

(this handout has been prepared by Bonnie Tucker, Research Specialist, [btucker@uchicago.edu](mailto:btucker@uchicago.edu) and adapted from the Templates for Partial Face-to-Face Humanities Core Sections Under Social Distancing Requirements by Members of the F2020 Humanities Core Working Group)

## **Defining Terms & Instructional Modes in the Online/Hybrid Learning Environment**

### **Defining Basic Online Teaching Terms**

**Online:** If a course is described as fully online, then students and the instructor never meet face-to-face, and the course is entirely conducted online. However, the term online can include both synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Some other terms used interchangeably to describe online instruction include **remote learning**, **e-learning**, and **distance education**.

**Face-to-Face or F2F:** Instructors and students meet in-person together, although perhaps on campus, or outside, or in a socially distanced class.

**Hybrid:** If a course is described as hybrid, then most teaching and learning takes place online, but there are some F2F meetings included in the syllabus.

**Blended:** This is similar to hybrid, and the terms hybrid and blended are often used interchangeably. Some teaching and learning takes place online, but there are also some F2F meetings included in the syllabus.

**Synchronous Instruction:** In an online or hybrid class, this term refers to any activities in which the instructor and the students must participate together online at the same time. For example, Zoom discussion sessions are synchronous instruction.

**Asynchronous Instruction:** In an online or hybrid class, this term refers to any activities that students can complete independently online, or to self-paced activities. For example, watching a pre-recorded lecture or completing a written discussion board or a blog post.

**Blended Synchronous:** This term refers to an in-person F2F classroom, which also includes students who are videoconferencing into the physical classroom space in order to participate (for example, if your class meets F2F, but two of your students were unable to return to Chicago from abroad because of COVID-19, this might be an option for accommodating those two students during the F2F meetings if they otherwise could not take the course). This option requires extensive classroom equipment and planning to ensure that students videoconferencing in will be able to fully participate.

## **Pedagogical Advantages to Online/Hybrid Instructional Modes**

In contrast to our normal teaching routines in which we combine different modes of teaching intuitively, online and hybrid teaching requires the instructor to deploy them more consciously and creatively. The following overview of instructional modes (largely culled from conversations with spring instructors) is designed to help you think about what might best suit your learning goals and teaching style.

### **A. Asynchronous Online Instruction**

Asynchronous online instruction platforms might include Canvas discussion boards, course blogs, prerecorded lectures, podcasts, etc. Asynchronous online instruction has the pedagogical advantage of giving students time to process or repeat information, particularly if they do not inhabit the same time zone. For example, students responding to a written online discussion via Canvas or a class blog can take time that they might not have during a faster-paced F2F discussion to look for relevant passages to support claims and to reread before offering an interpretation of those passages. With prerecorded lectures or podcasts, students have the opportunity to pause to take breaks or make more extensive notes, and instructors can embed quizzes in prerecorded materials to test students' recall and comprehension.

### **B. Synchronous Online Instruction**

During Spring Quarter 2020 in the Humanities Division, the most commonly used synchronous online platform was Zoom. Its screen sharing function makes it very easy to share slides, use Google docs, etc. without the extra time required for connecting to a media cabinet. Zoom breakout rooms are highly efficient for arranging group and partner work and are relatively easy to manage. This may be useful to those who conduct group or partner work during regular class time, given that social distancing requirements may render such formats more difficult during F2F teaching.

### **C. Face-to-Face Instruction (F2F)**

Under normal circumstances, we might not think of functionally differentiating the F2F component. In a partially F2F course, however, instructors may wish to consider how to best use the time when the instructor and students share the same physical space. Maybe the most important function of F2F instruction is establishing social presence and forging community. Of the available teaching modes, it is the most familiar one for developing students' ability to follow and learn to participate in an academic conversation. Lateral relations among students may also arise more spontaneously and comfortably than when students interact with one another in Zoom discussions.