Kylene Cooley

Online Teaching Philosophy

Earth science students and scientists thrive in collaborative, social environments to learn and discuss how the environment around us works. My online course design begins with a skill that students want to develop as a goal and builds the material around that. In the online learning environment, I create the social spaces to facilitate student-to-student and student-to-instructor connections. My participation in these spaces establishes a safe community for thinking out loud and working together.

My online teaching philosophy intentionally favors cooperative learning experiences wherever possible. Students will feel better connected through online courses when they have opportunities to interact freely and develop a written, or recorded, voice. Students become invested in their peers when we share our personal interests, depend on one another to make progress, and have chances to find commonalities on their own and make connections. Some activities I would use include discussion forums and peer review of work. I encourage students to share problems that they cannot solve, especially with coding, so that the whole class can find a solution together where anyone can contribute and everyone can benefit.

I use project-based summative assessments since both the online environment and time-related stressors make timed assessments counterproductive to online learning goals. In addition to having more than one continuous interval of time to complete an assessment, a well-communicated project plan that begins before half the term is over can help students manage their time without surprise deadlines. Project-based assessments can also help students to meet expectations or deadlines outside of the classroom. The course for LaTeX that I have developed is designed so that the time that students have committed to the class, goes towards achieving their personal academic goals. I want the skills I teach to be immediately applicable to improve student efficiency in their endeavors outside of the classroom environment.

Neither economic situation nor ability should be the biggest barriers in the online class when we have the tools to create an accessible classroom. I choose class materials that are available openly, or easily accessible through a library eBook otherwise. With the tools often integrated into learning management systems, it is simple to add audio transcripts, captions, and provide text-reading services to students.