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Adjunct lecturer Steve Raquel teaches his online Strategic Brand Communications class at the University of Illinois. Photo Credit: Holly Rushakoff

10 Viral Tips to Start Teaching Online

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As an adjunct lecturer at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for the last six years, I've had the privilege of being able to teach online (for both undergrad and grad classes) as part of the [College of Media](#) and the [Strategic Brand Communication](#) master's program.

In light of the spread of COVID-19, colleges and universities are taking precautions by closing in-person classes and asking teachers to switch to an online format immediately. I started teaching online starting three years ago, so therefore I had a longer onboarding timeframe, and of course my personal switch to moving my current classes online has been minimal. However, for many teachers, this requirement is going to be an awakening both in terms of technological prowess, but also operational management as teaching online has both its benefits and detriments.

Since the question of teaching online isn't being debated, I wanted to share some tips on things to keep in mind when you teach virtually that may help you manage your online class in this chaotic time if are new to it or nervous about it. I'm still learning, so if you have other

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...you probably have some training videos, interactive galleries, etc. as well as

Tip #1: Zoom (or any online video meeting platform) is your friend.

Luckily, our campus uses [Zoom](#) to house our online meetings. It allows for a lot of flexibility to meet online at once via laptop, phone line only, and by mobile video. Your college probably invest in a platform already, but if not, some other platforms include [BlueJeans](#), [GotoMeeting/Goto Webinar](#), [Skype for Business](#), [Blackboard Collaborate](#) and many others. While these platforms have a cost, so please check with your administration if you have access to one or more of them.

Tip #2: Tape your lectures, and use live online meetings to teach gaps and address questions/discussions.

One of the benefits of online teaching is self-paced learning. I've pre-taped all my lectures, then I ask students to send me questions of things they don't understand. From time to time, I do my live teaching sessions to fill in the gaps and allow the students to engage each other in group discussion. Students then can watch and rewatch the lectures at their own pace without the potential of a live teaching session where they might have bad internet connection.

Tip #3: Don't worry about an TED talk worthy video of your lecture.



In your mind, you're probably thinking your lectures need to look like a highly produced TED talk – multiple angles, overlays, boom or multiple mikes. It doesn't need to be that. Most of my online lectures are me using Zoom to record me talking over my powerpoint slides at a minimum. Make it simple, use varied inflection, and make them shorter *than*



... ..

Tip #4: If you tape your lectures, break them up.

Teaching a 60 or 90 minute in person class can be managed relatively well, but I personally seen students completely check out on videos longer than 10 minutes. I break my normal teaching into multiple videos of between 3-5 minutes a topic. I encourage your student to take breaks and to be willing to come back to watch a video vs. if they need to rewatch an hour's worth-plus of one video on multiple topics.

Tip #5: You don't have to teach during your live sessions if you don't want to (see Tip #2)

Since I videotape my lectures beforehand, I require students to watch them prior to the meeting, collect questions prior on anything they read/watched, then go over that during the live sessions. I think use the rest of the time doing group questions that allow them to connect with their fellow classmates on the topic being discussed. This way your online time with them is very focused on active learning, not passive listening.

Tip #6: Have students check in via chat multiple times during the live session.

This allows you to ensure they are active and present. Honestly, when you have more students it's easy to hide and to jump off without being noticed. If attendance is important to track, the chat module allows you to see names and when they check in. Most chats are saved separately — so you can open it later to track attendance.

Tip #7: Record your online sessions, and make it available for students to watch if they aren't available to join you live.

The fact is that students will be busy, and there will be times where they can't attend legitimately. I really make it a point to encourage live participation and watching it only if they have a valid excuse. However, make sure to have the video recorded and available for viewing after class.

Tip #8: For goodness sakes, make sure your internet speed is stable.

The ... worst.when.it...doesn't...right? Exactly. Find a place where the video and connection strength is strong and consistent. The last thing you want is having YOU drop off multiple times in your own online class and having students be frustrated. You might want to consider using live video, but then calling in via your phone line to minimize the load on your internet bandwidth.

Tip #9: Be ready for your close up.



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ensuring you audio and video works, and then also having good light in front of you so your face can be seen. Natural light is the best if you can get it. As a side note, minimize anything behind you that will distract students from focusing on you.

Tip #10: Enjoy learning yourself.



Your first couple of times teaching online may feel like the *I Love Lucy* episode at the Chocolate Factory, but you'll get the hang of it. As you encourage your students to learn new things, you'll learn it alongside them and will grow in your ability and confidence in teaching online.

Feel free to add your thoughts and additional tips below.

Steve Raquel is an award winning adjunct lecturer at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He also owns [IOV Media](#), a social media/digital shop located in the Chicagoland area. In addition, he and his wife have two high schoolers and a college student who are currently enrolled in either online or blended classes. You can learn more about him at www.iovmedia.com.

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Way to go on the timely topic - AND the great title of the piece. Well done, Steve. I guarantee going to get a lot more views than it already has.

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we will see.. :)



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