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ENHANCING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN A SOCIALLY DISTANCED WORLD BY HUMANIZING ONLINE EDUCATION: A GUIDE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTRUCTORS

Gilma Linette Ramirez Reyes

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ENHANCING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
IN A SOCIALLY DISTANCED WORLD BY HUMANIZING ONLINE EDUCATION:
A GUIDE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTRUCTORS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Communication Studies

by
Gilma Linette Ramirez Reyes
December 2021

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ABSTRACT

To maintain and continue to build long-lasting professional, educational, and personal relationships, this project provides a formal academic way of teaching for instructors, but it also that reflects what the heart of teaching should be about. It shows how instructors can facilitate care and demonstrate genuine positive intentions to their students when facilitating learning in an online environment. This goes beyond the only course content materials presented and moves to an educational experience that is cultivated through the student-instructor community.

The humanizing approach to online instruction for this project is defined as the center of communication and presence which includes students' and instructors' prior and current knowledge. It also provides a social capital structure that encompasses Culturally Relevant, Culturally Responsive, and Critical Pedagogy as the connective tissue that unites students and instructors to demonstrate their true nature or belief. This project uses the Community of Inquiry Model (teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence), along with the humanizing approach, motivation, validation, and communication immediacy to positively impact the online learning environment. A Guide demonstrates how the humanizing approach along with the Community of Inquiry Model work to produce outcomes of motivation, validation, and communication immediacy.

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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this project to instructors, leaders, and mentors who aim to inspire and recreate their classes to better serve others. I may not know you personally but the simple fact that you are reading this shows that you truly have a beautiful heart for learning, teaching, and growing. We need more people like you in the world!

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Today students aiming to reach higher education levels in their college or university may have a more challenging time focusing on their education while also trying to survive global issues (Camargo et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has made it tremendously difficult for students to succeed (Means & Neisler, with Langer Research, 2020), and it has changed the world and the way we live in it. It has made it difficult for instructors to teach in a new atmosphere (Hussein et al., 2020). The pandemic brought students stress and exhaustion (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). More students were likely to struggle to stay connected with their peers and instructors (Means & Neisler, with Langer Research, 2020).

Further, students and teachers have had to transition from a face-to-face traditional classroom environment to an online distance learning classroom environment for institutions to remain open and the educational system to continue during the COVID-19 pandemic. This transition implies a change of environment and to many students, this may not be the best atmosphere to learn. Bettinger et al., (2017), explain:

An online college course study found that students in online courses perform substantially worse than students in face-to-face courses, especially for the least well-prepared students. Interactions between

students, their peers, and their professors in online courses differ from those in face-to-face courses. (pp. 2872-2873)

Not all students are well-prepared to learn online and may find it more difficult than attending classes that are traditionally taught. A national survey of undergraduates given during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated what students perceived to suffer after moving to remote teaching: 65 percent of students reported that opportunities were worse or much worse online, 57 percent reported that their interest in an online course was worse or much worse than a face-to-face environment and 50 percent did not feel included as a member of the class (Means & Neisler, with Langer Research, 2020, p. 7).

Online learning can be a difficult environment to experience for many students.

Moreover, during the pandemic students as well as teachers were not only asked to learn, engage, and create within their online learning world, but many were also asked to provide and care for themselves, their families, and communities. These other responsibilities directly impact the focus teachers and students can devote to teaching and learning online.

The transition to an online learning environment also changes the communication dialogue. In a traditional classroom, responses are faster, and faster immediacy behaviors are more easily shown. This means that communication dialogue in a traditional space happens to be more natural as an ongoing conversation with fewer interruptions. However, in an online classroom environment face-to-face mediated meetings limit nonverbal cues and

asynchronous classrooms slow the pace through email or different application chats making the communication process different and at times difficult.

Therefore, in creating online classes, instructors need to think about the atmosphere they create and the important relationship that communication between instructors and students has in the learning process.

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic was the main reason that many students now have experienced an online course, it is likely that after the pandemic online learning will be an increasingly common form of instruction for teachers and learning for students attending institutions of higher education. In a survey of university/college presidents in the US by the American Council Education (ACE), over 50% of presidents of four-year intuitions said they will increase online offerings, and over 70% of Community College presidents surveyed say they will be increasing online, hybrid, and hyflex offerings (Taylor et al., 2021, p. 8). Online learning is here to stay and will continue and become the regular norm; online education for students and instructors should be improved and not overlooked (Zhu et al., 2020). Therefore, thinking about different forms of online learning engagement tools and approaches that are necessary to help students learn and feel supported and connected in a positive way will directly help the online learning environment for now and in the future.

Challenges of Remote Teaching and Learning

It is important to address the challenges that institutions, instructors, and students face when learning and teaching in an online environment. To improve how classes are being taught and improve student learning in a remote environment. In the below paragraphs remote challenges are addressed to not only be aware of what should be considered in an online environment for instructors and students, but also to make positive possible changes that can make a difference for the educational system for future academic scholars.

Instructor Challenges

Instructors are expected to do more in an online class than in the traditional form of teaching. In an online environment “instructors are often handed the additional roles of an instructional designer, technology specialist and administrative advisor” (Restauri, 2004, p. 32). Instructors prepare coursework content but also must learn different platforms to present the content.

A solution to aid these changes in an online environment is to have a technical knowledge support team whom instructors can go to with questions when teaching in an online learning environment. A technical knowledge team is essential to help prepare instructors to teach online.

Yet even with a technical support team, instructors are expected, for the most part, to learn all the software basics and additionally

have technical skills needed for the moderation of a distance education course including, the ability to use email, send email attachments and

generate and post to discussions through threaded discussion forums or synchronous chats to have students use it for themselves. (Restaui, 2004, p. 34)

It is essential that instructors learn the technical skills required for online learning.

Providing different supplemental resources can aid learners while taking a virtual course. Thus, knowing where to find resources can be helpful.

Instructors experiencing a virtual or blended classroom environment should be informed on where to find supplemental online resources that can offer multiple means to demonstrate knowledge competency for the students' educational benefit. It is important instructors are aware of such supplemental resources because it is possible that when instructors teach a course online, many students may not understand concepts or lessons right away. In these cases, instructors need to be prepared with supplemental online resources that can help students understand concepts or the lesson trying to be taught online to decrease confusion or frustration. Supplemental resources can allow students the extra demonstrations and time for lessons and concepts to be learned well and for them to master the material. Having online available resources for instructors can increase the likelihood of instructors personalizing the learning experiences for all students. (Greer et al., 2014, p. 84)

Instructors who are more aware of such resources can better support learners in an online environment.

Instructors play an important role in how resources are presented to students. A barrier that may hinder an online course is when resources are presented in a confusing manner. Examples of such instances are when instructors provide learners with far too many links within a website and information is presented as too wordy (Yang, & Cornelious, 2005, p. 6). These learning barriers have created online learning environments that are chaotic, stressful, and impossible to manage for students (Habib et al., 2012). Instructors need to discover students' learning preferences, integrate technology tools, apply appropriate instructional techniques, put them all into practice, and generate the most suitable method for individuals (Yang & Cornelious, 2005, p. 7).

Future and current instructors should be aware that teaching in an online environment is not easy, since online learning requires the instructor to be highly involved and use their creativity. Therefore, it is important to come up with ideas that can help instructors create an atmosphere where less confusion takes place, and a more intimate active uplifting environment is cultivated. (Powell & Bodur, 2019, p. 23). In the past year's factors considered were:

frequency and pace of how the classroom is run... the technical aspects regarding what is harder to understand and get used to... how learning modules may be delivered regarding what the content is being presented and what websites students are learning the most from...instructor content delivery regarding how instructors are communicating and organizing content for students... and lastly the book aspects of the class regarding

how difficult it is to read the book and understand it for students. (Pollock & Wilson, 2002, p. 565)

Many educators could look at this list and implement it and could say that these factors are sufficient to produce and carry out a successful online class environment. However, in most cases, these factors may not be enough to create a supportive classroom online environment.

Positive verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors from instructors and students are very important to create a supportive classroom climate. Nonverbal immediacy behaviors can be seen through eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures, physical appearance, smiling, and tone of voice. Verbal immediacy behaviors that instructors can use are using the words “we and our”, learning students’ names, and giving a personal example (Sözer, 2019, p. 389). Verbal immediacy behaviors that students can demonstrate in and out of class include asking questions, brainstorming ideas with their peers, sharing personal experiences about a topic related to class material. For instructors to create a positive immediacy experience with their students, instructors should be aware that they need to prepare content that contains a sense of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence. Examples of fostering teaching, social, and cognitive presence can be seen in the different forms of instruction and how it takes place, such as using video or audio clips that make instructors seem more real in a mediated environment. It is crucial to understand that creating positive teacher immediacy requires instructors to be creative, purposeful, and to

think about how to foster teacher immediacy throughout the course and for many instructors this can a difficult challenge (Bialowas & Steimel, 2019, p. 357).

Furthermore, this may require instructors to be familiarized very well with online technology and learn to use it, to increase their presence online.

Institutional Challenges

Now that more education for many is happening online it is important to think about what online learning looks like and how people will be encouraged to start or continue their education online. Institutions must reconsider and reevaluate the formal educational ways of teaching and question how policies established in the past are benefiting or not those who are working under the institutional policies now. Although there may be many reasons why students choose to attend an institution (or not), it is highly likely that since online learning is a fast-growing way of how classes are being taught now, online learning should be done appropriately, creatively, and strategically to reach success. Otherwise, educational institutions will be affected in a negative financial manner sooner rather than later. Champion (2020) urges institutions to strategically think about how to mitigate the effects of the coming enrollment cliff in 2026. Champion (2020) writes that among the many reasons students choose a specific college, a vivid reason is how the college environment makes them feel. Therefore, institutions must prepare their educators in a well-rounded form to help students not feel as if it may be beyond their control to process the information given online. Colleges and universities will need to learn effective forms of

communication online to engage and bring students to their institutions and keep them there through graduation.

Most importantly, institutions face the challenge of also providing appropriate tools for educators and students for classes to run appropriately online. “It is especially important that colleges of education ensure that their online instructors not only can teach online course content effectively but also can model optimum online teaching practices that can help their students envision online learning’s potential” (Borup & Evmenova, 2019, p. 2). Creating multiple strategies for online teaching practice is ideal; however, understanding the importance of how that process is done and how it can benefit many students will positively make a difference and remove learning barriers to lower the common disadvantages of online learning.

Student Challenges

Online learning, in its very nature, brings mental, physical, and emotional stress to students as they are exploring and experiencing the new normal routine and learning process required for their education in a virtual world. Students face challenges ranging from technical issues, distractions, and time management, and staying motivated, understanding course expectations, a lack of in-person interaction, adapting to unfamiliar technology, and possibly thoughts of uncertainty about their educational future (Friedman, 2020). Students are already facing many possible Internet and common online issues. “If higher education institutions do not address the issues that students are facing in their learning

environments as of now, then they face a real risk of low enrollment of students not entering educational institutions by the year 2026” (Campion, 2020, p. 542).

Especially because students' preferences and experiences are not only about online learning itself but other possible reasons. The online environment poses several challenges for student learning. One online learning challenge students face is the change of how often they communicated in person with their peers to how often they communicate remotely in and out of the classroom. Park and Kim (2020) state:

Students in an online environment may recognize the absence of communication between their instructors and their peers because of the physical distance online learning brings to the table. The absence of interactions because of physical presence can affect the performance of students in an online learning environment in a negative manner. (p. 292)

Means and Neisler, with Langer Research (2020) documented several other challenges for students learning online during the pandemic. They asked students open-ended questions about the challenges in learning from their course after it moved online. Many responses focused on having a hard time staying motivated when they did not have a regular structure of class routines:

- *“With the world in chaos, it was hard to stay focused and motivated to mentally show up for class.”*

- *“The greatest challenge was finding the motivation to get out of bed and complete assignments. It’s not the same as getting up, getting ready, driving to class, then sitting in class to learn.”*
- *“Being motivated to actually do it. When it was in person, I had a set time and place to do my work, but at home, I never set up a schedule.”*
(p.10)
- Student responses also highlighted the lost opportunity to get immediate feedback from their instructor, and missing the chance to deepen their understanding by discussing the course content with peers:
- *“Not being able to ask questions during the lecture (since it was pre-recorded). That being said, my teacher was very available to help at any time, so I took advantage of that.”*
- *“During in-person lectures, I was able to ask my peers and my teacher for help with something I was struggling with and they would be able to show me how to do it. When class went online, I was no longer able to ask for help the same way I could before, and it was harder to teach myself the class.”*
- *“Not being able to discuss topics with my classmates. Not being able to hear their questions on the subjects we were learning that could have helped me learn more.”* (p. 10)

Finally, many students also pointed out the loss of original, hands-on experiences that helped them expand their understanding in the way to the subject they were studying (Means & Neisler, with Langer Research, 2020):

- *“Part of the class was a lab where students could do experiments and see results. After the class went online all of the labs were cut out of the curriculum. I had a harder time understanding the theory and relating it to the practical.”*
- *“Doing the practical hands-on stuff—we had to video ourselves doing it.”*
- *“My work needed to be in person with kids. The online portion was nothing like what the course was supposed to be.” (pp.10-11)*

For students these changes have caused feelings of not feeling motivated, missing the presence of the instructor, and the loss of authentic hands-on experience.

Without improving the online learning experience, and without supporting faculty to make the necessary changes, students may continue to experience these challenges in the future. Therefore, this project will explore some communicative concepts that can improve the online student experience, models to implement them into an online class, and developing a practical guide that can help faculty as they develop the beginning, middle, and end of their online classes to improve the student experience.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HUMANIZING APPROACH

The idea that education is neutral and gives all students the same opportunity to succeed is a myth. The educational system is not neutral, and it privileges some students over others. This is because the educational system has been established in a Eurocentric foundation which only happens to give opportunities to those that are already in a successful position to succeed academically (Rendón, 1994, p. 34). Reevaluating and reconsidering the formal educational ways of teaching and questioning the Eurocentric teachings, policies, and perspectives will give all students the same opportunities and change the educational culture to a culture that does not marginalize students or influence them to change their own culture or prior ways of thinking.

Educators serving in the educational system now must aim to learn and find different strategies to help students process and engage with the information being taught online. As Brock et al., (2019) note:

the assumption that student engagement and academic achievement are inherent student attributes is deeply embedded in the culture of higher education and trickles down to the way courses are taught. This assumption privileges students who have been cued to think they are college material, as well as those who learn effectively through reading and writing. (p. 3)

Moreover, educators in an online environment must consider within their teaching that not all students come from a privileged background and that many students are first-generation students aiming to do their best but do not have the same experience as privileged students. A more optimum online teaching practice is ideal; however, understanding the importance of how that process is done and how it can benefit many students will positively make a difference and remove learning barriers to lower the common disadvantages of online learning that it implies. The culture of higher education assumes that all students are prepared for college and therefore, should be taught in such a manner. However, this current structure does not profoundly think about where students are coming from and therefore, does not give every student equal educational opportunity but automatically dismisses it (Rendón,1994).

Theoretical Frameworks

To address the additional challenges, we need an approach that incorporates culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), and validation (Rendón, 1994), but also addresses the communication challenges of online education (Garrison et al., 1999). Humanized online instruction is highlighted and can be seen through culturally responsive pedagogy and critical pedagogy (Freire,1972). These frameworks challenge the former way of educating and state that students' own prior background experiences and knowledge are the foundation of learning and community building and should be

considered when courses are being taught. These can reduce the inequities that most educational systems practice today.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Educator and researcher Gloria Ladson- Billings (1995) introduced the term *culturally relevant pedagogy* to describe a form of teaching that includes culture as well as current and prior knowledge from involved students which brings forth a more holistic environment. Ladson-Billings' (1995) research presents three criteria or propositions for culturally relevant pedagogy:

(a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. (p. 160)

Culturally relevant pedagogy helps instructors modify and think about how they are contributing and teaching their students by having instructors think about their personal culture in relation to their student culture (Hefflin, 2002). Hefflin (2002) describes using the process of African American literature through culturally relevant pedagogy and finds out that teachers who tailored instruction to fit the textual, social, cultural, and personal lives of students is mainly about seeing pedagogy through the norms and practices of their students' lives. Culturally relevant pedagogy can “empower students not only intellectually but also socially, emotionally, and politically” (New America, n.d.).

Geneva Gay (2018) advanced culturally relevant pedagogy to create *culturally responsive teaching*, which is a powerful framework targeted to teacher's strategies and practices. Gay focuses on the "doing" of teaching, and defines it as:

using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. Culturally responsive teaching is the behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. (p. 3)

Upon this framework, Gay argues and lays out the need to improve learning for students, by changing the former ways of how classes have been taught. These changes can be done through different instructional techniques, instructional materials, student-teacher relationships, and classroom climate. (New America, n.d.)

Critical Pedagogy

Like culturally responsive pedagogy, the humanizing approach aligns with critical pedagogy and how author Paulo Freire (1972) viewed education. Freire (1972), an educator, and philosopher who wrote the book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* believed that the classroom was a place where social change could take place, where people (students) can be themselves, and a place where students could exchange information without fear of judgment. Freire believed

that every student should feel enabled to take control of their learning and not feel like they are only being poured into and brainwashed by instructors.

Students should be actively giving, making, and exchanging knowledge within and outside a classroom space.

Freire (1972) noticed a problem with how the educational systems have been established. Freire refers to this as “the "banking" concept of education as an instrument of oppression.

This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, could become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. (p.72)

In other words, Freire (1972) declares that there is a problem with the educational system and students are not truly making their own reality by what they already know. They are simply only intaking information but necessarily contributing or making knowledge from their personal perspectives or cultural backgrounds.

Freire (1972) declares this as a form of oppression to the way teaching and learning takes place within and outside the classroom. Because of how the classroom is conducted, they become environments, where teachers are seen as the oppressors and students are seen as the oppressed. These classrooms demonstrate attitudes and practices that only and mainly instructors have control over and where “the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students” (p. 80). Freire (1994) brings to our attention that indeed we have a broken education system where many instructors consciously and unconsciously practice oppression in their classes. Humanization can only happen when teachers and students:

Become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on "authority" are no longer valid, to function, authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education is "owned" by the teacher. (p. 80)

To conclude, both culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay, 1998) and the theoretical views of Freire (1972) highlight ways in which the humanization approach happens or does not happen through the use (or lack) of communication and presence in an online environment. Therefore, an approach is needed that encompasses culturally relevant, culturally responsive, and critical

pedagogy that unites students and instructors to reflecting one's true nature or belief. This can be demonstrated in an online course through communication and presence by a social capital structure where prior and current knowledge is accepted. Drawing from these theoretical standpoints, the new approach should reject oppression and can open the doors for one's true nature or belief of education liberation to occur where students' values and past knowledge are accepted. This approach can enable students to pursue full humanity by not ignoring what they already bring to the table, but by cherishing their personal backgrounds and cultures as strengths to contribute to what can be learned next.

Humanizing online instruction has been known to be a pedagogical strategy that attempts "to improve equity gaps by acknowledging the fact that learning environments are not neutral; rather, they often operate to reinforce a worldview that minoritizes some students" (Pacansky-Brock et al., 2019, p. 3). Humanizing acknowledges that engagement and achievement are based upon human interaction and that it only successful "through the background and experiences students bring to college and the educational environment provided for them" (p. 3). Through this lens, educators should be aware and not ignore cultural hegemony, personal denigration, educational inequity, and academic underachievement (Gay, 2018, p. 33). Instead aim to bring awareness to address these issues and how they affect learning environments.

The humanizing approach has offered a plan for visible and practical teaching approaches that can be used for online teaching. It nourishes positive

online classroom climates and “supports the cognitive and affective differences that co-exist within a college course” (Pacansky-Brock et al, 2019, p. 4).

Humanizing strategies provide ways for students to make the course their own, welcoming visuals for constructive first impressions, cultivates trust between the instructor and the student, and creates an inviting space for culture to be embraced and seen as a strength in the online environment. The humanizing approach can be accomplished in an online environment by appropriately utilizing the Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison et al., 1999) that includes three concepts: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. Like, Gay (2018) and Ladson-Billings (1995) state the humanizing approach also emphasizes the need of including communication and presence which can be done by integrating culturally relevant, culturally responsive, and critical pedagogy theoretical concepts, that when implemented in any online classroom leads to outcomes of positive student validation experiences, motivation, communication immediacy. Furthermore, the humanizing approach creates a supportive class culture where teacher immediacy behaviors are demonstrated, and where students are actively involved in a community learning environment. Therefore, the humanizing approach to online instruction for this project is defined as the center of communication and presence which includes students and instructors prior and current knowledge a social capital structure that encompasses culturally relevant, culturally responsive, and critical pedagogy as

the connective tissue that unites students and instructors to demonstrate **one's true nature or belief.**

Introducing the Solution to Online Courses Dehumanization

Understanding and implementing a humanizing approach in the process of how to properly navigate online learning is a step forward for higher educational institutions to not risk low enrollment numbers by the year 2026 (Campion, 2020) since teachers and students are the future in maintaining educational institutions. With a shift to online learning and raised complications mentioned above, a more concentrated humanizing approach is needed. Online teaching and learning can be a dehumanizing experience because teachers and students are not communicating and connecting in the same way as it would happen in a face-to-face environment. Students taking online classes are facing negative feelings to continue their education (Pacansky-Brock & Vincent-Layton, 2020). Students are experiencing invalidation because they lack meaningful support from instructors and those around them (Pacansky-Brock et al., 2019).

As Pacansky-Brock and Vincent-Layton (2020) express, humanized online teaching should consider students' backgrounds and experiences which are non-cognitive components that can be cultivated through instructor-student relationships and community. This approach provides a more comprehensive and compassionate way to carry out engagement and rigor. A humanizing approach focuses not only on what students learn about but also aims to reflect learning through conversations that may not be found in traditional forms of

teaching. A humanizing approach goes in-depth on more than just simply teaching content. It is a profound approach to reach many students who may likely feel isolated because of past invalidation experiences.

A humanizing educational approach encourages communication between students and teachers, their peers, and their learning process (Pacansky-Brock & Vincent-Layton, 2020). Creating a mindset that not only thinks about today but also the future of the educational world. A humanizing approach can take higher educational institutions a long way to success. Pacansky-Brock & Vincent-Layton (2020) state, “humanizing recognizes that engagement and achievement are social constructs developed through the background and experiences students bring to college and the educational environment provided for them” (p. 3). Nevertheless, a humanizing approach requires course content to not only be course content but be filled with relationships that foster the process of connection and communication.

To implement a reachable and durable humanizing approach anywhere where learning takes place, institutions must make sure that hired instructors, counselors, coaches, and administrators implement the value and importance of validating students through the course curriculum and in all areas of teaching. Even more important is putting to practice validation acts, such as positive feedback to students, constructive comments on their work, sending positive reminders to help students believe in themselves. These are only some examples of the validation acts that an instructor can create to combat the

dehumanization of an online environment. Through validation acts, a humanizing education approach can be created and reached. Therefore, validation is a critical component to prevent students from feeling isolated in a learning environment.

Although online courses are granting access to many students all over the world to study and become educated, many students are low-income, minority, and first-generation students. These students may find it difficult to succeed in an online education environment in comparison to more privileged students because of how the educational system is established. Online education to unprivileged students poses disadvantages but these same disadvantages are not seen as a big deal to privilege students who acquire them, nor to educational systems who passively ignore them. The challenges posed for the unprivileged student include, for example: time management skills, experience, and knowledge on how to go about studying, full support from parents that went to college, strong self-motivation and awareness of resources offered online, and the sense of belonging to the college environment. These are factors that require cultural-educational imbedded considerations which are often missing in the face-to-face educational system as well as in the online educational system.

In the following chapter, I will write about ways to humanize online learning by using the Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison, et al., 1999) building a positive online class culture, and describe outcomes of said implantations such as validation, motivation, and engagement. This paper presents general

communication concepts that will help improve communication and presence in the student and teacher relationship to remove barriers that may be hindering a humanizing form of authentic connections and communication in an online classroom.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPLEMENTING A HUMANIZING APPROACH

To further our understanding of what truly is the humanizing approach and how to apply it in an online classroom environment this chapter will solely be focused on addressing practical ways in which one can bring to life the humanizing approach through the implementation of the Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison et al., 1999) and its potential to see outcomes of validation, motivation, and communication immediacy.

Validation

Validation for this project connects to the humanizing approach because it considers students' feelings and views to enhance learning, to support and consider all types of interpersonal relationships that should be fostered, and recognize that learning and connecting with others is an ongoing process that does not stop when a course is over. Therefore, validation can be considered an outcome that can be seen through the implementation of the Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison et al., 1999) and the humanizing approach.

Motivation

The humanizing approach and the Community of Inquiry Model also seek to give an outcome of motivation in online space. Examples that can probe motivation are dependent on how the social presence and teaching presence are being facilitated by the community of students and instructors. Communication

and presence along with one being able to express one's true nature or belief can be a form of activating motivation.

Communication Immediacy

Communication Immediacy is defined as “verbal and nonverbal communicative actions that send positive messages of liking and closeness, decrease the psychological distance between people, and positively affect student state motivation” (Dixon et al., 2016, para. 2). For this project, communication immediacy is an outcome that demonstrates truly the relationship students and instructors have within an online space through the implementation of the humanizing approach and the Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison et al., 1999).

Communication Immediacy is an important concept to consider within The Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison et al., 1999). This concept allows individuals to notice how messages/communications, whether positive or negative, are being interpreted. For example, if a student is frowning on a Zoom video call while the instructor is talking, the instructor and learners may notice that the student may be upset, bored, or confused. Communication Immediacy is important to understand and address because it happens when students are engaging in content, when they engage with others and when they engage with goals/directions of the course. Therefore, one can say that it happens within The Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison et al., 1999). Learners throughout the trajectory of their experience constantly are communicating immediacy behaviors

and demonstrating if they are having an enjoyable learning experience or the opposite. Furthermore, instructors in this process can facilitate and improve the environment by engaging with students to create a community where learning takes place.

Elements of Community of Inquiry Model to Help Humanize Online Courses

The Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison et al., 1999) is a helpful lens to enhance and humanize the educational experience in an online class and build a positive online class culture (see Figure 1). “It represents creating a deep and meaningful (collaborative-constructivist) learning experience through developing three interdependent elements—social, cognitive and teaching presence” (Garrison et al., 1990, p. 90). Hence, validation and motivation are possible outcomes that can come from using the Community of Inquiry Model as designed. The figure below (Figure 1.) is the Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison, et al., 1999, p. 29).

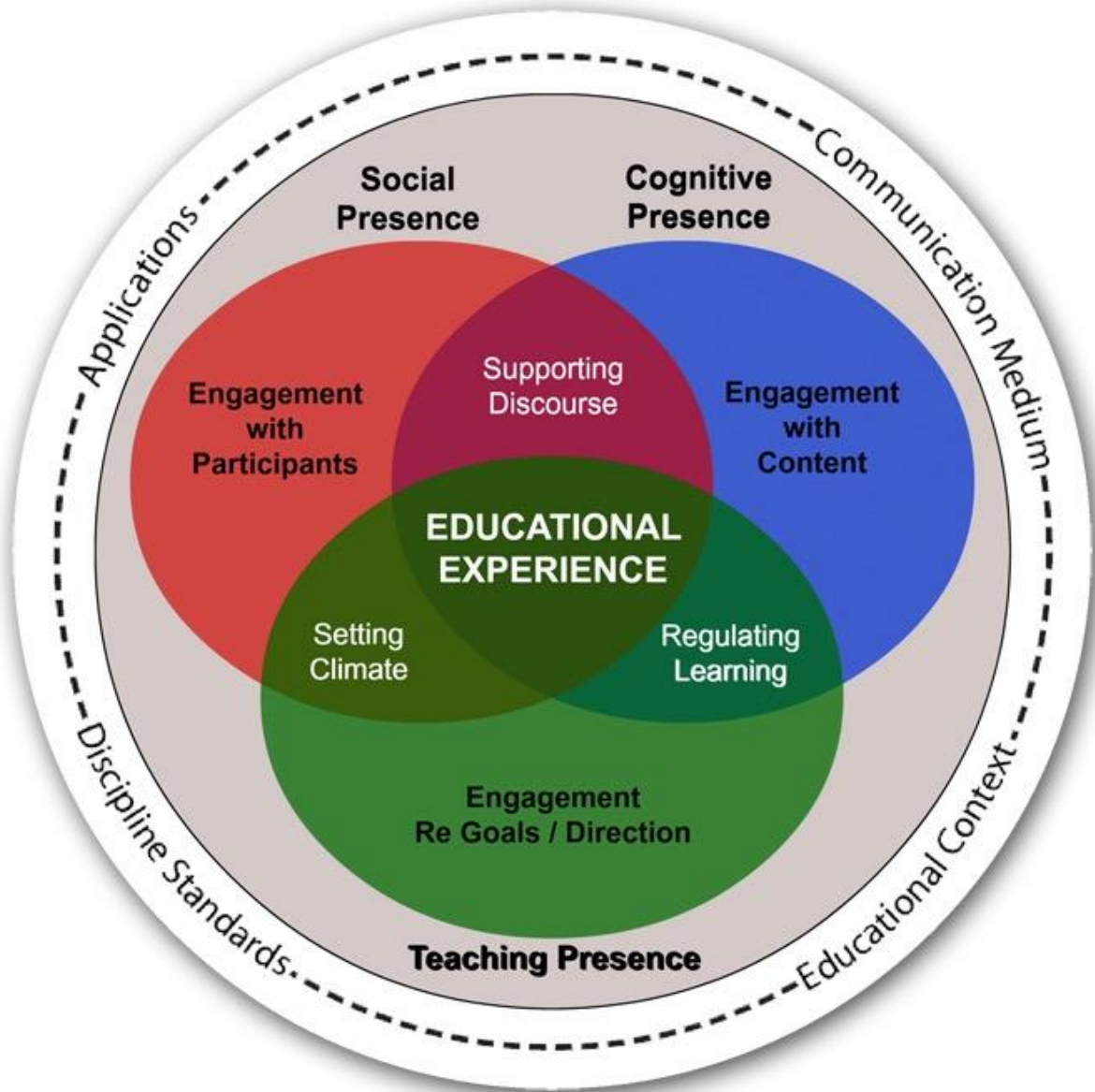


Figure 1: Community of Inquiry Model (Image source: The Community of Inquiry, ND)

Within the Community Inquiry Model, social presence creates an environment where trust exists and where students within this space feel comfortable and safe to take risks. As Aragon (2003) states:

The overall goal for creating social presence in any learning environment, whether it be online or face-to-face, is to create a level of comfort in which people feel at ease around the instructor and the other participants.

Without this goal being achieved, the learning environment can turn to one that is not fulfilling or successful for the instructors and the learners.

(Aragon, 2003, p. 60)

This foundation prepares learners for the teaching and cognitive presence.

Teaching presence is demonstrated in all the things an instructor does to lead, reinforce, sustain, and mold what the learners come across, while cognitive presence incorporates actions such as activities to stimulate learners to

investigate their thinking process to connect with content and facilitate learning.

These three interdependent elements (social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence) when consciously and purposefully thought about and put into action, can enhance instructors' and students' interactions in an online environment and as a result through communication and presence highlight the humanizing approach.

Teaching Presence

Teaching presence involves enhancing and presenting the social and cognitive presence concepts implemented by the instructor through design, facilitation, and direct instruction. This includes “the selection, organization, and primary presentation content, and the design and development of learning activities and assessment” (Garrison et al., 1999, p. 89-90). A point that follows

teaching presence is how instructors design their online courses. Designed elements to build teaching presence such as instructor guidance, building understanding for learners, and their motivating actions through the course. When instructors implement these elements, students' experiences in an online learning environment is likely to be positive, and learners can initiate discussion topics, share personal meaning, and have more focused discussions.

Face-to-Face and Online Differences

In a face-to-face environment, teaching presence can be implemented by meeting students during class time and instructing them on their meaningful tasks or pairing them into collaborative groups. In an online environment, however, instructors face complications because all work must be presented in direct forms to not confuse. For example, without direct guidance, students may wonder about what to do and how to complete the assignment. Instructors need to be specific to resolve a problem and press the group to add their ideas.

Teaching Presence and Immediacy

Instructors can set an online climate through verbal or nonverbal communication to enhance their teacher immediacy towards their learners, which can fluctuate or be enhanced depending on how an instructor is communicating (McCroskey & Richmond, 1992). Through teacher immediacy, The Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison et al., 1999) is sustained because communication and presence are constantly activated in the instructor and student relationship. Mehrabian (1968) defines immediacy “as the extent to which communication

behaviors enhance closeness to and nonverbal interaction with another” (Mehrabian, 1968, p. 203). In short, instructors and students can show immediacy behaviors through their verbal or nonverbal messages. Mehrabian writes about different kinds of non-immediacy verbal communication examples, such as:

I don't understand those people" exemplifies the spatial non-immediacy category, or 'Where can I reach you when I have to call you?' exemplifies the passivity non- immediacy category. Non-Immediate verbalizations have been found to correspond to more negative communicator attitudes than immediate (1967, p. 294).

Therefore, when thinking about immediacy, instructors should always aim to create a comfortable environment for learners where they are demonstrating positive immediate behaviors. Through the foundational work of Mehrabian and many other researchers, we now know that teacher influence through immediacy is dependent on how instructors navigate their course and their teaching presence. “Immediacy is the primary way humans signal interpersonal closeness, willingness to communicate, and positive feelings for other people” (Andersen, 2009, p. 502). LeFebvre and Allen (2014) examined teacher assistants’ immediacy, and in their study, they state,

This investigation identified no significant difference between assistants instructing lecture/laboratory or self-contained course sections. However, the impact of teacher immediacy influenced the teacher-student

relationship in both settings. Students rated their teaching assistants more positively as immediacy behaviors increased. Moreover, student perceptions of immediate behaviors by their teaching assistants impacted both affective and cognitive learning (p. 38).

These results showed universal importance that is not dependent on the course format but is dependent on the presence of instructor immediacy. Hence, immediacy behaviors can be related to both social presence and teaching presence because verbal and nonverbal messages are forms of communication and presence to cultivate student-instructor relationships. In a multicultural examination study, researchers found “that nonverbal immediacy produced psychological closeness across cultures, and it also produced positive results in terms of effective learning across cultures” (McCroskey et al., 1996, p. 305). Therefore, one can say that it is important to understand that immediacy can always change, grow or fluctuate, and it depends on the instructor and student learner on how immediacy will be processed, cultivated, and produced.

Verbal or nonverbal communication can either support or discourage how students feel about themselves and their potential to succeed in an online learning atmosphere. Moreover, “a teacher can enhance students’ perception of closeness through the engagement of certain verbal strategies (e.g., linguistic choices that convey connection) and nonverbal behaviors (e.g., eye contact, smiling)” (Brooks, & Young, 2015, p. 516). Therefore, building a teaching presence in an online classroom environment can be implemented through

different strategies that demonstrate the relationship and connection between students and instructors. This can also be done by allowing students to collaborate with other students and by including and implementing encouraging, motivating words in any assignment done in class to increase positive immediacy behaviors. Allowing to build a supportive discourse and allow the instructor to see the growth of the learners and how the course content is presented to benefit everyone.

An instructor can implement the use of student communication applications such as GroupMe, Remind, and Slack. These applications are general communication forms that may provide students and instructors a faster and easier form of sending and receiving messages. "With mobile technologies, students can organize extra-class activities by increasing their motivations without just sitting in front of a computer" (Denizalp & Ozdamli, 2019, p. 20). Some positive general functions that mobile applications can bring to the classroom through mobile technology is the ability to have a faster direct design form of communication among students and teachers. Moreover, using mobile technology will create a more flexible space where students can ask each other questions about what they are learning and not necessarily having to wait to ask questions during class time.

When students have a question or a concern, they can use their mobile applications to communicate with their instructor as well allowing both the instructor and student to receive a response more quickly than an email. The

instructor can also build rapport with their students by sending them friendly academic messages or reminders. Instructors are more likely to connect with students and not only communicate with students within the classroom environment. The applications can be a form of faster-paced communication that led to students feeling more comfortable within the classroom and have a sense of teaching presence. And students will also feel that their instructor cares about their learning and wants them to succeed.

Although this form of communication does not necessarily involve the instructor meeting with a student in a one-to-one meeting, it does provide a teaching presence aspect because the presence within the act of communicating through applications allows the student to know that they are not alone within their learning. They can instantly receive messages back from another peer student or instructor, and in this way, the creation of a teaching presence is being accomplished, facilitated, and designed. Building a positive teaching presence reassures the learners they can always ask for help when they need it, whether it is during class time or outside class time. The online learning environment already imposes a lack of communication between students and teachers making it difficult for students to ask questions or be as involved as they normally would be in a classroom face-to-face setting. Implementing mobile technology through applications such as GroupMe, Remind, or Slack increases the chances of a flexible learning environment design and facilitation where a sense of community and presence is involved, which allows students to enjoy a more humanizing

atmosphere where positive interpersonal communication and connection are cultivated.

Teaching Presence and Motivation

When teaching online courses instructors should aim to tap into each student's personal motivation to allow students to learn comfortably and meet course criteria and foster helpful conversations that will lead to a productive discussion in an online class. Instructors' communication can provide confirmation, encouragement, and approval. These messages can give room to allow students to feel a sense of motivation because they will notice that their instructor, through their communication and presence, is interested and actively involved in their learning process.

The Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative (CWSEI, 2013, p. 1) notes that the "instructor, an expert in the subject, is uniquely qualified to show students why the material is important, intellectually interesting, and valuable for them to learn. Conveying this message is an important goal of any effective instructor." Therefore, with this capability, instructors can open and pave different avenues for students to not only get familiarized with the course material but can also use their expertise to present the material in more interesting and creative ways by using different themes or topics that relate to the course objectives. For instance, they can use real-life stories or activities to unite students, enhance collaboration, and make the material meaningful and accessible. These ideas will help students stay motivated and feel connected to their learning and build more

confidence as they are completing the online course, and not feel isolated throughout the learning process. These strategies demonstrate the care an instructor should implement in any online learning class and how thoughtful an assignment should be to create more outcomes of motivation. They also show that if done correctly, they can take students to reach higher goals for themselves.

Implementation of Online Validation for the Beginning of Class

Students arrive at a college or university with past validation or invalidation experiences. Some students even question if they are “college material” because of their past schooling invalidation experiences and may have few role models to direct them in the college process (Rendón, 1994, p. 34). Imposter syndrome is a common experience that many students face when they feel as if they do not belong in college or question if they are smart enough to be in college or why they were accepted into a university (Ramsey & Brown, 2018). Imposter syndrome is real and common among many people aiming to accomplish something for the first time, and it is likely to happen to first-generation students not familiarized with how higher education works (Ramsey & Brown, 2018). Although making students more aware of resources and opportunities in their college experience may seem like the best way to help students feel more validated within their college or university, most students may not experience validation through opportunities because they may not know what questions to ask to get them to those opportunities (Rendón, 1994). It is the interpersonal

closeness that would truly make a difference in creating a humanizing online atmosphere for students that will draw students to learn and grow in their academic journey.

Therefore, the humanizing approach opens a way that can start validating students' experiences before classes start. Instructors can aim to understand students' various backgrounds and not only offer resources about one subject or one category (e.g., the writing center, math tutoring) but a wide set of resources that can support students (e.g., affinity centers, basic needs, legal services, etc.). For example, understanding that some students come from a household where attending college or a university is a norm while others are first-generation students that may not be familiarized with how higher education works can influence how a student and instructor relationship is built from the beginning, even before the course starts.

Depending on the needs of the student and their past knowledge background, the instructor will then need to prepare and process where the student stands academically and will need to make the best accommodations or recommendations for the student's success. For example, making a survey that addresses students' past knowledge and background. This survey can include questions about how they feel about their preferred ways of learning, how they wish to work with others, and past experiences. This can give instructors a general idea on how to think about a student's past knowledge perspectives, current thoughts, and what standpoint students are coming from.

To begin a course, institutions hiring instructors may help increase validation within the classroom by giving instructors information about their students before classes begin; for instance, some universities give the public information on the demographics of students on their website. Instructors with that public general information can take initiative to get to know their learners in a general manner. Furthermore, giving more room for instructors to exercise a more welcoming validating experience for students by increasing teaching presence, helps instructors to also feel less nervous about how to approach their students for the first time, as well as helps them focus their attention on ways to have students feel supported. Rendón (1994) lays out practical communication ideas to help institutions further help their instructors to understand how to validate students:

Institutions should provide faculty with a yearly demographic profile, hold faculty development workshops centered on students' similarities, distinctions, and enjoyments. Also, focus discussions on problems that nontraditional students face and bring to college. This aspect should also be considered during the development workshops. Help faculty serve as validating mentors for students who may find the transition to college difficult. (Rendón, 1994, p. 46)

Implementing these strategies will help instructors foster a warmer environment for their students while teaching them.

The common misconception; however, is that most institutions may think that facilitating such workshops is enough to humanize courses and help instructors do that. Like validation (Rendón et al., 2011), humanizing is an ongoing process. These strategies are helpful to a certain extent, but a humanizing education needs to be cultivated and maintained by the instructor throughout the course; reading a demographic analysis may aid in noticing commonalities and differences in the process. An instructor must see and understand the commonalities and differences of students yet implement actions to treat every student and class as unique entities with their own personalities. This can happen by the instructors verbalizing when they are available to meet with students or by creating time for questions within the course. In addition, allowing students to have a voice on how they would like to present themselves for the first time to their peers in class may create a more humanized atmosphere and more validating experiences in the trajectory of the class. Giving students room where they can express their ideas and thoughts in different forms creates a more open, humanized environment where students are more likely to build trust with each other and their instructors.

Furthermore, the humanizing approach allows validation experiences to occur even before the course starts and that can be taken further by understanding that connections with others can be created even if students and teachers are not constantly communicating in a face-to-face setting. At the beginning of the class creating a validating, welcoming online class can be done

by a few practical tools that instructors may implement. One strategy provides a directive path for students on how to begin a course. Something as simple as a welcome video walking students through how to navigate the course or a “Start Here” tab in the LMS can remove shame barriers. The Association of College and University Educators (ACUE, 2020) tool kit also recommends “managing an online presence, organizing the online course, planning and facilitating quality discussions, recording effective micro-lectures, engaging students in readings and micro-lectures” as techniques that can help the online classroom be welcoming, engaging, and to help validate all students’ overall educational experiences and demonstrate teaching presence.

Cognitive Presence

The second element is cognitive presence which is described within the community of inquiry model as “the extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse in a critical community of inquiry” (Garrison et al., 2001, p. 11). Cognitive presence is important in critical thinking, a process and outcome frequently presented as the ostensible goal of all higher education” (Garrison et al., 1999, p. 89). Critical thinking in cognitive presence reflects categories and indicators within an online classroom. Categories such as triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution. Indicators such as the sense of puzzlement, information exchange, connecting ideas, and applying new ideas (Garrison, 2000, p. 4).

Cognitive presence is a critical element modified and affected in an online class because students are processing information more distantly when they are being educated online.

Ways to humanize online learning with cognitive presence is through building a positive online culture creating and presenting information to students in a supportive manner and organized way, by making specific meaningful tasks that are targeting students' interests and attention, and are not confusing. This can be done with strategic activities and meaningful tasks that avoid rhetorical, vague, and inconsistent communication between students and teachers.

Face-to-Face and Online Differences

In a face-to-face classroom, the likelihood of communication being confusing is less likely to happen because questions, comments, and concerns receive a response almost immediately. However, in an online environment, communication takes a longer time, and a response is waited for. In an online course, communication may be lost, or the meaning of communication may change, causing confusion. At some point, students in their online class may need more personal clear communication given to them since they may have more specific questions or concerns that might arise.

Most faculty agree that students need to develop not only subject-specific knowledge because of their university education but also skills, abilities, and dispositions that help them make informed decisions, self-manage their affairs—including their learning—and act in socially responsible ways

at work as well as in wider society. (Kreber, 2010, p. 7)

Learning goes above and beyond course content, and that requires various kinds of communication strategies.

Cognitive Presence and Immediacy

Instructors should facilitate conversations that lead students to ask a variety of questions about real-life situations regarding the course. Ways instructors can go about facilitating conversations is through how they verbally and nonverbally express themselves to their students. Verbal and nonverbal immediacy messages that students receive in an online class can change and impact how students are thinking and processing the information being learned. Depending on the immediacy communication behaviors that go on within an online space, students are less or more likely to ask questions and enhance their learning experience. Students taking online classes should experience an open-minded environment where all ideas through communication can be developed, processed, and not forgotten. Instructors should aim to build a course that enables students to learn at a comfortable pace, aiming to meet course criteria, while fostering helpful conversations through their verbal and nonverbal behaviors that can lead to a productive discussion in an online learning class. Facilitating and creating courses that will allow and build a supportive discourse and allow everyone to be creative in their own way as they learn. In such courses, students may feel more motivated because their instructor is interested and actively involved in their learning.

Cognitive Presence and Motivation

To stir, facilitate, and create outcomes of motivation in an online course also lies in how information is being processed and thought about. It lies in thinking critically about what is being taught by the instructor and students understanding and expanding their knowledge. For this to happen students also must meet the instructor halfway through the course and their learning. This means that, at minimum, some motivation should be shared and existing priorly between students and instructors as a shared responsibility for a successful learning experience to happen in an online class.

The motivation strategies CWSEI (2013) describe are personal relevance and interest, choice and control, and a sense that one can master the material.

First, personal relevance and interest mean:

... recognizing the students' backgrounds and experiences and aspirations and finding ways to connect the material to those. What you see as interesting may not be interesting for many of your students. In practice, making the material relevant usually means finding ways to present it in terms of authentic, real-world situations and problems that the students can relate to. Showing how the material will be used in careers they aspire to is also motivational. (CWSEI, 2013, p. 2)

These strategies are used for a traditional face-to-face class environment; however, they can also work to build a positive online class culture and foster more outcomes of motivation for students. In an online class, recognizing or

applying such ideas may be more difficult. Therefore, an instructor may have to think about intentional motivation phrases or behaviors to incorporate into their online classroom.

One possible strategy to start an online class is to have students introduce themselves either in the class live sessions or through their institution's learning management system (LMS). This way, students can express themselves and get out of their comfort zone by getting to know their peers.

The second suggested motivational strategy to follow to build a possible positive online learning course is to give a sense of control to the learner.

"Allowing some choice over assignment topics or formats and having projects where the student can choose a topic of particular interest to them" (CWSEI, 2013, p. 1). This tactic gives some control over what is being learned to the student. It allows the learner to feel as if they are not only being told what to do but are making choices for themselves to carry out their work. Another form to increase motivation is for instructors to become more conscious about the amount of time students are given for each assignment. Essentially this will create a more compatible environment where students can feel they are not being rushed through meaningful tasks and are more likely to do well. And this also demonstrates to the student that their instructor is flexible and truly wants them to digest what is being taught.

The third suggested motivation strategy provides "the learner with a sense that they can master the subject, and that they understand the process to follow

to achieve that mastery” (CWSEI, 2013, p. 2). By instructors implementing this strategy into the online classroom, they are executing a positive learning environment to its very core. To carry out this process:

1. Communicate clear learning goals to the students;
2. Express to the students they can master the material if they put in the effort;
3. Create assignments and activities challenging but doable with effort (diagnostic or other assessments in the course can help determine the appropriate level of challenge);
4. Build-in early success (e.g. ramp up the difficulty in an activity so all students can relatively easily complete the first part);
5. Build “bonus” challenges into activities to keep the faster students engaged;
6. Regularly provide feedback that gives students a clear sense of how well they are mastering the material;
7. Make sure the course elements and assessments are aligned with the learning goals;
8. Explicitly point out to students how much they have learned; and
9. Give students specific advice on how they can improve their learning (CWSEI, 2013, p. 2)

These strategies create a humanizing atmosphere where motivation is likely to be an outcome and is demonstrated.

Implementation of Online Validation for the Middle of the Class

Although the role of a teacher may start as a solely leading position, implementing practical ways of validating students' experiences may change the trajectory of how teachers lead as they become facilitators of the classroom. Instructors, through a more validating direction, and cognitive presence will aim to implement the combination of all students' differences and use this as their strength to think about the course before the course begins. A humanizing approach may start by only validating student experiences through small acts of increasing motivation and may lead to an actual strong community where social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence exist and are being demonstrated through positive immediacy behaviors in the classroom.

Validation can happen through an online course, through the humanizing approach for example, where instructors implement positive comments that support and boost students' confidence and make students think about the information being taught in a positive manner. These may be comments that may not necessarily have to be said directly to students but can be written down where they may be visible for students to notice it. Instructors can also show outcomes of validation and humanize their online course by the form they act in all areas of the course. The connections that both the humanizing approach and validation bring to the table is the ability to see past circumstances and focuses on what the actual instructor and students are doing to make that interpersonal

connection by creating accepting validating experiences. When teaching online courses, and one is aware of cognitive presence, validation plays an important role in developing how students will interact, grow, think about knowledge and perform in their academic journey during class.

Rendón Linares and Muñoz (2011) did a qualitative study involving focus group interviews with 132 first-year students. They found the following experiences validating:

1. Faculty took the time to learn their names and refer to them by name.
2. Faculty gave students opportunities to witness themselves as successful learners.
3. Faculty ensured that the curriculum reflected student backgrounds.
4. Faculty shared knowledge with students and became partners in learning.
5. Faculty told students, “You can do this, and I will help you.” Coaches took the time to help students select courses and plan their futures. Parents, spouses, and children supported students in their quest to earn a college degree.
6. Faculty encouraged students to support each other (i.e., form friendships, develop peer networks, share assignments, provide positive reinforcement).

7. Faculty and staff served as mentors for students and tried to meet with them outside of class, such as in patio areas, in cafeterias, and/ or in the library. (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011, p. 15)

Most of these examples show a sense of involvement from the instructor's perspective and ensures that the curriculum is not being taught and only be talked about in class but is aiming for higher levels of thinking. The sense of involvement is shown through words or acts of affirmation, letting students know that they are not alone through learning, demonstrating validation. An example to express validation is to take an appropriate amount of time to grade the learner's work, give feedback that allows one to think critically during the grading process, highlight what the student's strengths are, not only what needs to be improved, and worked upon. Validation will be experienced by not allowing the student to feel discouraged but have a more positive attitude to reach the course objectives and be more encouraged to finish the course strong.

Other ways that validation can also be implemented in an online learning course is through inviting academic guest speakers that offer resources. For example, if an instructor is teaching public speaking, inviting a guest speaker that is a public speaking consultant, can increase the possibility of that student not being afraid to ask for help and meet other people who can help them to reach their educational goals and therefore this may create positive validating experiences for students. Remember, part of validating student experience and cognitive presence involves constant reinforcement of content along with

interpersonal connections among peers and communication between students and instructor. Instructors should aim to constantly know students may need more than instructions for an assignment, and they should do everything they can within their control to be present in their thinking process and offer different resources to ensure they know whom to go with or talk to reach valuable validation experiences.

Validating students' experiences means that instructors must make themselves present in all areas of the course, which will help students, eventually, to stay motivated and engaged in and out of the classroom with course content. The essence of a humanizing education approach is to validate by creating in types of formats for space for students to feel comfortable enough to not stay silent but succeed. Validating students' experiences means understanding that to some students, a single explanation may be enough, but to other students, a need for more examples and illustrations will be required. Validating students' experiences is to realize that instructors are more than knowledge givers but also motivators. Constant reinforcement of good work and work that needs to be done and be improved is necessary and can be accomplished in different ways.

Validation is an enabling, confirming, and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that foster academic and interpersonal development: this can be done by actively contacting students to offer assistance, encouragement, and support and provide opportunities for

students to validate each other through encouraging comments that validate the work of peers. (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011, p. 44)

Active learning and validation can create a humanizing educational approach by implementing peer-to-peer feedback regularly. Instructors can create meaningful tasks where students need to ask questions to other students to receive feedback on what they have learned or what they can improve on. Instructors can provide a feedback guide to aid students' development of understanding on how to provide constructive feedback that aims to validate work done. Moreover, some may think that validating students' experiences may be a form of pampering students by not allowing them to figure things out on their own. However, it is the exact opposite of that. Giving students validation will foster an act of courage within themselves to carry out better performance within their education. "Validation theory provides a framework that faculty and staff can employ to work with students, so it gives them agency, affirmation, self-worth, and liberation from past invalidation" (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011, p. 17). Validation is a form of being present for students and creating presence and offers encouragement through easy or difficult situations.

The issue that arises in an online course is that often students may be given only minimum feedback and responses, but the actual involvement to build validation is missing. Although the framework in research about validation proposed is thoughtful, a need for a more humanizing practical perspective is needed to implement these ideas. Students need more than a regular syllabus

presented to them. Students need personal attention and connection throughout the course, given verbally or nonverbally during the course. Students in an online environment need practical and warm encouragement when the course begins and when the course is moving forward throughout the year. It can be through enhancing what is already within the course, such as the syllabus, assignments, and policies.

Students should feel that their voice and values matter and be able to feel confident within the classroom space. Instructors must work to build a community where building ideas takes place and where all perspectives matter, not a dictatorship. Valuing all voices creates a more humanizing education approach along with a validation foundation for a classroom. As author bell hooks (2003) writes, “we do this by enacting a politics of affirmation where the difference is accorded respect and all voices deemed worthy. As teachers, we can make the classroom a place where we help students come out of shame” (hooks, 2003, p. 103).

In the process of how a classroom is run, one may notice that traditionally most of the work is distributed to the students by the instructor. However, this can change by instructors becoming overseers and flexible by giving more room for students to facilitate the classroom. For example, giving the students the opportunity to teach the class and present projects that reflect their understanding of what is being learned. The classroom experience through validation recognizes students' differences and embraces students' differences to

use as a form to dwindle shame and hopelessness because of possible past failures. Instructors can recognize and embrace students' differences by creating multiple accountability groups within the classroom to help students stay connected to their peers and have them get to know or share their opinions.

Social Presence

The Community of Inquiry model (Garrison, et al., 1999) is a (collaborative-constructivist) form of how a classroom can be conducted. And as a result, the Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison, et al., 1999) presents social presence as a form to humanize students' online environment. Social presence is defined as "the ability of participants to identify with the community (e.g., course of study), communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop interpersonal relationships by way of projecting their individual personalities" (Garrison, 2009, p. 352). Social presence ties into the humanizing approach because it opens the opportunity for students and instructors to build interpersonal relationships in a trusting environment where they can reflect one's true nature or belief. Students within this trusting environment can build upon their own knowledge and share their knowledge without fear of rejection while also receiving the opportunity to share their personal cultures and experiences.

"When social presence is combined with appropriate teaching presence, the result can be a high level of cognitive presence leading to fruitful critical inquiry" (Garrison et al., 1999, p. 96). When social presence exists in an online space, students are likely to ask more questions to their peers or instructor

because they feel safe to share their ideas with other learners. Social presence opens the opportunity for learners to present themselves as “real-life people” rather than mere strangers working with each other. This increases the chances of students not feeling bored in class, and it creates an atmosphere where learning is happening more actively among peers. Furthermore, verbal, and nonverbal immediacy behaviors can also aid social presence as a form to also create a positive atmosphere because of the constant communication present.

Face-to-Face and Online Differences

Social presence is activated when students and instructors meet face-to-face in a traditional classroom most of the time because students and instructors are sharing the same location, and fewer distractions arise. However, in an online class, social presence can be harder to cultivate and maintain because distractions arise, and students and instructors are not physically together.

The technology itself can make establishing social presence difficult. Students may have cameras off, which provides fewer clues to their distractions when the instructor is teaching. Technology problems can lead to muted speakers, over-talking, and broken audio, making communication and social connection more difficult. Asynchronous classrooms have time lags and may depend more on text-based communication for social connections and group interactions. Further, collaborative work is more difficult. Whether a class is asynchronous or synchronous, students may not be connected with anyone in the class and instead are multitasking, doing different things at once, not focused

on the work, and are not interacting in a mindful, purposeful manner. In regards, to asynchronous and synchronous modalities there are differences to humanizing these two different modalities which involve on how instructors are cultivating and facilitating the course. Further details are explained and demonstrated in the actual project.

Another factor that complicates the element of social presence is simply the geographical location where students are trying to take in information. Because it is an online class experience, glitches or unstable internet causes them to have issues making connections or building productive relationships. Some students may not have the supportive environment they need to concentrate and produce great work causing them to also lack the ability to continue their course. Students may need to do their coursework from a car, bathroom, closet, or shared family space.

Social Presence and Immediacy

Some ways instructors can implement social presence in an online classroom is through positive immediacy behaviors, such as smiling, eye contact, body orientation, and other nonverbals, which creates a connection between them and others (Trad et al., 2014). Thus, instructors can implement immediacy and social presence by showing students through their facial gestures and body language they are interested in their learning and that they are open to having conversations. In an online environment, both verbal and nonverbal immediacy

behavior plays a huge role to accomplish a sense of social presence since physical presence is automatically taken away.

One idea on how to go about this process is to get ideas from social media. Further research explains that most students today are familiarized with social media, which includes the potential use of Instagram. McCormick (2019) writes about an activity called “Instagram it.” The activity can be implemented when teaching online and can be done by creating a fun assignment where students can present themselves with a photo and their own created hashtags. Students can reflect a part of their identity, and the activity aims to aid students in creating a sense of social presence and a space of being comfortable with others, allowing learners to communicate more about themselves in a more practical, natural, fun manner rather than only through dull tasks.

Thus, social presence can be seen through actual immediate behaviors or the enhancement of involvement within an online space. Students can express themselves throughout the course and could get out of their comfort zone by teachers including activities in their teaching plan, to help them get to know their peers. Aragon (2003) offers suggestions that include course design, welcoming messages, student profiles, incorporate audio, considerations of having smaller classes for students to receive personal attention for their work, structure collaborative learning activities, and the instructor’s role to lead and be a facilitator for their class. These suggestions can be implemented in an online class to humanize social presence along with immediacy by helping students

connect connected, feel, and build their supportive relationships in and out of the classroom. In this process, students can see that their instructor enjoys teaching them and shows warmth by caring in whatever form, creating a ripple effect that can influence those they interact with.

Social Presence and Motivation

Social presence is an important element to consider and enhance in an online environment. Social presence leads to increased higher course engagement and increased “student motivation and participation, actual and perceived learning course and instructor satisfaction, and retention in online courses” (Richardson et al., 2017, p. 412). Social presence, when implemented through any means, can create a positive online course.

Implementation of Validation for the End of Class

At the end of an online course, other ways that validation can also be implemented can be through different forms of final reflections. For example, using emojis as expressions and symbols for students to share their thoughts can be a fun and interactive way for students to feel validated within an online space and that instructors are truly interested and care about their students’ thoughts and feelings.

Another way can be by providing students at the end of the course with purposeful reflectional statements. Purposeful reflectional statements can help learners think back on what could have gone better during their learning

experience, as well as help instructors adjust for future courses. At the end of the course, validation can be shown by allowing learners to show their mastery skills content by allowing more than one option to be demonstrated through a paper, project, assignment, and creative performance instead of only through an exam, these examples may allow students to experience more validation within an online space.

Validation includes understanding that all learners have different learning styles and moves to uncover how to teach by considering all learning styles. Four learning styles that students may alter throughout a course may be visual, kinesthetic, auditory, and written. Different ways teachers can support these different learning styles is to constantly get to know the personality of the classroom and to adjust for students to benefit from changes and learn more. Instructors can do this by engaging students more in and out of a class conversation about the subject. Instructors can use applications that allow faster communication and avoid the student wondering what to do next for a long period. They can question students about the material or ask for oral summaries about the material. Instructors can also provide notes, diagrams, and pictures so students can reflect on the information given.

Validation requires instructors to establish a foundational positive ground to an atmosphere they would like to see throughout the course. It requires educators to not settle in doing minimum work for their course but instead take the initiative for their class and take upon a role active in the beginning, during,

and after the course. Examples of how instructors can take upon the active role of showing validation can be done by sending emails and reminders to students in and out of class. This way, learners become aware of possible deadlines or exams that are coming up.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

To help instructors support student education and help humanize online education, I am proposing to build guides for already commonly used online tools such as the syllabus and activities. A humanizing perspective will be done by taking these tools and annotating them to show how they can be enhanced with different humanizing factors such as the elements of the Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison et al., 2001).

Through the Community of Inquiry Model (Garrison et al., 2001) the Project creates an annotated syllabus and collaborative activity guides to demonstrate the enhancements that can be done when the humanizing approach is considered and put into action and the difference it can make in an online class. My hope in creating these guides is to positively enhance the relationship between instructors and students and, through this project, bring a positive humanizing presence of community within an online learning space.

The Project includes a syllabus and Jamboard for the beginning of the course. For the middle of the course, the Project provides music and motivational quotes. And at the end of the course, reflections and resources are provided. The syllabus includes annotated descriptions on how instructors can reflect their interpersonal closeness to students. The Jamboard helps students to reflect and allows students and instructors to collaborate and build a social presence.

Through the Jamboard students and instructors can enhance their presence through student-to-instructor and students-to-students relationships to build and cultivate a humanizing atmosphere.

The music and motivational quotes are provided to keep a supportive classroom momentum going for students and instructors as they are working in an online course together. Music with or without lyrics and motivational quotes are provided as a source of encouragement and motivation, to increase communication immediacy, and create more validating experiences. Lastly, reflections and resources are provided to open the opportunity for reflection and improvements. Ideas of reflection are presented to aid instructors and students to be transparent. Furthermore, if guides are implemented, they are likely to create a humanizing atmosphere that cultivates authentic student-teacher relationships.

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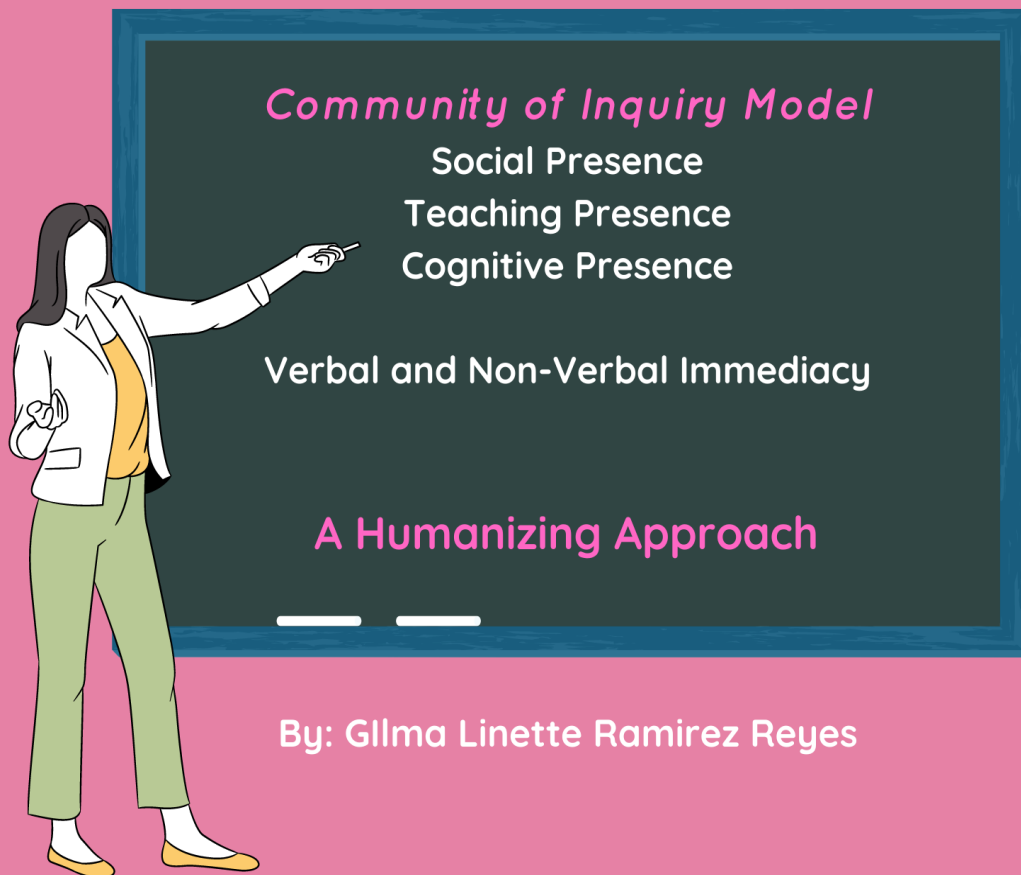
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APPENDIX A
GUIDE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTRUCTORS

GUIDE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTRUCTORS:

ENHANCING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS ONLINE



By: Gilma Linette Ramirez Reyes

Introduction

The conception of this project was initiated by my personal experiences as both a graduate student and a teaching associate while attending California State University, San Bernardino, addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. My ideas and research expanded with the transition from a face-to-face environment to an online learning environment.

As a student, I noticed that I was feeling both physically and mentally isolated from my educational experience. I needed to be more encouraged and motivated by the teachers and students who were in the same situation I was. Even though resources were offered to me by instructors and other mentors to help me stay on track, still I felt I was missing a connection that seemed to be the engine to help me focus and move forward with my studies. As a teacher, I realized that my students and I were not connecting the same way as I was traditionally used to. While I wanted to improve this, I also realized that students had a harder time engaging with me and online course content since there was a lack of immediacy behaviors being shown on their part. I noticed a need for a **“humanizing approach”** to teaching. I see this as a necessity for the success of students learning in the online world today and in the future.

I felt that as a student and instructor I wanted to give back to my community of higher education instructors since not many consider all the hardships and obstacles that teachers face to teach courses. I believe that the creation of my project is needed for instructors that teach any online class because instructors can use my project to humanize their courses and connect with their students even through distance learning. And I believe more than ever students need motivational and inspirational support from their instructors to carry out any courses. Finally, this guide is designed to help instructors navigate their way of teaching and in general enhance the student and teacher relationship as instructors teach throughout the class. Therefore, this guide has been divided into three specific sections to help facilitate a communal experience between students and instructors during the beginning, middle, and end of an online class.

Guiding Principles

Community of Inquiry

This guide is built upon the Community of Inquiry Models' three essential and overlapping elements of an educational experience: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence. These three concepts are highlighted throughout the guide. All three concepts aim to enhance learners' educational experiences:

1. Social presence opens the opportunity for learners to present themselves as “real-life people” than mere strangers working with each other.
2. Cognitive presence incorporates actions such as activities to stimulate learners to investigate their thinking process to connect with content and facilitate learning.
3. Teaching presence is demonstrated in all the things an instructor does to lead, reinforce, sustain, and mold what the learners come across,

Communication Immediacy

This guide also leverages verbal and nonverbal communication immediacy. Communication immediacy signals warmth and a willingness to connect. Verbal and Nonverbal Immediacy are intentional behaviors that send messages to learners which can happen in and out of the classroom environment. When instructors and students use verbal and nonverbal immediacy, affective learning, and motivation are more likely to occur. In this guide, verbal and nonverbal immediacy serve as an aid to enhance the communication and presence between student-instructor relationships.

Tips on How to Use

- Follow the guide and each section as it pertains to the section you want to address and change for your class.
- The guide is broken down into three sections to address the beginning, middle, and ending of a course.
- During this process carefully read the “call out” boxes to think about each section as it pertains to your class and the changes you want to make to help humanize the online learning environment.
- As you follow this process be sure to think about your communication and make sure you are being clear about the instructions given while using a warm tone.
- A humanizing atmosphere within an online space can only be created when information is given in a transparent form and all information is clear and not confusing. Make sure to add your personal touch of your personality of color in the process.
- Notice and use the symbol small colorful icons colors: Verbal Immediacy, Nonverbal Immediacy, Social Presence, Cognitive Presence, Teaching Presence, Motivation, and Validation are all next to colorful icons as a self-reflecting tool to help understand what concepts you are using in the section you have chosen.
- Make sure that you are noticing how you are humanizing the course as you bring to life the concepts mentioned above.

Format of Guides

Beginning the Course

1. Guide A: Syllabus.....page 78
2. Guide B: Jam board..... page 92

Middle of Course

3. Guide C: Music.....page 96
4. Guide D: Motivational Quotes.....page 99

End of Course

5. Guide E: Reflections and Resources.....page 103

Symbols

As a quick visual reference to which concepts are being applied in the Guide, the following symbols will appear:

Verbal Immediacy



Nonverbal Immediacy



Social Presence



Teaching Presence



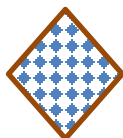
Cognitive Presence

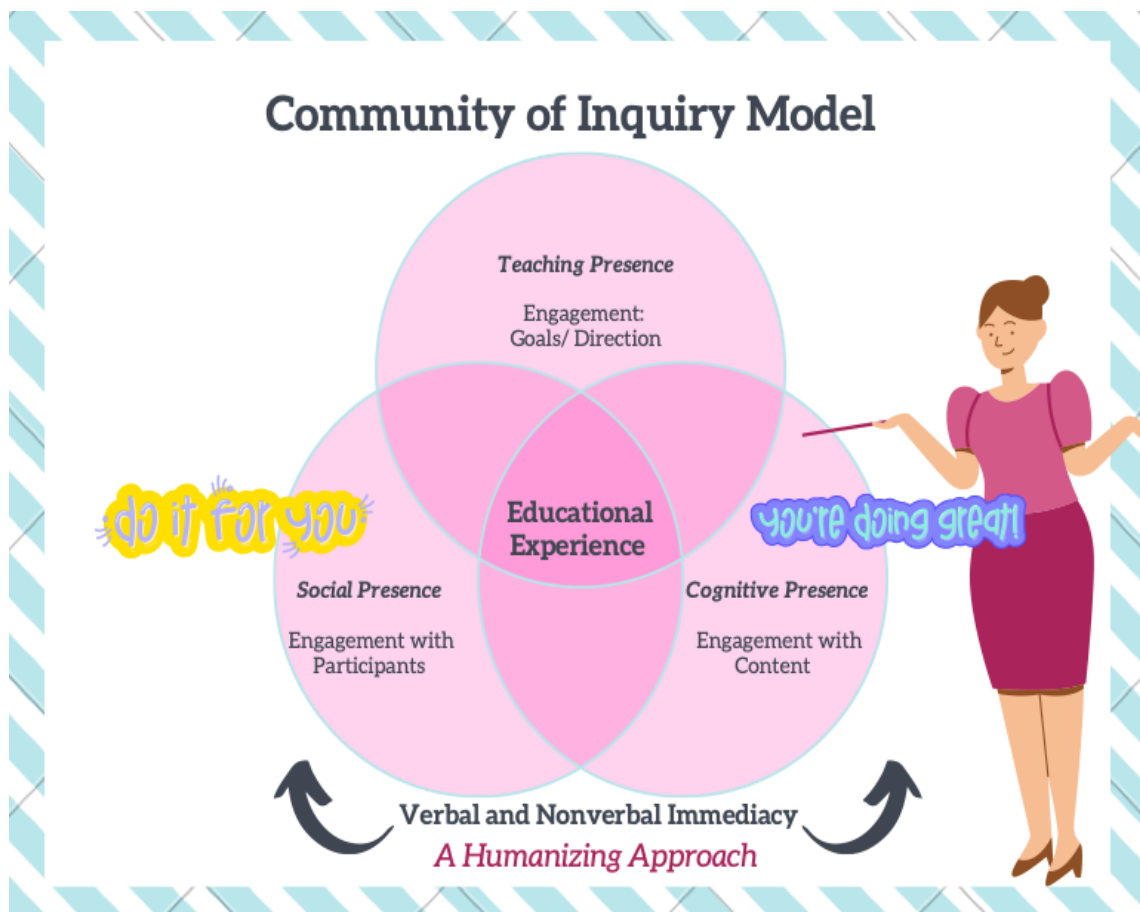


Motivation



Validation





Guide A: Syllabus

The guiding principles of Social Presence, Teaching Presence, and Cognitive Presence within a syllabus can be reflected in a humanizing through the aid of verbal and nonverbal communication such as pictures and supportive written communication. Validation and motivational outcomes are likely to occur through students' contributions as they find that the syllabus is a flexible approachable document.

Course of Study



**Name of School
Name of Department
Course Name, Section Number
Term, Year**

Course and Instructor Information

Many students have not heard the term “syllabus” before coming to college, and many who have heard the term may not realize the document’s importance in successfully navigating a course. Changing the title to “Course of Study” rather than “Syllabus” allows the student to have a clearer impression of what the document is about rather than feeling confused or intimidated about what they are about to read.

“It is written in a supportive tone and uses asset-based language to encourage growth, cultivate hope, establish expectations for success, and recognize the array of experiences and knowledge students bring to the class as a value that enriches learning” (Pacansky Brock, Smedshammer, & Layton, 2019, p. 6).

Nonverbal Immediacy: Is shown through positive written behavior instructor can choose to use to reflect a supportive tone and enrich learning.

Teaching Presence: Is shown through how course content is taught and presented therefore, changing “syllabus” to

“course of study” changes how learners are reflecting and processing information and how the instructor is going about introducing and teaching the class (Garrison et al., 1999, p. 89-90).

Giving room for an easier understanding where learners can automatically be aware of the paper, they have in front of them, rather than trying to figure it out and feel intimidated or confused if they do not know what the word syllabus means.

Instructor Name

Picture of Instructor 🧠 🌟



Brief Biography 🧠 🌟 ❤️

Teaching Philosophy

Office location

Learning more about the instructor helps create a sense of teacher presence in the learners.

Providing a picture of the instructor will instantly create positive nonverbal teacher immediacy and teacher presence since learners see their instructor as a person once they see the “course of study” first page.

Including a brief biography allows students to get to know their instructor right away. This will enhance verbal and nonverbal immediacy since students will be more likely to communicate in some form to their instructor. And increase motivation and affective learning.

Including the instructor’s teaching philosophy can also contribute to Teaching Presence and help create the student/teacher relationship (Richardson, Maeda, Lv, & Caskurlu, 2017, p. 412).

Telephone: Create a (Google phone number)

Email:

Class App: Download App to be able to use on phone and computer 

- **Details on how to go about this process**

Class communication applications increase student and teacher presence and verbal and nonverbal immediacy because it allows students to communicate and create authentic relationships. Some options are Slack, Yammer, GroupMe, etc.

Student Hours: Days and Time or by Appointment



Changing the phrase “Office Hours” to “Student Hours” creates a sense of positive teaching presence and demonstrates and changes the tone to what students will read and hear in their heads before thinking of talking to their teacher. Learners will realize that there is a time apart just for them, and they are more likely to join the hours allotted to be helped with their work or notify their instructor of their personal hardships preventing them from producing their best work. “Choosing words that position the student as the agent (Brookhart, 2009, p. 7).” is very important to make the course humanizing.




“It is about choosing words and phrases to support students in seeing themselves with a scholar’s identity (self-efficacy for learning) and as active and strategic in managing that learning (self-regulation). And it is about giving feedback that, when possible, helps students decide for themselves what to do next (Brookhart, 2009, p. 32).

Providing easy and quick communication options increases the chances and ability to text questions to the class or ask quick questions to the instructor, which increases the chances and ability to text questions to the class or ask quick questions to the instructor. This increases both Social Presence and Teaching Presence. It can also help students get quick answers to their questions and feel less anxious


about progressing in their learning, which positively impacts cognitive presence. Remind is one such application.

Options/links for instructors to be quickly available for students are provided below:



Calendar link - helps you schedule meetings ahead of time and decreases back-and-forth emails to set up meetings online!   

Demonstrating that the teacher is available and reachable also opens opportunities for the instructor to motivate learners and to validate students' experiences. Use a calendar application that allows students to book virtual appointments outside of Student Hours. Some options are Calendly, YouCanbookMe, etc.

Class Days/Time: Web-based server software Name – (Include Link/LMS) 

Including Class Days/Time for online hybrid and synchronous learning times makes these expectations clear to students. Providing the LMS or course website contributes to cognitive presence because instructors are able and are present to reinforce when students should be in class and what is expected from them as learners.

Reach Out for Success and Take Care of Your Mental Health Statement

Examples:



Mental Health Statement:

“When you realize your own abilities and you can cope with stresses of life you can work productively and can contribute to your community. Remember it starts with you. In the process, remember that you are not alone. Reach out and take care of your mental health.”

“Taking care of your emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing is so important. Your mental health affects how you think, feel, and act. It determines the way you handle stress, relate to others, and make all kinds of choices. You don’t have to take this journey alone. For information please call: _____”

“Reach Out for Success” written by the instructor can increase students’ self-reported intentions to seek help from their instructor and also relate to ratings of the instructor” (Gurung & Galardi 2021, p. 1). It is best to provide this statement at the beginning of the course of study for learners to read right away and know that their instructor cares about their mental health and not only the content they are teaching (teaching presence). It creates a trusting environment for the students where can feel comfortable to ask for help not only for class-related questions (teaching presence). “Reach Out for Success” may also lead to outcomes of validation and motivation for students.

Course Description



Example: This course is designed to assist you in becoming a more competent and effective communicator. By becoming a more competent and effective communicator you will be able to build long-lasting positive relationships and connections with others leading to frequent success and new opportunities in life. You will be introduced to effective speech communication with an emphasis on informative and persuasive public speaking and presentation skills. This will help you to express your ideas and feelings, and at the same time help you understand the emotions and thoughts of others.

Connection statement with an emphasis of long-lasting peer relationships (atmosphere)



Example: Learning is a process that does not happen overnight. Some days may be easier than others, yet the key is to never give up even if it is not easy at

times. In this class you will learn _____, _____, and _____.

This new knowledge will challenge you but will not defeat you because you will learn new skills that will last you a lifetime. All you must do is have the right attitude and give it your best.

In this section, instructors can explain the course description. Keep in mind that the goal is to connect with students, not to intimidate them into not taking the course. Write about what students will gain by taking your course (for example, skills, habits of mind).

This information helps humanize the online learning space and helps create a more intimate, active, and uplifting environment for the learner (teaching presence is activated).

This information can reduce student anxiety and confusion. This description helps build cognitive presence in the class.

When students receive the course of study, which is their first impression of the course they are taking, it must be establishing cognitive and teaching presence in a positive manner. This can mean including a more detailed course description that helps students make connections about the importance of building positive educational relationships.

This description helps create the atmosphere they will be experiencing and contributing to in the course. It helps form the class into a community that it should be by beginning to establish cognitive presence, teaching presence, and social presence (Garrison et al., 1999).

Course Goals

Required Text

Author, title, and year of the book (Provide link if possible) Different options to obtain the textbook 

Providing the textbook name, author, and year is common. However, providing more information on where students can obtain their textbooks is much more helpful and makes the class more humanized. Be sure to mention if your library has a copy of your text (physically or digitally) or if it is an Open Educational Resource (OER) that students can access for free and provide the appropriate link(s). By providing more information regarding the textbook instructors can enhance the (cognitive presence) aspect of their class and (teaching presence). Learners will then be more likely to find their textbook and be better prepared for the course increasing their motivation for the course (Garrison, et al., 2001).

Class Sessions



Details and explanation regarding how the class will take place:

Synchronous or Asynchronous Class:

Hybrid class:

Recordings of Class Sessions:

Provide Days, Times, and software platforms that will be used

In this section, the instructor is encouraged to be mindful and flexible providing options for learners to obtain the course content through attendance of the course, recorded videos of the course, or a hybrid class atmosphere where learners can experience and gain a traditional face-to-face instruction (social presence) along with web-based online learning such as videos, activities, discussions, etc. (teaching presence, cognitive presence) (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001).” Providing a more flexible environment creates a humanizing

sense since learners are more likely to stay enrolled in the class and not give up on their educational experience because they are given the resources and the time necessary to carry out their work.

Increasing social presence and teaching presence may provide instructors may have more opportunities to give feedback and interact with students in different ways not only one single form, resulting in a positive validation experience and motivation.

Grade: One-to-One Follow-up



To keep students motivated and engaged in the course, it is important to provide optional biweekly meetings for all learners. Such options increase positive social presence and teaching presence within the classroom creating a warmer environment between the instructor and the student because of the connection and communication that will be cultivated and nourished (Garrison et al., 1999). As a result, the possible outcomes are that students will likely feel highly motivated and experience a more positive validation experience regarding their personal educational journey.

Biweekly One-to-One: Dates and times

Optional One-to-One: Dates and times

Explanation: Purpose of Biweekly and optional one-to-one meetings:

Measures

Changing the words “Grade Standards” to “Measures” gives a warmer tone about how the student will be evaluated by the instructor. Through the choice of words, instructors are giving feedback to their learners on what to think about when they think about grades. Tone can inspire or discourage. It’s important to choose words that imply that students are agents, active learners” (Brookhart, 2009, p. 34).

This more approachable tone gives room for growth on the learner’s end and does not let the learner be defined in any way by a “grading standard” (Assuming that students might think they are being placed in a standard they might not feel capable of reaching).

Being careful on the language/words that are used within the syllabus can highlight teaching presence and cognitive presence greatly if considered and done properly. Instead of placing learners and instructors in a harsh relationship, it sets a growth connection where learning is happening, and both the student and the instructor can enjoy the process.

Meaningful Tasks

Changing the word “Assignments” to “Meaningful Tasks” gives room for the learner to approach the task differently as normally they would. Changing the tone of what is heard by the learner since “Tone refers to the expressive quality of the feedback message, and it affects how the message will be “heard.” The tone of a message is conveyed by word choice and style; these are much more than just linguistic niceties” (Brookhart, 2009, p. 34). Changing the term, in this case, creates a more supportive sense that allows students to know that the task is doable and not a duty and that after completing it they will gain something meaningful.

Cognitive presence and teaching presence are activated tremendously when instructors understand the importance of their language and how it plays a huge impact on the way students go about processing content and how they can carry out tasks.

Grading Scale and Points

EXAM 

Thinking about different ways to test students and providing different options is part of also humanizing the online course. The flexibility allows students to show how they have mastered their work and can make the work more “doable” and more meaningful for students as they complete the course, which can motivate students and create a more validating experience for them.

By giving options to the students on how they want to be examined engages teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence since students can show and demonstrate critical thinking abilities. Opening opportunities for students to ask questions and demonstrate the knowledge gained.

Paper, Presentation, Reflections, Applications (applying the concepts)

Late work and Makeup Assignments “Grace Period for Tasks”



Example: Tokens

It is encouraged to possibly have an opportunity where students can turn in late work without being harshly penalized for it. This act of kindness will alert the learner that their instructor wants them to succeed, and they should aim to work hard in and out of class. It also recognizes students' humanity and values their complex lives and decisions.

One technique can be, giving out “tokens” through email as chances to turn in late work. Students may earn additional “tokens” by completing extra meaningful tasks related to the course goals, such as attending a campus event, going to the writing center, participating in a study group, etc.

Another option is to have a specified “grace period” where students will not be deducted points. For example, if the professor is not going to begin grading assignments at the stroke of midnight, they may give students a grace period until the next morning (e.g. 9:00 am) when they will begin grading without a point deduction.

These strategies humanize the online class experience, increases teacher immediacy, student motivation, and teaching presence.

Communication In and out of the classroom



To humanize an online classroom atmosphere, it is important to include easier forms of communication by providing a manageable platform of communication. This can be through a class-specific social media app (e.g., GroupMe, Remind, Slack, Microsoft Teams, etc). Students enrolled in the class will be able to communicate their ideas to their peers and instructor easily. By instructors providing these forms of communication other than email helps learners feel as if they are not alone through the educational process and feel more comfortable in reaching out if any questions arise.

Teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence are at work since the learner has more opportunities to communicate with and engaging with the instructor, peers, and think critically about the course content. Communication immediacy may also play a huge role as students and instructors and peers to peers interact. Increasing their motivation.

Email, GroupMe, Remind, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Slack Applications

***Ways to communicate with the Professor
Expanding communication***

University Policies “University Guidelines”

Support for Students with Disabilities “Accommodations: Support for Students”

Inspirational or Motivational Quote



Including an inspirational or motivational quote can increase student's motivation to learn and work hard while taking the course and not give up. When providing inspirational or motivational quotes throughout the course of study, teacher presence and teacher immediacy are at work since the learner is less likely to not feel alone and feel encouraged.

Purpose of Road Map:



Including a unique statement of why students should check the weekly road map provided for them is important because it creates a mindset that prepares learners for what is coming related to the course and what they should focus on. Cognitive presence is shown when the learner is being prepared for what will be taught in the future. Teacher presence is also playing an active role as the instructor leads the way for the student to learn and be highly involved.

Example of Unique Statement: As you begin _____, you may or may not be familiar with what you will be learning. Thinking about this process can be overwhelming. However, during the process of learning new material, a road map was created to help direct your every step. Use the road map to your advantage and to gain a better understanding of what we as a class will be doing weekly. Think about this road map in the same way you would think about a regular world map as a guide to understand and know a new city, state, or country. In our case, this road map will help you understand this new class that has new knowledge and will help you in your present and future endeavors.

Road Map

Week 1: Module 1 <u>Dates:</u> <u>Title of Theme</u> Class Days	Before Class:	In Class:	After Class:
Week 2 Module 2: <u>Dates:</u> <u>Title of Theme</u> Class Days:	Before Class:	In Class:	After Class:

Guide B

JAMBOARD

The guiding principles of social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence within a Jam board can be reflected by verbal and nonverbal communication such as pictures and supportive written communication that are reflected in a single board. Increasing validation and motivational outcomes because students within the classroom can add their personal contributions to create a community of learning in a board where all their ideas will be shared with everyone within the same space of learning.


About Jamboard: 

Jamboards were created to help people create and collaborate and bring ideas to life. Jamboard unlocks people's creative potential in an unhindered productivity manner. Jamboards can be used whether people are in the same room or not.

Needed resources:

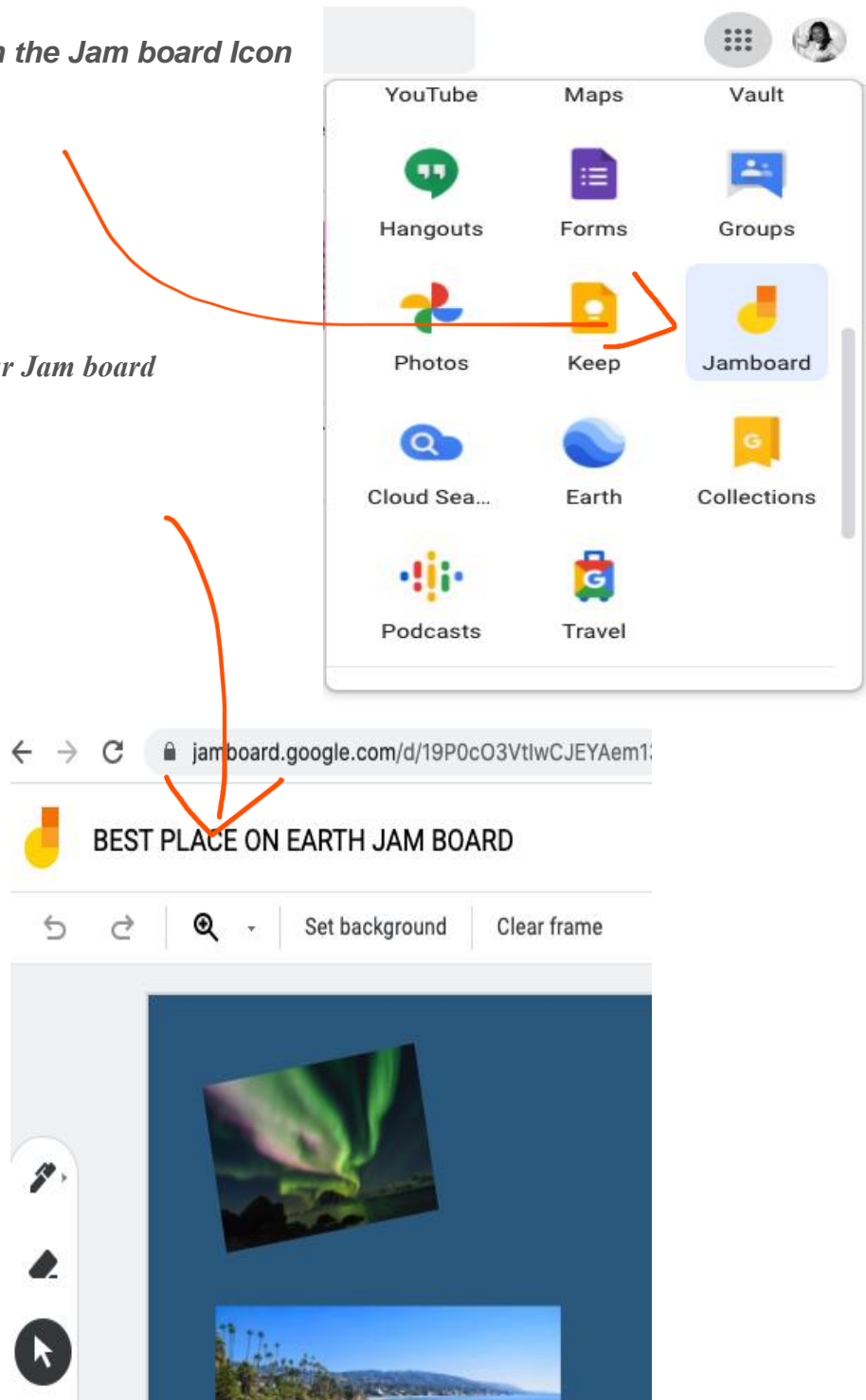
1. Phone/Computer.
2. A Google account. Creating a Google account will give you access to the Jamboard Icon

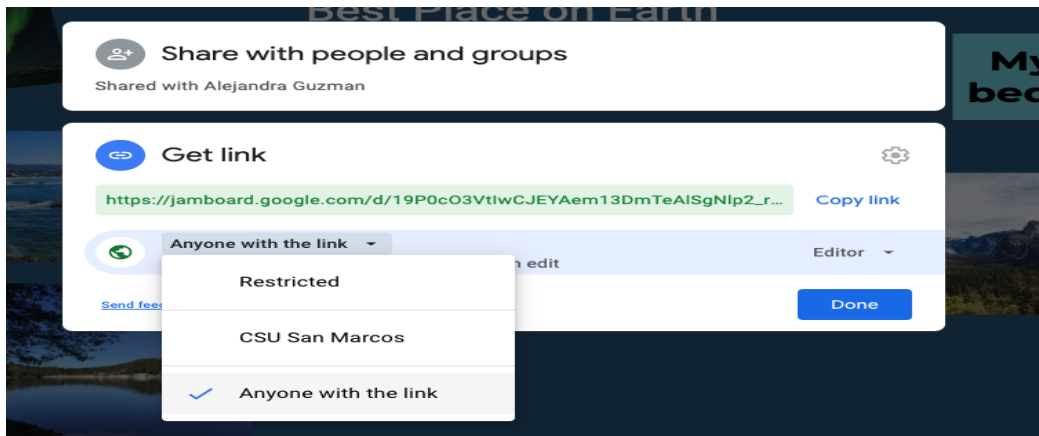
To-Dos:

1. Create a Jamboard by clicking on the  sign on the right of your computer and title your Jamboard on the left side: (see visuals down below)
2. Make the link given for your Jamboard account Shareable for class to have access to it

Click on the Jam board Icon

Title Your Jam board





Instructions for Synchronous Course:

1. Before the class session copy and paste the Jamboard link created/given to your class LMS account or somewhere visible for students to have easy and fast access to it.
2. Message or email students to post 2 pictures within the Jamboard and let them know they will be sharing in class about the pictures they post on the Jamboard.
3. Inform that they first need to say their name and major before talking about their Jamboard post.



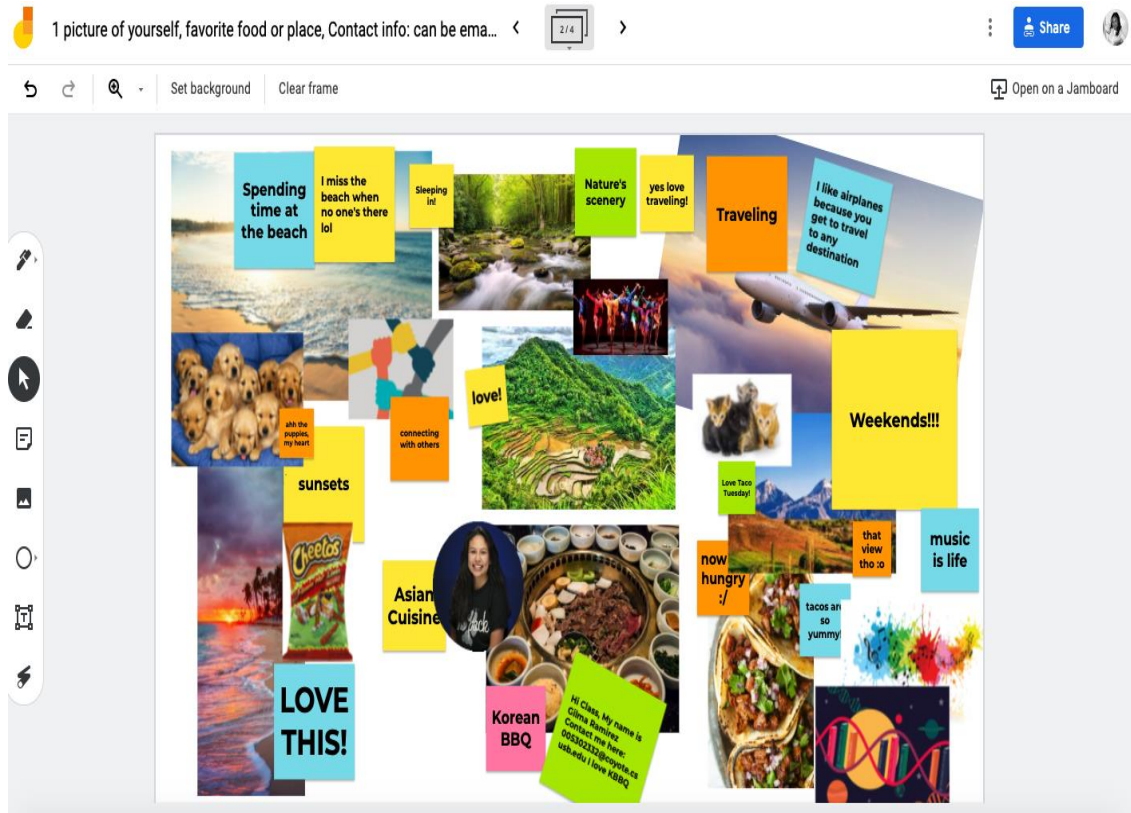
Ideas for Pictures that students can post:

Favorite food, favorite place to go, favorite animal, safe place, favorite movie, and so forth.

Instructions for Asynchronous Course:

1. Copy and paste the Jamboard link created/given to your class LMS account or somewhere visible for students to have easy and fast access to it.
2. Message or email students to post 3 pictures within the Jamboard the first picture is a picture of them with their name and major on the side, a favorite place/thing, and how they would like to be contacted (they can share phone number or email) by their peers.

***The Jamboard should look like this!
whether your class is synchronous asynchronous😊***



By implanting a Jamboard into the online class students and instructors can connect and create a humanizing atmosphere as a community as they share their likes and preferences. Social presence cognitive presence and teaching presence are all activated as students connect and express themselves through creativity in a humanistic form. Students are likely to experience a more positive validating experience and feel motivated.

Guide C ***MUSIC***

The guiding principles of social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence can be reflected through music. Enjoyable uplifting happy music can have the potential to uplift the student's communication within the classroom that opens the classroom to become a supportive and uplifting environment by increasing validation and motivation among the community of learners. Students within the classroom can suggest different songs that can help learners focus and think supportively about others and learning content.



List of Music for Motivation is likely to increase positive validating experiences for learners. "Playing music before class is another way to get students focused and engaged" (Deschaine & Whale, 2017).

"Music enhances the process of learning. The systems it nourishes, which include our integrated sensory, attention, cognitive, emotional, and motor capacities, are shown to be the driving forces behind all other learning" (Playing for Change Foundation, 2021).

Instructions for Synchronous Course:

1. Choose an encouraging quote and music/song of the week.
2. Email or message learners the chosen encouraging quote along with the music/song for the week.
3. Before starting class, play the music/song as you wait for students to come into the video chat room.
4. Before talking about any class tasks (share the quote as a way to encourage and motivate students).

Instructions for Asynchronous Course:

1. Choose the encouraging quote and music/song of the week.
2. Email or message learners the chosen encouraging quote along with the song for the week.
3. Post the encouraging quote and music/song somewhere visible and easy to see

YOUTUBE LINKS: Music Suggestions without Lyrics

1. [Happy Tropical Vibes- Positive Music Beats to Relax, Work, Study by Good Mood Music Box](#)
2. [Good Morning Vibes - Happy Energy Music Beats to Work, Study, Relax by November Rain](#)
3. [Happy Mood Music - Music to Keep the Mood Light and Happy by Happy Music Happy](#)
4. [Happy Music - It's Friday Baby - Happy Friday Vibes to Chill and Be Happy](#)
5. [Happy Music - Good Vibes - Upbeat Music Beats to Relax, Work, Study By: Happy Music](#)
6. [Chill Vibes - Lofi hip hop mix - Stress Relief, Relaxing Music By: Chilli Music](#)
7. [Feelin' good - \[upbeat chillhop mix\] By: Gooey Music](#)
8. [Happy Music - Uplifting Sunny Morning Music - Today is Going to Be a Good Day By: Happy Music](#)
9. [Happy Uplifting Background Music for Videos By: IceGuyMusic](#)

10. [Inspiring Corporate Background Music for Videos By: IceGuyMusic](#)

Music Suggestions with Lyrics

1. [Pharrell Williams - Happy \(Official Music Video\)](#)
2. [CAN'T STOP THE FEELING! \(From DreamWorks Animation's "Trolls"\) \(Official Video\)](#)
3. [Surfaces - Good Day \(Official Audio\)](#)
4. [Surfaces - Sunday Best \[Official Audio\]](#)
5. [Mariah Carey - All I Want for Christmas Is You \(Make My Wish Come True Edition\)](#)
6. [Meghan Trainor - Better When I'm Dancing](#)
7. [Surfaces - Loving \[Official Audio\]](#)
8. [Surfaces - Take It Easy \(Official Lyric Video\)](#)
9. [Surfaces - Palm Trees \[Official Audio\]](#)
10. [Surfaces - Sail Away \(Official Music Video\)](#)

Guide D

Use for the Middle of the Course:

Inspirational Motivational and Encouraging Quotes

The guiding principles of social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence can be reflected by using inspirational, motivational, and encouraging quotes through verbal and nonverbal communication such as pictures and supportive written communication. Increasing validation and motivational outcomes through a learning community of learners. Instructors can probe students to feel inspired and help motivate through the use of affirmations of what others are currently saying or what others have said in the past encouraging students daily.



A list of inspirational, motivational, and encouraging quotes can increase positive validating experiences for learners (Rendón, 2011).

Through the encouragement and the transferrable motivation of the instructor teacher presence, cognitive presence, and social presence can come to life in and out of the online class (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 1999).

As well as positive verbal and nonverbal immediacy to create humanizing atmosphere.

These quotes are derived from Anna Klawitter's website titled "75: Best Motivational and Inspirational Quotes for College Students"

You can find more: <https://www.meratas.com/blog/quotes-for-college-students>

Quotes for First Time College Students

1. "It's not about perfect. It's about effort." — Jillian Michaels
2. "Excellence is not a skill. It is an attitude." — Ralph Marston
3. "Focus on your goal. Don't look in any direction but ahead." — unknown
4. "You don't get what you wish for. You get what you work for." — Daniel Milstein
5. "Do something now; your future self will thank you for later." — unknown
6. "Don't try to be perfect. Just try to be better than you were yesterday." — unknown
7. "Keep going. Everything you need will come to you at the perfect time." — unknown
8. "Even the greatest were beginners. Don't be afraid to take that first step." — unknown
9. "Everything you've ever wanted is on the other side of fear." — George Addair
10. "Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life." — Steve Jobs
11. "You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have." — Maya Angelou
12. "The best way to gain self-confidence is to do what you are afraid to do." — Swati Sharma
13. "If you hear a voice within you say 'you cannot paint,' then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced." — Vincent Van Gogh
14. "Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow.'" — Mary Anne Radmacher

Quotes to Help Students Persist in Their Studies

1. "A little progress each day adds up to big results." — Satya Nani
2. "It's not about having time. It's about making time." — unknown
3. "Losers quit when they're tired. Winners quit when they've won." — unknown
4. "Skill is only developed by hours and hours of work." — Usain Bolt
5. "You will never always be motivated. You have to learn to be disciplined." — unknown
6. "Self-discipline is the magic power that makes you virtually unstoppable." — Dan Kennedy
7. "The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing." — Walt Disney
8. "Focus on doing the right things instead of a bunch of things." — Mike Krieger
9. "The successful warrior is the average man, with laser-like focus." — Bruce Lee
10. "Discipline is just choosing between what you want now and what you want most." — Abraham Lincoln

Quotes That Help Build Determination

1. "Wake up with determination. Go to bed with satisfaction." — unknown
2. "It never gets easier. You just get better." — Jordan Hoechlin
3. "Fall seven times, stand up eight." — Japanese Proverb
4. "The pain you feel today will be the strength you feel tomorrow." — Nicole
5. "You don't want to look back and know you could have done better." — unknown
6. "Successful people are not gifted; they just work hard, then succeed on purpose." — G.K. Nielson
7. "Determination is doing what needs to be done even when you don't feel like doing it." — unknown

8. "If you are not willing to risk the usual, you will have to settle for the ordinary." — Jim Rohn
9. "Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did." — Newt Gingrich

Guide E: Reflection Time

The guiding principle of social presence can be reflected through reflection time because reflection time opens the opportunity for students to share their experiences within the classroom environment. Reflection is a time for supporting positive change to occur for future and current students taking the course. Teaching presence can be enacted with reflection time by how instructors facilitate the reflections among students. Cognitive presence can be demonstrated with reflection time in how students are seeing their experiences and how they would like to see changes in the future. To increase validation and motivational outcomes, students can add their personal contributions to create a community of learning where they experience positive or negative experiences, and these reflections are accepted.



Instructions for Synchronous Course:

1. Have students pick 3 emojis in class. Emojis can be found in this link <https://www.emojicopy.com/>
2. Verbally tell the learners that the emoji chosen should reflect their feelings about how they felt at the beginning of the course, middle of the course, and the present moment.
3. Have students copy and paste their emoji into the chat, and as the instructor goes down the chat and have students share to the class how they felt (ALL responses are valid).

Instructions for Asynchronous Course:

1. Create a Google document, title the document "Reflection Time" on this document write the instructions (as stated below)
2. Choose 3 emojis from this website: <https://www.emojicopy.com/>

Emojis chosen should reflect your feelings about how you felt at the beginning of the course, the middle of the course, and how you feel now about the course.

3. For every emoji chosen, write 1 sentence explaining how you felt at the beginning of the course, middle of the course, and how you feel now the present moment.
4. Do not write your name for your answers to be anonymous make sure to look at this document on the last day of class to see what others have written and reflect on the fact that you might have not been alone throughout the process of learning.

Through “reflection time” instructors are likely to increase a more humanizing atmosphere for students, as learners reflect and think about their experience and their peers. Also increasing a positive validating experience for learners since their voice is being heard.

This guide is derived from ideas from Mary-Ann Winkelmes' (2004) Transparent Assignment template.

Click – Here for [Transparent Assignment Template PDF](#)

Learning and Leading

Learning Objectives: “Purpose”



Having learners read a purpose for every task they do in and out of class is important since this gives learners a clearer vision of what they should be gaining after they complete the task. Creating a “purpose” and outlining the learning objectives makes the task more doable and learners are more on track on what their educational experience at the moment of processing should be.

Cognitive Presence and Teaching Presence are present when both the learner and instructor demonstrate an interest in the same goal and work to enhance critical thinking to accomplish a goal. Students are also likely to feel motivated because they will know their purpose for what is to be accomplished.

Examples: 

Before:

Right now I feel “ _____ ” After completing this assignment I feel
“ _____ ”.

During:

While working on this assignment I will be able to apply “ _____ ” (e.g.
skills, knowledge, habits of mind). ”

After:

After completing the task I will be able to understand “ _____ ”

Instructions: “Telling vs Showing”  

Providing clear and transparent instructions to learners will help build a positive cognitive presence while student embarks on the new task. Being able to provide clear instructions and doing it in such a way that reflects on how the task should be considered and thought about is vital and reflects on teacher presence as well.

Transparency in what is the intention of the task is critical for learners to continue their educational growth. Addressing students’ feelings before and after the meaningful task is important for instructors to know to better create a more encouraging and inspiring teaching presence for all students.

Telling example:

This assignment is due Friday, April 22, 2021, by 10:00 PM and is worth 5% of your overall grade.

It should be five pages long. Please be sure to not have any grammar and writing errors.

1. Watch the movie, *Going to Space*.
2. Answer the following questions:
 - Define what space is and the symbolic meaning; and
 - Define how the transformation atmosphere occurred.

Showing example:

After observing the movie and thinking about a general conclusion purpose from the movie. Create a presentation (10 slides maximum) that addresses the four points below. The task will be due Friday, April 22, 2021, by 11:59 pm. Please be sure to review your slides and have someone else check to not have any grammar and writing errors.

1. Define what is space and the symbolic meaning;
2. Define what transformation atmosphere meant; and
3. How does this issue reflect difficulties in preserving life.

Breakdown of points: Symbolic meaning 10% Transformation Meaning 30%
Explains Affects 15% Meaning difficult preserving life 30% Writing 15%

Student comments:



Allowing learners to share their thoughts and feelings about the task gives students the ability to feel more comfortable in the task they completed. It allows the instructor to also get to know what the student is thinking about the assignment and creates space for improvement on the instructor's end for all future learners that will take the same course. This can foster a humanizing approach since students' feelings and ideas and thoughts are being considered not only the instructor's point of view, thus increasing a positive validation experience.

Instructors follow up comments:



Instructors' constructive criticism is important for the development of the learners' educational growth. Providing a section where learners can receive feedback in a warm tone as examples above can create a positive sense of teaching presence, cognitive presence, social presence, and immediacy when the learner receives the feedback, and they are motivated to keep going despite the changes that might need to be made.

Example of Constructive Feedback:



Hi Linette,

I noticed that your annotated bibliography was full of great articles that you researched. Great job in searching for interesting articles. However, for this assignment your annotated bibliography needed to be more aligned to the methodology aspect of your research. For the next assignment make sure you base your annotated bibliography aligning it to the same topic you chose for research methodology. Overall great work. Keep it up!

Best,

Dr. Ramirez

Other Resources for Instructors to Provide to Students

Metacognition:

- [Metacognitive Study Strategies – Learning Center](#)
- [Mastering Metacognition: The What, Why, and How](#)

Study tips:

- [Ten Study Methods That Work - Learning Center](#)
- [17 Scientifically Proven Ways to Study Better This Year](#)
- [Critical Thinking - Everyday Skills - Study Skills - 301](#)
- [DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE STUDY HABITS](#)
- [Academic Success - Penn](#)
- [How to Improve Memory for Studying in 27 Ways - Study 101](#)
- [Studying 101: Study Smarter Not Harder](#)
- [10 Steps To Ace Your Next Test](#)

Appendix A

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[_Equitize_Higher_Ed/links/5e4d701e92851c7f7f488740/Humanizing-](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Michelle-PacanskyBrock/publication/339365337_Humanizing_Online_Teaching_To_Equitize_Higher_Ed/links/5e4d701e92851c7f7f488740/Humanizing-Online-Teaching-To-Equitize-Higher-Ed.pdf)

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