Social Work Instructor Teaching Guide

We developed this Social Work Instructor Teaching Guide in the hopes that it might be of help as we move to a distance learning approach. This guide reflects our beliefs in the importance of building community and offering our students the most current and best practices in teaching.

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INTRODUCTION:
We know this has been a challenging time as we work to quickly move our courses online. We want to provide you with a comprehensive guide that includes a deep dive into online pedagogy and the art of building community, while also encouraging you to take care of yourselves. Finally, we hope we have shared some useful tools and suggestions to consider as you begin to teach asynchronously or hybrid model.

What is included in the guide.
This guide includes information to help you teach asynchronously and synchronously. There are references, tools and information about building community and pedagogy and creating successful distance learning opportunities for our students.

How to use the guide/ways to use the guide.
You can read through this guide start to finish or skim and find sections that are interesting to you. We encourage you to share ideas and resources that you find with each other, and we will add to this guide as well.

The first section of this teaching guide focuses on building community; for students and for instructors. Community of Inquiry, Inclusive Teaching, Intersectional Pedagogy, and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy are approaches for engaging students in virtual learning environments. Strategies are suggested for creating connections between students, between instructors and students, and also between instructors. Ultimately, the goals are to ignite students’ excitement for the content and the learning process and provide peer support for instructors new to teaching hybrid, synchronous, or asynchronous courses.

BUILDING COMMUNITY:
Building Community is an essential cornerstone of distance learning education through synchronous and asynchronous classrooms. We want to support students in connecting with the content, their cohort, and their instructor. We want to create a learning environment of respect, openness, excitement, and engagement and to do this, we must set the tone and invite students to contribute. When students are engaged in the learning process and feel like they belong, they are more likely to participate. If they do not have that experience of being in “community” with others, they may disengage, and miss opportunities to learn and connect.

Community of Inquiry
One teaching model that focuses on creating community is the Community of Inquiry Model. The model has a goal of creating deep and meaningful learning through social, cognitive and teaching presence.

- **Social presence** is the ability of students to identify with the community and to have “real” interactions with instructors and peers that allows for the development of relationships and trust.
- **Teaching Presence** is the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of gaining an ability to think critically and to have meaningful learning experiences.
- **Cognitive Presence** is the extent to which students are able to develop and internalize learning through online educational practices (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001).
Inclusive/Intersectional Pedagogy
Inclusive teaching practices contribute to building community. Academic material that relates to students’ home life and culture helps them to take ownership in learning, improving academic achievement in a significant way.

Inclusive teaching practices also honor the multiple perspectives of our students while validating their unique lived experiences. These teaching practices value both the students and instructors’ intersecting social identities and encourages collaboration. Inclusive interactions contribute to students feeling they belong and are valued members of their cohort.

Intersectional pedagogy is another approach to teaching and learning that recognizes inequity based on intersecting multiple social identities. Intersectional pedagogy encourages a critical framework for students and instructors to understand various perspectives and examine systemic oppression and privilege and social justice issues.

Trauma-Informed Pedagogy
Trauma-informed teaching is one way to build a learning environment that is consistent with social work practices and values. Trauma can impact executive functioning and self-regulation, redirecting students’ brains toward survival and away from learning. Students may find themselves having challenges with time management and struggling to concentrate and remember content.

Trauma-informed pedagogy can increase student self-awareness and attention to self-care, reduce risks for re-traumatization, and support successful course completion (Carello & Butler, 2015). Students entering the various helping professions are at risk for developing trauma reactions, especially those with their own trauma histories (Aglias, 2012). Supporting students’ capacity to engage with potentially re-traumatizing content is important as they participate in their coursework, field practicums, and transition into the social work profession.

Trauma-informed teaching doesn’t need to be burdensome for instructors. Simply increasing awareness and understanding of the core principles can guide our pedagogy.

Trauma-informed principles include:
- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment
- Attention to cultural, historical and gender issues (SAMHSA, 2014; Fallot & Harris, 2009; Fallot & Harris, 2001).

An example for integrating these principles into your class: when discussing case scenarios or showing videos, consider when and how the material is introduced, and whether there are scenes or narrative that may warrant a brief warning prior to viewing and discussing. Encourage students to engage in self-reflection and self-care practices while working with the content.
Using trauma-informed pedagogy does not mean changing our scope of practice. We want to remember that our role is teaching future social workers while maintaining appropriate teacher/student boundaries. Although we are licensed practitioners, we are not the students’ social workers. Students may be experiencing higher rates of trauma and stress due to COVID and can be encouraged to utilize campus and community services as additional supports if they are distressed or overwhelmed.

**Instructor Support and Self-Care:**
Building community and connection applies to instructors, too. Adjusting to hybrid and on-line teaching has its challenges. We are in Zoom meetings all day and are having less and less face-to-face interactions. Instructors can create intentional opportunities to connect and support each other.

Some ideas for supporting colleagues include:
- Set up regular team meetings for the subject you are teaching with your lead
- Set up regular meetings with your mentor to discuss courses and pedagogy
- Start an email chain for the semester or use Slack or a blog.
- Share information, resources, questions, things that went well, things that have room for improvement.
- Let others know if you are stuck, frustrated, overwhelmed, thrilled, knocking it out of the park, having brilliant ideas that need to be shared!

Instructors can offer support for each other by sharing self-care strategies and encouraging each other in maintaining some type of regular self-care practices.

Self-care tips:
- Maintain structure.
- Limit exposure to the news.
- Stay connected – to family, friends, classmates, instructors.
- Exercise.
- Unplug for at least an hour a day – no phones, computers, tv’s.
- Do one nice thing a day that’s just for you.

**TEACHING:**

The second section of this guide focuses on teaching. We share our philosophy on teaching and offer some practical tips for supporting students in virtual learning environments during the global pandemic. Specific strategies are suggested for your hybrid classroom, including setting up your virtual classroom and utilizing the learning management system. Teaching is interwoven with building community. We found that the pedagogical approaches that support connections for students and instructors also contribute to an effective learning environment.

We want to create meaningful learning experiences for our students. We want to motivate them reflect on the course content and connect it with social work skills and knowledge. We want to share our enthusiasm for the course content and inspire students in moving into the social work profession. We hope to find a balance between challenging students and supporting students.
We want to consider the following as we teach:

Content - Instructors provide meaningful content that reflects who they are as students and allows for them to engage with material in a variety of ways, which can include reading textbooks and articles, videos, and podcasts to answer discussion prompts. Break students into small working groups into small working groups. Use case scenarios or engage in role plays to develop skills and understanding of knowledge.

Social/Emotional Connection – We want to encourage student to student learning and connection. A discussion forum on Bright Space entitled “Q & A” (with clear description of use) encourages students to ask questions and receive answers from not only the instructor but hopefully other students. Group projects and activities can also create student relationships. Encouraging students to share phone numbers with each other and to form study groups is another way to support student interactions.

Evaluation - We want to be explicit with students regarding how we will be assessing their work and what is part of their grade. We must provide regular and timely feedback to individual students. We want to provide feedback that follows our rubrics and is both positive as well as providing suggestions for improvement. We want to respect the diverse ways in which our students learn and engage with material and we want to offer a variety of opportunities for them to be evaluated.

TEACHING TIPS:

We want to build relationships with students to support their learning process. We want to hold compassion for students who may be experiencing changes in their life circumstances that are interfering with their learning process or assignment completion.

A few suggestions to get to know your students and let your students get to know you include:

• Logging into synchronous sessions 5 to 10 minutes early, to say hi to students and be available for some quick questions.
• Let students know your availability and how best to contact you outside of synchronous sessions. Give students an idea of when you usually check your email (twice a day - at noon and 6 pm or maybe just once a day in the morning) and let them know your general response time (24 or 48 hours).
• Encourage them to ask questions of you and other students in the cohort.
• Zoom one-to-one meetings with students.
• Check in regularly; send individual emails, post written Bright Space announcements and video announcements.
• Open discussion board for sharing.
• Blog.
• Check Bright Space multiple times a week and provide timely responses to Discussion Board assignments and to graded assignments.
• Be personable – let the students know a little bit about you and your philosophy of teaching and social work.
• Relate teaching and learning activities to students' experience or previous knowledge.
• Encourage students to make choices in content and assessment methods based on their experiences, values, needs, and strengths.
• Provide students the opportunity to work together and to get to know each other.
• Use social media with your classes – set up a Twitter account for your class!
• Increase flexibility: Students may need some additional support as they are coping with the on-going pandemic.
• Consider checking in with students regarding due dates and making adjustments as necessary.
• Be present: Think about our own well-being and our ability to stay focused with students during synchronous sessions. We want to hold on to some self-compassion, too!
• Be authentic. Pay attention to your own need for breaks or refocusing.
• Consider engaging in some mindful activities and inviting students to refocus with you by tuning in to their breathing.
• Intentionally begin each synchronous session online with a connection exercise: doing a physical stretch together, playing music, taking a collective three breaths. There are many grounding and connection exercises you can do.
• Use an icebreaker that is a storytelling exercise you build in as a connection check-in.

**Bright Space:**
Bright Space is the learning management system that we use. This system supports your virtual classroom and asynchronous work. A few helpful hints to maximizing your Bright Space:

• **SET UP YOUR ZOOM LINK!** It is very important that you set it up and then actually sign in!!! If you just set it up but do not sign in, the first person to sign in becomes the Host and that could be one of your students. You need to be the host. Consider adding your preferred pronouns to your name on ZOOM.
• Post weekly announcements to let students know what will be expected for the week. Give them timeframes for assignments (I.e; 45 minutes for the video and 45 minutes to read and answer the Discussion Board question).
• Under Content, you can post the syllabus as a separate unit. Then each week post a module with the power point and the Discussion Board Question and any additional materials you want the students to have. This provides a clear outline for them to navigate the course easily. Consult with Instructional Designers.
• Post Power Points. You can post the power point from the text as it is written, or you can add your own material and you can also record an audio overlay of your lecture that you will embed in the PP. Remember – audio should be no longer than a few minutes. You can record a few slides, skip ones that don’t necessarily need your lecture and then pick up again for other slides. Ideally, they should not total more than 15 minutes per power point.
• Discussion Boards: Post online discussion questions to be sure students understand the content you would like to apply in class.
• Have weekly reflections. Ask them open-ended questions like: what have you learned so far? What material are you struggling with?
• For each topic in the course (use the appropriate heading to post your comments), write one post to show what you have learned and what you understand from the lectures and
course readings, as well as from the ongoing online discussions. Your post should also write about how this new learning might influence your thoughts and actions at home and in the larger community around you.

- Let students respond to Discussion Boards with various modalities: videos/audios/mapping tools, etc. Or ask different students to lead discussion board conversations each week.
- Use case studies for discussion board conversations.
- Have a frequently asked questions section: Provide a threaded discussion, which allows students and instructors the ability to share concepts, ideas, questions and answers. One way to use this tool is for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Create a Forum that allows students to see FAQ questions/answers. They may be able to help each other and you can post all questions/answers there instead of emailing to individuals.
- Post videos, links to podcasts, etc.
- Have interactive weekly assignments.

Outline for a Hybrid Classroom:

In keeping with the goal of delivering meaningful content while engaging our students and creating a cohesive learning environment, it is recommended that Zoom classes do not need to last the full 2 hours and 50 minutes. Rather, plan to have portions of the class on Zoom and other content, exercises, assignments posted to Bright Space. You are more than likely working with a lead faculty member on how to balance out your course with Zoom and Brightspace activities.

Here are some examples of how this can be done:

- One suggestion is the flipped classroom. Direct instruction is moved to the individual learning process through activities, readings, videos, discussion boards on Bright Space. The classroom time is then devoted to a dynamic, interactive environment where the instructor guides students to apply the content creatively. Classroom activities might be role-plays, small group exercises and discussions.

- Assigning a weekly reading from the syllabus and posting the power point then asking our students to participate in a relevant discussion board might cover the content we would typically lecture on. Then in the classroom, we can answer any questions students might have to clarify content and then move on to engaged learning. Videos can also be assigned to alleviate the challenges of showing a video during a Zoom session.

The additional benefit to this kind of approach is the increased ability to meet universal learning styles. We have content delivered through multiple modalities and we also have students participating in a variety of styles, which allows everyone to have an opportunity to learn and participate in ways that best work for them.

Setting up your class:

- Familiarize yourself with Bright Space.
- The Home Page has a Faculty Help section.
- Post a picture and a bio of yourself!
• Print out your class list right before class begins as it is subject to change as students enroll or drop. (Don’t forget to track students who don’t show up or students who show but are not on your student roster).
• Refer to training modules on Bright Space for how to effectively use it. You can add videos, power points, exams, handouts, case studies or any other content you would like students to have.
• Send weekly emails or post Announcements in Bright Space reminding students what content you will be covering and what they need to do to prepare for class. Reminder of assignment due dates is helpful.

Class time – focus is on developing the social emotional connections with students and creating an intentional learning community. Students will interact with the instructor and with each other to create a learning environment.
Suggested meeting time activities:
• Check in
• Discussion using questions posted prior to class
• Exercises from the textbook or exercises you develop
• Present a case study for discussion
• Guest speakers
• Small group work in Zoom breakout rooms; role-plays, assignments

Resources for classes:
Textbooks/power points
Instructor teaching manuals from the publisher
Handouts
Case studies
Podcasts
Videos
Blogs
Guest speakers
Expectations:

Let students know what they can expect from you and what you expect from them. Here are some ideas:

- The students should expect that the instructor will be prepared for class and will create a learning environment that utilizes life, work, and educational experiences as key elements in the learning process in order to make it meaningful.
- The instructor should be able to present the curriculum in a manner that allows the student to easily translate theories into applications.
- Every student should be given every opportunity to improve until the learning experience comes to an end.
- The instructor should solicit feedback from the students and listen throughout the entire process.
- The instructor should keep students aware of where they stand with respect to the course evaluation process on a regular basis (i.e. weekly updates of what has been turned in and what is missing).
- The instructor should give the student timely and quality feedback on student contributions to discussion, homework, and quizzes.
- The student should be treated politely and with respect.
- The instructor should check Bright Space frequently during the week and respond to posts.
- Answer emails within 48 hours and be available for Zoom office hours on DAYS/TIMES and by appointment.

What we expect from students:
- Motivation and discipline – checking Bright Space at least three times a week.
- Be prepared.
- Ask questions.
- Professional and respectful interactions.
- Use NMHU email ONLY for communication. Email communication between student and instructor using personal email addresses is a violation of federal student privacy laws (FERPA).

Remember to Have Fun!
RESOURCES:
Pedagogy Resources:

Community of Inquiry Model:

Community of Inquiry:
https://coi.athabascau.ca/


Inclusive/Intersectionality Pedagogy:


Intersectional Pedagogy:


Trauma-informed Pedagogy:


T-I training slideset (with lots of resources): https://traumainformedteaching.blog/

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Self-care Resources:

The Trauma Stewardship Institute
https://traumastewardship.com

University of Buffalo School of Social Work: Community Resources, Introduction to Self-Care.

Teaching Resources:


https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-I-m-Spending-My-Pandemic/248954


Martin, J. (n.d.). Building relationships and increasing engagement in the virtual classroom: Practical tools for the online instructor. *Journal of Educators Online.*


http://www.nus.edu.sg/cdtl/docs/default-source/professional-development-docs/resources/facilitating-online-discussions.pdf

University of Oregon Teaching Effectiveness Program. Generating and facilitating engaging and effective online discussions.

https://facultyinnovate.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/Effective-Online-Discussions.pdf


https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/five-ways-to-build-community-in-online-classrooms/

How to create videos:

https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/video-record-presentations-2570df5-f81c-40bc-b404-e04e95ffab33

Zoom home page:

Whiteboards

https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115005706806-Using-annotation-tools-on-a-shared-screen-or-whiteboard

Polling

https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2016/07/22/productivity-via-shared-screen-annotation/

https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/213756303-Polling-for-meetings#h_fe37b3f4-8e05-4b87-bd66-12d8c7f19f8

Breakout rooms

https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206476313-Managing-Video-Breakout-Rooms

Inclusive teaching practices toolkit. ACUE.

https://acue.org/inclusive-teaching-practices-toolkit/

About Universal Design for Learning.

http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html#.XvyzwhKiUk

NMHU Center for Teaching Excellence, http://cte.nmhu.edu/about/