Tips for Teaching an Online Class

Remind people that they have to pay attention! Make a point to remind people that an online class is just like an in person class. But, since we can't see each other, it is harder to know if anyone is even paying attention. I joke that if I see your head hit the table when you fall asleep from boredom, or if you roll your eyes at my bad jokes, or if you take a call on your cell phone and leave the room - I will probably see those things in an in person class!! If that happens in an online class, I have no idea. Students need to communicate more to let the instructor know when something is going wrong. They could all pick up the phone and walk out of the room and I will unknowingly be talking to no one!!

Engage students more. Ask questions, call people by name, use the tools in the application you are using (like polls, chat, changing of status) to involve people.

Use your voice. You have to use more inflection to sound interesting. When in person, you can use body language, eye contact and other things you do not have access to online.

Take an online class. As a student in a class, it is hard to juggle all the windows you need to use in one monitor (or even two). If you have time to sit in a class, it will help you know what the experience is like.

Set up a second computer so you can monitor the delay. Set up a second computer that will sit close enough for you to see it and log into that computer as a student. Watch that computer to get an idea of how long the delay is. If you are using VOIP or a phone for audio, your voice will not get to the participants at the same time as the screen captures.

Slow down and Mind the delay!! Don't move the mouse too quickly or switch windows too quickly. When you are showing something important, be sure to pause for a couple of seconds to ensure that everyone gets a view of what you are trying to show.

Announce your schedule. Try to stick to a schedule a bit more in an online class. For example, if you expect that an exercise will have about 20-30 minutes, say, "It is 30 past the hour. I expect that this exercise will take about 20 minutes. I will check back with you at 45 minutes past the hour to see how it is going. In the mean time, if you have a question, please "raise your hand" in the classroom application or type something in the chat area to get my attention." This way, they may take off the headsets and can focus on the exercise without worrying about missing something.

Stick to your schedule. If you say you will check in at 45 minutes past the hour, stick to that! If you don't start speaking until 47 or 48 past the hour, your students are sitting around wondering what is going on. In a regular classroom, people can see that you are making your way to the front of the room and understand what is going on.

Use public chat rather than private messaging (when appropriate). If you are pm'ing students, the others are sitting around wondering what is going on. When possible answer questions using your voice or public chat so that others can benefit from the answers.

Ask for feedback periodically. Ask if you are going too fast or two slow and check in with them periodically.