-to-week. Students will be better able to plan their schedules including their two or three other courses if each has a consistent structure.

For asynchronous online courses, establish a regular posting schedule. If you will be posting recorded videos or narrated slides online for asynchronous viewing, maintain a regular posting schedule. For example, let students know that new content will be posted every M/W/F at noon. This regularity will provide a sense of consistency and reliability, especially if you are not present.

Provide deadlines in the Glow calendar. Because all students use Glow, using the calendar feature will allow you to post alerts and notifications about upcoming due dates.

Discuss online etiquette, expectations, and options early in the semester. Consider taking a brief moment to showcase optimal lighting and audio over Zoom or Google Meet. Tell students they can reduce audio noise by turning off notification alerts and wearing headphones or earbuds. Let students know if you would prefer their audio and video to be on during a class session. Note that some students will have limited ability to control their physical environments (for example, if they have a desktop computer in a crowded home environment) and may be uncomfortable letting other students see their homes. In these cases, you could discuss options with concerned students (for example, a student could use a virtual Zoom background to retain their privacy). Be flexible about options that maximize student comfort.

Maintain one-on-one contact with students throughout the semester. Because formal and informal discussions are much more difficult to achieve in an online course, provide regular check-ins with students throughout a course. These check-ins may consist of a video or phone chat, or can even take the form of a weekly journal (with feedback from you) or a brief check-in over email. In a smaller course, you might check in with students once every week or two. In larger courses, you might ensure a check-in with each student at the beginning, middle, and end of a course.

Strategies for keeping students engaged in an online course

Synchronous, online courses over platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet allow students to feel they are in a virtual classroom space. However, unlike an in-person classroom, there are dramatically more distractions. Students have the ability to disengage, multitask, or zone-out altogether, all without the instructor's notice. Additionally, even when students are paying attention, a two-dimensional screen tends to "flatten" personalities, emotions, and enthusiasm that would be more palpable in-person. Here are some tactics to foster and maintain engagement during online classes.

At the beginning of each class, give students a warm-up question to answer. For example, ask some students to remind everyone what was discussed in the previous class, or something they found especially interesting from the daily reading. If the course size is too large, select a subset of students to answer and ensure that everyone participates over the subsequent classes.

Try not to talk for long stretches of time. The longer you talk without actively involving students in course material, the greater the likelihood of disengagement. This lack of attention is especially likely in an online course, in which students will be more tempted to multitask (e.g., check email, browse the web, etc.).

To increase participation and engagement, continuously ask students questions throughout a class session. Use the polling feature in Zoom (or in another application such as Google Forms, which graphs answers in real-time) to ask clicker-style questions. Most of these questions could be anonymous, but to increase engagement, you might occasionally ask a non-anonymous question so students are more motivated to pay attention.

Give students the impression that they could be called on at any moment. "Cold calling" can be done in a way that doesn't impose anxiety... let students know from day one that you want full participation, and that you will help students participate by occasionally asking them questions.

Ask students to collaborate over a shared document. During a Zoom or Google Meet session, students can collaborate on a prompt using Google Docs or Jamboard. These tools actually allow easier written collaboration than using a real chalkboard! Another idea is to ask students to collaboratively take notes in class.

Use Zoom breakout rooms to encourage small-group discussion. These rooms also provide students an opportunity to talk without your presence, perhaps encouraging more dialogue without fear of saying something wrong. To monitor student progress in breakout rooms, periodically pop in and out of a room. Consider asking students to work on a shared Google Doc within a breakout group... if you observe that there is little or no activity on the Doc in real-time, you can join the breakout group and provide guidance.

Consider disabling the "private chat" feature in Zoom. Zoom makes it too easy for students to virtually pass notes in class. Disengaging the "private chat" feature among students decreases the temptation for private conversations. You can disable this feature while continuing to allow students to privately send a message just to you, or to allow students to send messages to the entire course at once.

Consider creating handouts with "skeleton outlines" to encourage participation. If students are provided handouts with fill-in-the-blanks or dedicated space to take specific notes, they will be more likely to follow an online lecture or discussion so that they can complete their handouts.

Design mechanisms to ensure participation and active learning for asynchronous course materials. Consider keeping recorded lectures short and requiring students to answer questions before moving on to new content. Studies have shown that recorded content is more easily digestible in 8-10 min segments rather than 50-min blocks. Alternatively, record narrated PowerPoint presentations that require students to keep "clicking" to the next slide. You can embed self-practice quiz questions throughout.

Tips for building class community

In a socially distanced classroom (in which students wear facemasks and sit six feet apart) and in an online classroom (in which students only see each other over Zoom or Google Meet), it is harder to establish relationships and generate a sense of community compared with traditional in-person classrooms. Therefore, in a hybrid/remote course, consider adopting deliberate approaches to facilitate student interactions and community.

Allow students to get to know you quickly.

The professor is the bedrock of any course. When students are comfortable with you, they are more likely to participate, share, etc. Therefore, be deliberate about introducing yourself and generating trust with your students early on in the semester. Share aspects of your life, your sense of empathy with what students are enduring, and your desire to be an approachable teacher throughout the semester.

Introduce yourself prior to the first day of class by posting or emailing a brief introductory video. An introductory video is a great first step towards making students feel comfortable with you and the course content. In your video you could share biographical details about yourself, what you love about the course subject matter, your feelings about the upcoming semester, etc. Consider also asking students to record and post brief introductory videos. You might provide some prompts specific to your course (e.g., "What did you find most fascinating from the introductory biology courses?" "What interests you most about animal physiology?"). Encourage students to reveal and share their non-academic lives to the extent to which they feel comfortable.

For in-person courses, take advantage of the self-quarantine period at the beginning of the semester to allow students to meet each other online without wearing masks. Social distancing guidelines (especially wearing face masks) will prevent students from fully seeing each other in person. Therefore, to better allow students to meet and become familiar with each other, use your first class session(s) online to allow students to meet and interact without wearing masks.

At the beginning of the semester, reach out to each student for an individual conversation or meeting.

For larger courses with many students, feel free to spread out meetings over multiple weeks. Within each meeting, ask students to share some aspect of their lives, what they want to learn from the course, etc. Students with whom you've had little one on one communication may be less inclined to communicate challenges they are experiencing.

In online courses, allow for informal interactions

before and after class. Just as you might informally chat in an in-person course as students enter/exit the classroom, show up to online courses 5-10 minutes early and stay 5-10 min after a class ends. Many students are seeking informal student-to-student contact too. Consider leaving the Zoom/Meet room open for continued conversation after you leave.

Start and end asynchronous recorded lectures/slide presentations with brief videos. Bookend your recorded course content with a friendly hello and goodbye so that recorded lectures still have the tone of an in-person course. Just as you might in an in-person course, comment on your weekend, the weather, current events, etc.

Encourage small group work outside of class. To build relationships and community among students, consider assigning students to small groups and requiring them to complete an assignment or prepare for a discussion outside of normal class hours. For example, you might encourage or require students to collaborate using Google Docs or Google Slides to prepare for an upcoming class. Keep in mind that online students will be in different time zones.

Build "outside class" spaces for students to interact without your presence.

To mimic informal conversations and interactions that would normally take place outside of class (such as during late night studying at the library), consider creating Zoom or Google Meet times for students to meet and discuss course material with each other or with a TA. Ask students if they wish to be placed into study groups for upcoming exams. Encourage the use of Glow Discussion Boards and incentivize posts and responses. Students on and off campus will appreciate the creation of these spaces.

Find a way to regularly highlight individual

students in the course. Consider starting or ending each class or week with a brief student presentation (academic or personal). Alternatively, consider having a weekly contest or problem-solving event in which you can regularly announce and highlight a winner (for example, a weekly cartoon caption contest).

Designing an accessible and inclusive course

Accessibility and inclusion take on new meanings in hybrid and remote courses. To make a hybrid and remote course accessible means to ensure that students with impairments, disabilities, economic hardships, or technological difficulties are able to fully access online content and materials. Designing an accessible hybrid or remote course also means ensuring that the course content is equally approachable and attainable for a variety of students with different backgrounds, strengths, and levels of engagement.

Consider making an introductory video, not only to introduce yourself and the course at the beginning of the semester, but to reach out to all individuals.

Take deliberate steps to make all students feel welcome and equally worthy of being in the course. You might describe how you first came to appreciate and understand the content, or how you overcame challenges when first learning the material yourself. Provide students with a growth mindset and optimism for learning throughout the course.

Take steps to present yourself as, and to be, approachable and accessible. Approachability is especially important if you are wearing a facemask or exclusively meeting students online. Show genuine interest in your students by maintaining eye contact (for example, trying to look at your laptop camera rather than elsewhere on your computer screen). Creating an accessible course means creating consistent avenues of communication.

Write a syllabus that is inviting rather than intimidating. In your syllabus, take care to identify the availability of resources for students for whom the course is not accessible. Position yourself as an ally in the effort to address any needs students may have. Consider devoting a segment of your first class session to questions about the syllabus to foreground your commitment to an accessible course.

Ensure that remote students have all the hardware, software, and high speed internet connectivity necessary to fully participate in the course. Either contact students before the first day of the course, or give students time to acquire the technology they need during the beginning of the semester. The Dean's Office, Financial Aid office, and OIT can work with students to ensure they have what they need.

Ensure that online students have received all necessary books and course materials (e.g., course packets, handouts, etc.). Contact the bookstore or departmental administrators as necessary. Also post as many handouts and readings on Glow as possible.

Don't assume online students will be able to print materials on their own. During a normal, in-person semester, students have access to printers and paper. Online students may not have these luxuries. Therefore, avoid assignments and course materials that require students to print. Also consider the fact that for some assignments, students who have access to a printer may have an inequitable advantage over students who do not (e.g., students editing assignments on hard copies versus on screens).

To help students with auditory impairments, use the closed captioning features within Google Meet or Panopto. Using technology for visual communication that provides closed captioning benefits students with hearing impairments. Closed captioning also benefits students who may struggle with English proficiency or interpreting the accent, intonation, or cadence of a professor.

To help students visualize course information, ensure that all slides and course materials are easy to read. Use a sans serif font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Helvetica) instead of a serif font (e.g., Garamond, Times New Roman) on slides and other course materials. Avoid bright background colors and ensure that foregrounds and backgrounds have optimal contrast. Avoid pure red/green color combinations that may be imperceptible to colorblind students.

Include highly visual content in slides and handouts. Most students learn much better with both text and visual imagery relevant to the course content. These images also bring course material to life. Try to think of audio alternatives for visual materials you disseminate.

Organize your content in consistent ways. Students will consciously and unconsciously become accustomed to the ways that you present information on your handouts, slides, and webpages. Help develop a sense of stability by being consistent with how you visually present and order information (e.g., use the same font, method of outlining, etc., throughout the entire semester).

Helpful information to share with students on or before the first day of class

Introductory information about courses and logistical information on syllabi will be especially important in a hybrid and remote environment. Students will have few preconceptions about the new Williams classroom experience, and many are likely to have anxiety about the uncertainties of their new courses. Consider being much more deliberate about sharing information about your courses, both in introductory emails/videos, and also in your course syllabi. In fact, to save time during your first class session and to ensure that students receive useful information, you might consider making a video or narrated PowerPoint file in which you share details about your course or go through your course syllabus prior to the first day of class.

Before the first class session, provide answers to the following questions:

- **What will your classroom be like?** For an in-person course, how will the room be structured? How will social distancing work? How will students know where to sit? For an online course, what should students expect during the first class meeting? How many students will be present?
- **How will hybrid courses combine in-person and online students?** Will in-person and online students learn synchronously? Should they expect to interact with each other?
- **What materials should students have?** What books should students have obtained from the bookstore? When do students taking courses remotely need these books, and what should they do if they have not received them? Will there be course packets and handouts available?
- **What technology should students have for class?** Do they need to bring laptops or tablets? Do they need certain applications downloaded or software installed?
- **What technology should in-person students not bring to class?** Let students know if you would prefer they not bring laptops or tablets.
- **What should online students do in the event of a “technology emergency?”** What happens if a student’s laptop breaks or the internet connection goes out? What happens during a remote class if you lose internet connectivity and the class is on their own? Establish some brief guidelines at the beginning of the semester to preemptively solve these inevitable problems.

Consider adding the following information to your syllabus:

- **How and when can students contact you?** Mechanisms of communication will be much more important in a hybrid/remote environment in which students cannot depend that you will be available during the day or in your office.
- **What are the attendance expectations?** Can in-person students switch to “online status” on any class day for any reason? How can they make up a missed class? What are the attendance expectations of online students? How are your attendance policies flexible for students who may be experiencing health concerns?
- **What mechanisms are in place to support an in-person student who needs to be quarantined or return home?** What resources or support will make the transition to online learning more successful?
- **Will each class session be recorded?** Students need to know if they will be recorded and who will have access to these recordings. Can other people potentially download and keep these recordings?
- **How does the honor code apply to your remote or hybrid course?** What assignments or questions should students feel free to discuss with each other online? When is online collaboration inappropriate?
- **What are the workload expectations for your hybrid or remote course?** Workload expectations are much more important to communicate now that Williams is adjusting to a new, online academic culture.

Designing and grading student assessments

In any course, assessments are used to measure student learning and intellectual development throughout the semester. In hybrid or remote courses, there are unique challenges students face when preparing for, completing, and receiving feedback on quizzes, exams, and assignments.

To more consistently assess student learning in a hybrid or remote course, consider designing shorter, lower-stakes assessments that you can administer more often. These shorter assessments will allow an instructor to more precisely monitor student learning and progress throughout the semester. Although shorter, these assessments could be cumulative in nature, providing opportunities to integrate information from across the course.

Compared to normal, in person courses, consider allowing greater flexibility in the window in which students can take exams, as well as relaxed time limits for completing exams. Students may have greater distractions in their rooms or at home, and greater flexibility will allow students to find the most beneficial time and place for their current environment. Studies have shown that timed online exams create unnecessary stress, are vulnerable to bandwidth problems, do not protect against cheating, place undue burdens on students who require learning accommodations, and perhaps most important... are poorly correlated with understanding. Therefore, consider providing students with a substantial time window (i.e., multiple days) and maximum time limits for completing exams.

To design a more accessible course, consider offering multiple ways for students to participate and demonstrate their learning in a course. Especially in hybrid and remote courses, try to employ multiple strategies for students to be active in a course, engage with each other, and demonstrate learning and growth.

Consider that online applications could allow for more creative homework/quiz/exam questions. Using Google Docs or Google Slides, students can draw with multiple shapes and colors more easily than in an in-person exam. Using Google Slides or PowerPoint, students can design and orally narrate presentations. Using Google Sheets or Excel, you can send students data to analyze on their own, produce graphs, and form conclusions. Therefore, consider that these platforms may allow for more creative, engaging assessments than traditional in-person assignments or exams.

There are many excellent tools for authoring and grading online quizzes and exams, such as Glow Quizzes, Qualtrics, and Google Forms. Glow Quizzes automatically grade objective answers and record scores into the Glow Gradebook. Additionally, Glow Quizzes provides immediate feedback to students about correct/incorrect answers and allows instructors to explain answers.

Take steps to promote academic integrity and prevent honor code violations. Remind students about how the honor code applies to each assessment. Consider using short- or long-form answers instead of multiple choice questions. If using multiple choice quizzes, use the "shuffle" feature in Glow so that each student receives a different order of answers.

Be clear about what format is best for students to submit written assignments. Word documents may display altered page layouts depending on differences between versions. PDF documents will always appear the same on any screen or in print. PDF documents can be graded on a tablet in applications such as Notability, then returned to students as PDFs or printed to hand back to in-person students (with proper social distancing precautions).

Make yourself available during the deadline timeframe of an assignment or exam. Because it will be more difficult for students to ask you questions as they complete assessments, provide a way for students to contact you in case there are questions.

In a hybrid or remote course, be especially deliberate about discussing and reflecting on assessments with students after you return them. Because there are more barriers for student/faculty interactions (especially among online students), be deliberate about setting up appointments to meet with students individually to discuss their performance and progress. Encourage a growth mindset and help students to overcome any emotional "sting" of receiving a low score/grade so that they can fully participate in the rest of the course.

Some simple technology that may be helpful in hybrid or remote courses

Beyond using pedagogical software (e.g., Glow, Panopto, Perusall, etc.), document creation tools (e.g., Google Docs, PowerPoint, etc.), and videoconferencing tools (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet, etc.), there are some simple technological tools that may prove handy when teaching hybrid or online courses. Always feel free to discuss these items, or any other technology needs, with OIT. Supply lines to purchase many of these are currently quite restricted. Orders should be placed as soon as possible.

USB camera for livestreaming or recording in-person classes. A USB camera can plug into your laptop and integrate with Zoom or Google Meet to livestream video (as an alternative to the camera in your laptop). A USB camera can also be used to record video using video applications on your laptop. Therefore, you can position a USB camera to livestream or record any aspect of an in-person course.



USB microphone for hybrid course discussions. A USB microphone is designed to optimize the signal-to-noise level in a large classroom and allow your laptop to pick up and record audio from anywhere in the room. Therefore, these microphones could be useful in a socially distanced classroom, allowing any student in a large room to be heard by remote students listening in over Zoom or Google Meet.



iPad Swivl. iPad Swivls (and similar products) allow a mounted iPad to turn towards a remote device or microphone during a class. Therefore, an iPad with Zoom or Google Meet can follow your movement as you walk around the room, or even turn towards a student when they are talking.



“Podium on wheels” with camera. A cheaper alternative to an iPad Swivl, some faculty have had success with classroom set-ups in which an iPad or laptop with camera is mounted onto a mobile podium. Therefore, an instructor can move the podium in front of a long whiteboard or blackboard so that remote students can track lots of writing during a course.

Document camera. Document cameras are able to be integrated into Zoom, Google Meet, or laptop video recording applications so that you can draw, demonstrate 3D objects, etc., during an online course or recorded lecture. These cameras can be a bit pricey, but OIT has some available.



DIY document camera. A cheaper alternative to a commercial document camera, you can use your own phone or tablet as a document camera on a custom-made cardboard box with lighting or an inexpensive gooseneck camera arm available online.



Trackpad stylus. Drawing tablets from Wacom, or a stylus that works with your phone or trackpad (e.g., a pogo pen from tenonedesign.com), will allow you to draw or write on a Zoom whiteboard or Jamboard much more easily than using a mouse.



Clicker alternatives. Because clickers will be unwise to use in a socially distanced classroom, there are alternative applications that students can use on their own phones. For example, Poll Everywhere is free for under 40 users (Kahoot, Top Hat, and iClick are also alternatives). The main disadvantage to these tools is that students would need to use their phones, creating potential distractions during class. Zoom has a polling feature built in if students have their laptops. Finally, Glow has survey and quiz tools that can be used outside of class.

Glossary of hybrid and remote teaching terms

The following terms are commonly used by online educators to describe hybrid and remote courses:

Accessibility. Course design that enables students with impairments, disabilities, economic hardship, or technological difficulties to fully access online content and materials. Also refers to course design in which content is accessible to a variety of students, each with different backgrounds, learning styles, and levels of engagement.

Asynchronous course. A course in which students access and learn from course content at a time and place of their choosing. For example, students could access pre-recorded lectures or narrated PowerPoint presentations online, then complete quizzes or other assessments by a specified due date.

Blended learning. Course instruction that combines in-person modules with online modules (for example, complementing in-person lectures with pre-recorded lectures to watch outside of class).

Breakout room. A feature embedded in Zoom in which students can be divided into different groups and placed into virtual rooms such that their conversations are private from other groups. Allows for small group discussions in a virtual classroom.

Discussion board. A feature in learning management systems, including Glow, that allow instructors and students to post questions/comments online for the purpose of soliciting public answers/responses from other students.

Distanced classroom. A classroom in which everyone maintains healthy socially distancing procedures and wears a facemask at all times.

Flipped classroom. A course in which content delivery (e.g., watching lectures) primarily occurs outside of scheduled class time, and the classroom experience consists of discussing material or working on problems.

Hybrid course. A course that can accommodate students in an in-person or remote format. At Williams, students will indicate whether they will be participating in-person or remotely at the beginning of the semester, with necessary flexibility for in-person students who may suddenly need to transition to remote instruction (for example, to self-quarantine for multiple days, or to return home in the middle of the semester).

Hyflex course model. A hybrid course in which a student can freely choose whether to participate in-person or remotely on a daily basis, without much prearranged notice.

Learning management system. An online software application used to create, manage, deliver, and track learning for courses at a college or university. At Williams College, we use Glow as our LMS.

Self-paced learning. Learning in which the instructor deliberately allows students to access course material asynchronously without a strict timetable. This form of learning particularly benefits students with other commitments such as paid employment or childcare.

Synchronous course. A course in which students learn and/or discuss material at the exact same time, whether in-person or online. For example, students meet over Zoom or Google Meet for a lecture or discussion with a professor at a specified time.

Virtual classroom. A classroom that exists exclusively over videoconferencing technology, especially with the use of online whiteboard, polling, and other tools.

Zoomflex. A course primarily taught remotely using videoconferencing technology and Google Docs, with the ability to serve both synchronous and asynchronous students. Students work on a shared document during a class session but can also work on the document asynchronously.