Face-to-Face but Socially Distanced: Pandemic Pedagogy

Working Group Facilitator: Rachel Newcomb (Rollins College)
Group Members: Laurian Bowles (Davidson), Matthew Irvin (Sewanee), Amy Jasperson (Rhodes), Corinna Kahnke (Sewanee), Shana Minkin (Sewanee)

I.   Introduction

This document is the product of an Associated Colleges of the South summer working group whose aim was to consider how faculty can continue to do high impact, face-to-face activities while social distancing. Our working group consisted of faculty members from several ACS colleges, all with slightly different plans for returning in the fall. We are assuming for most of these scenarios that students will be physically present in the classroom while at the same time recognizing that we may additionally have students who are attending virtually. While one of the challenges we faced was not knowing exactly what the fall would look like, as educators accustomed to working in a liberal arts environment, we prioritized maintaining close connections to our students and creating learning conditions that are as inclusive as possible of different situations and learning styles.

We have divided this working paper into three sections. In the first narrative section, **Thematic Ideas,** we explore tools such as universal design that could be employed as a way of including both differently abled students as well as accommodating both in person and remote students together. In the second section, **Face to Face Classroom Activities Incorporating Virtual Learners,** we offer ideas for reconfiguring small class activities for a socially distanced environment. Some suggestions are more general while others will work better for courses in different disciplines, i.e. the sciences or languages. The third section, **Curated Resources,** offers a list of links and resources where instructors can find more suggestions for teaching tools to use in a socially distanced environment.

Through all this, we want to emphasize that the most urgent necessity for the fall is to forge connections with and among our students. While the concrete task is to have effective small groups both in person and with the students working online, creating a community of learners that is also a community of care is the most pressing need. This must be done whether teaching takes place fully online or in a blended format. Keep things as simple as possible for students; now is not the time to try several new technologies that are new to both you and them. Focus on the strengths you draw on for creating connections with your students under normal circumstances while also not pretending that this isn't an unprecedented time for all of us. In the words of one of our group members, at this moment more than ever, we must "divest from the performativity of normalcy." (Laurian Bowles)

II.   Thematic Ideas

What Can We Learn from Disability Studies about Better F2F Classroom Experience?

Outline of Universal Design for Learning

Disability Pedagogy offers imaginative ways to improve F2F classroom interaction, especially class discussion. Students with disabilities already require many of the online resources that we are finding ourselves integrating into courses, and pedagogy specifically designed for students with disabilities might offer ways to think about how to integrate those into a classroom community that is attempting to accommodate both face to face and virtual participation.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an application of the principles of Universal Design specifically to the pedagogical environment. Its goal is to create flexible methods of teaching and learning that already include a diverse set of learners (rather than requiring individual accommodations).

There are three principles (Rose, et. al. 2006):

1. Multiple Means of Representation
2. Multiple Means of Expression
3. Multiple Means of Engagement

These depend on research in neuroscience, on brain networks of recognition, strategy, and affect: the first *finds* patterns, the second *applies* patterns, and the third *evaluates* patterns. The Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University set out other principles for the classroom, some of which seem particularly applicable to the challenges of our F2F environment, including emphases on equitable use, making technological aspects simple and intuitive, and tolerance for student (and professor) error.

So what does UDL help us think through? First of all, it suggests that the very F2F elements which we are seeing disappear (ease of reading facial expression, ease of hearing, physical movement) were already lacking for students with disabilities in *any* class (not in a pandemic). Multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement can minimize the frustration of difficulties hearing, seeing, or moving while helping to retain the excitement, spontaneity, and high stakes of a F2F classroom discussion. Employing these multiple modalities could not only make F2F masked and socially distanced classrooms more accessible for able-bodied students, but generally improve outcomes for students with disabilities. It could also introduce modalities into our classrooms that we retain after the end of the pandemic specifically to make them more accessible.

Specific recommendations:
Drawing on a special issue of the journal *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology and Pedagogy* (18.1; http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/18.1/coverweb/yergeau-et-al/), we would like to make some suggestions that retain the benefits of good face-to-face teaching:

1. Real-time unfolding of events
2. Impromptu communication required or encouraged
3. Participants are tele/present
4. Strong social element
5. High stakes
- We suggest finding ways to enhance classroom presence with telepresence; for instance:

    - **a class discussion that included smartphones in a *positive* way.** A GroupMe can be used to live-upvote or clarify (providing via emoji the facial reactions we don't have, or an "ear" to suggest that it be louder)? This could retain the "live" F2F while providing opportunities to make it clear that something is understood and emotionally support students making a point.
    - **Display the notes of students during discussion through a shared Google doc**. By dividing students into groups, discussion could be focused while non-speaking students remain involved, and there are multiple ways of following along.
    - **Allow long pauses**, in which students can regroup, but also pick up their laptops and write questions or produce and ask for clarification.

Note, **there are potential problems for incommensurable multimodal situations,** and our classroom discussion seems ripe (in trying to maximize engagement) for over-saturating students with and without

disabilities by too many modes of contact. This means that students should be able to focus on a single mode at one time, unless they feel like they can engage with a second.

Conclusions:

Even with the limitations of social distancing and masking, F2F teaching provides impromptu action and reaction, high stakes, and social bonding, all taking place in real time. Disability pedagogy shows how multimodality can retain these desiderata while dealing with the visual and aural limitations that social distancing and masking will necessitate. The regular use of the limited and consistent digital modalities, which involve student engagement *and* create a record of the class, would allow breaks from frustration while offering alternate modes of representation, engagement, and expression for all students, regardless of disability. The list of Works Cited below offers further reading suggestions that faculty can consult to learn more about Universal Design.

Works Cited:

Burgstahler, Sheryl. "Universal Design in Education: Principles and Applications." (https://www.washington.edu/doit/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Universal-Design-Education-Principles-Applications.pdf)

Rose, David H.; Harbour, Wendy S.; Johnston, Catherine Sam; Daley, Samantha G.; Abarbanell, Linda. "Universal Design for Learning in Postsecondary Education: Reflections on Principles and their Application." *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 19.2 (Fall 2006). pp. 135-151.

Schley, Sara. "Creating an Inclusive Classroom." *Inside Higher Education*. 27 February 2018. (https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/02/27/how-create-inclusive-classroom-students-disabilities-opinion)

Yergeau, Melanie; Brewer, Elizabeth; Kerschbaum, Stephanie; Oswal, Sushil; Price, Margaret; Selfe, Cynthia; Salvo, Michael; Howes, Franny. "Multimodality in Motion: Disability and Kairos." Special issue of *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* 18.1 (2013) (http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/18.1/coverweb/yergeau-et-al/pages/index.html)

III. Face to Face Classroom Activities Incorporating Virtual Learners

At this point, most instructors will have taken part in various workshops about the use of their particular institution's learning platforms. Regardless of the specifics, the following brief checklist is intended to make the first day of classes easier on everyone, reduce anxiety, and provide the best possible setting for blended synchronous learning classrooms.

Considerations:
How are you adapting your teaching presence to the blended synchronous and socially distant classroom?
What are your guidelines for expectations of remote and in-class students?
Are classroom, learning platform(s), material and activities accessible to all participants beyond in-class / remote students (e.g. neurodiverse students/instructors, students/instructors with disabilities)?

Classroom technology:
For both stationary and PTZ cameras, is it positioned either directly above or below the monitor where participants appear?
Are you prepared for basic use and troubleshooting?
Is the classroom set up to ensure proper social distancing measures, i.e. 6 feet distance?

The following list describes interactive classroom activities that can be adapted to a face-to-face environment that allows for social distancing while also considering the needs of virtual participants.

1. **Debate -** Students prepare ahead of time in socially distanced small groups, teams can be divided by online and in-class so virtual students can meet together virtually. When the debate begins, the students can interact over the screen and in person.

2. **Jigsaw -** Groups are pre-assigned a question, discuss this together, and then appoint someone to be spokesperson. When class reconvenes, spokesperson leads conversation/reports on the question.

3. **Fishbowl -** Two students are in fishbowl having conversation while surrounding students take notes, comment, and question students in center. Can be alternated so that one online student is in center of fishbowl while other is in person. Can take form of debate, discussion of current events, etc.

4. **AAAA and BBBB = AABB and BBAA or AA+ BB=AABB -** This discussion strategy is simple: composition of groups changes or groups are combined, with the goal of keeping students in conversation. Combining online and in-person students could allow students to pair up with virtual students as partners and then the virtual students would switch groups. While this would entail a possibly noisy classroom as students tried to hear one another both in person and online, the use of individual computers during group time (as compared to a large screen in the classroom) could make this possible, as well as taking the discussion outside, if technology allows virtual student participation.

5. **Improv -** Here we suggest that students begin a discussion with two or more people. Other students can call for a "freeze," at which point whoever called for the freeze will replace one speaker and continue the discussion. This can be done with preassigned questions, perhaps, or as a review of a unit. This would work with remote students who could hear and participate in the classroom.

6. **Group Presentation -** For this particular activity, most of the work would take place outside of the classroom. Students could work together online, and come up with a project of their own. The presentation to the class could be managed primarily with an interactive whiteboard or class screen, as well as students who explain slides, videos, or other presentation projects from both within and outside of the classroom. This could work much like a poster project, as mentioned in the previous section.

7. **Teaching outside** – for professors able to take their classes outdoors, or with ample space, such as a large classroom or working between two adjacent classrooms. Arrange students in groups, with students working on their individual whiteboards for problem-solving sessions during class time. Professor displays prompts/problems for students to solve on the Microsoft Teams portal where the problems would come up on their individual screens, but they will be discussing the solutions as a group. Sessions will be recorded on Teams so that remote learners have access to everything.

8. **Solving problems with only one right answer** - Make DIY white boards using a page protector sheet with a piece of white paper and a dry erase marker, give one per student or per team, and use that to communicate quantitative answers. This allows professor to see problem solving and keep students apart. It also is good to help students communicate within a team if they are apart, so they don't have to shout.

9.   **Jeopardy -** good for review sessions. Can use free software such as Kahoot for students to answer on their phones. Questions are revealed on computer screen or power point, and students can play from their seats or online.

10. **Review Sessions –**ask students to post 2-5 topics they'd like help understanding using a discussion board feature on course management software. Professor uses this information to make a list of topics or terms that appeared the most frequently. Make list available to students visually during class, either by projecting on screen or on their laptops. Students can take notes as they go. One at a time, ask a student to pick a term from the list and share everything they know, as well as questions they still have. Then allow other students to weigh in, with professor filling in as necessary, until they have a full understanding of the concept. Repeat until all unfamiliar concepts are reviewed.

11. **Labs -** in order to maintain distance, number of labs is reduced and students can't work on the labs in partners. To save time in class, preparation for labs will be recorded by professors ahead of time and students will watch before they come into class. Lab write-ups will take place with a partner, so they can bounce ideas off each other during the data analysis. Focus is on improving students' writing and note taking abilities, with off-weeks used to develop problem solving skills with the help of older students hired as TAs.

12. **Case-based learning/problem-based learning –** This involves presenting groups of students with situations where they have to thoroughly explore a scientific problem through research and outside class work and come to an understanding about how to solve it. In many classes, students typically work on these cases throughout the semester, culminating in a paper and an oral group presentation, typically as part of a team. In a semester where some students may be remote while others are face to face, groups should be balanced so that each group includes members who might not be able to physically meet. Consider smaller group sizes that include one or two virtual students. Student groups can meet virtually to encourage social distancing and also include those who are not present on campus. Final presentation could be recorded to include virtual students.

13. **Public note taking -** Notetaking as something everyone does and does publicly – have a Google doc projected on smart board and notes are for those at home

14. **Think – pair – share –** Here students could be given a prompt and time to write their own responses. They could then swap their written responses with others, either via email or elsewise online. Students could comment on responses, again, via email or Google doc, and then these could be opened to the classroom at large. It is possible to have the students participate in "Think-Pair-Share" without talking, or by eventually sharing in groups.

15. **Realia** - Some classes, e.g. beginning foreign language, literature and culture courses, incorporate a substantial amount of tangible objects. These materials could be made available to students in an online format. Magazines and newspapers in the target language can be accessed via the websites of the respective publications. Conversely, objects such as foods and everyday products are easily found via online-shopping sites in the target language and, taking advantage of precisely the fact that remote students are not located in the classroom, they could present the objects from their surroundings.

16. **The 5 minutes before class** - Instructor and early bird students may find themselves in an awkward on-site / online space before class begins. However, utilizing these minutes can break

the uncomfortable silence and serve to foster the learning community. Simple inquiries after pets and their names, favorite films, music, authors, etc. or the presentation of a meaningful object within an individual's reach serve to humanize the experience and create a bond beyond the course's subject matter.

17. **Objects, Images, and Quotes** - Presenting an object, image or quote related to the day's topic can be a good way to start the class. Students are asked to analyze and contextualize the presented item in relation to and meaning for the studied material. For smaller classes, a round robin format works well to report on results; larger classes can be organized in student pairs or small groups.

18. "**Speed dating**" - This format offers a variety of literal and figurative applications. It could be used on the first day of classes for students to get to know each other. In the (beginning/intermediate) foreign language, literature and culture classroom, it allows students to practice their speaking skills early on. Furthermore, this setup lends itself to brainstorming with a larger number or, depending on the size of the class, all co-students when engaging in an inquiry or task set by the instructor.

19. **Interactive viewing** - When the day's lesson plan is focused on materials such as short films, documentaries, or video clips, the chat function of a learning platform can turn a passive viewing into a participatory and interactive task. Not only are students able to ask questions of the instructor during rather than after the screening, they are also able to communicate with their peers, be that for general observations or to work on a specific task set by the instructor in advance.

20. **Virtual museums** - For each field of study, museums and/or specific exhibits can be incorporated into lesson plans. The instructor would set a specific task, such as finding and investigating a specific object, focusing on a lesson-related assignment, or engaging in cross-cultural analysis. Most institutions have an online presence, many offer virtual (interactive) tours and study material, and international collections, archives, et al. usually have an English language option. For foreign language, literature and culture courses in turn, activities centered around a museum visit in countries of the target language can be designed for all levels of proficiency and inquiry.

21. **Multiple part activities** - Projects designed in a set of consecutive steps such as in-class, at-home, follow-up, wrap-up, presentation, allow students to interact and remain engaged throughout the process. Each can focus on a different skill set, in which students are not mere consumers but have agency in creating learning content and are accountable for outcome and results through the practice of collaborative and self-directed learning and outcome-oriented interaction.

III.   Curated Resources

Resources for science activities from all disciplines:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18iVSIeOqKjj58xcR8dYJS5rYvzZ4X1UGLWhl3brRzCM/edit#gid=0

Videos of lab methods and science concepts:

https://www.jove.com/

More socially distanced teaching strategies:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/15ZtTu2pmQRU_eC3gMccVhVwDR57PDs4uxlMB7Bs1os8/edit

Adapting teaching presence to the hybrid, synchronous and socially distanced classroom:

https://create.piktochart.com/output/5383776-how-to-humanize-your-online-cl

https://www.purdue.edu/innovativelearning/supporting-instruction/portal/files/4_Community_of_Inquiry_Framework.pdf

https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2020/05/27/will-active-learning-be-possible-if-colleges-have-physically

https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/2020/06/active-learning-in-hybrid-and-socially-distanced-classrooms/

Resources and works cited for the foreign language, literature and culture classroom:

Girons & Swinehart: Teaching languages in blended synchronous learning classrooms. A
         practical guide. Georgetown UP, 2020.

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (**ACTFL**): News, resources, webinars , and more (membership not necessary):
- https://www.actfl.org/news/all/resources-response-covid-19
- https://www.aatg.org/page/OnDemand
- https://www.actfl.org/resources/teaching-and-learning-remotely

Language-specific resources can be found through the respective organizations: **AATA, AATF, AATG, AATI, AATJ, AATK, AATMG, AATSP, ACL, ACTFL, ACTR, ASLTA, CLASS, CLTA, MLA, NCOLCTL, and National Standards Task Force for Hindi**