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MOTIVATION &  
ENGAGEMENT

In online teaching

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PACE

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## Are you an instructor who improves student motivation?

The following list will help you rate your ability to increase your students' motivation.

*To motivate my students:*

- I show enthusiasm for my subject and for teaching
- I communicate high expectations to my students
- I avoid sarcasm and put-downs
- I listen carefully in order to understand my students' concerns
- When students have been absent, I let them know they were missed
- I connect students' current knowledge and skills to new learning
- I treat all students equally and fairly
- I make positive comments when responding to student work
- I communicate clear learning outcomes for students
- I use well-designed, open-ended questions to promote critical thinking skills
- I use visuals (overhead transparencies, models, videos) with lectures to stimulate interest
- I use brainstorming at the beginning of a lesson to get students involved
- I encourage students to apply what they have learned to situations outside the class
- I wait 5 seconds after I ask a question before I call on a student

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### Motivating online learners

Your ability to inspire motivation in your online students is no different than in your face-to-face environment, except that some of your strategies will change. Some key motivational elements of online instruction are: engaging and maintaining student interest, establishing relevance, setting expectations for time, and providing continuous encouragement. Sound familiar?

Plan to incorporate the following motivational strategies when you build your online lesson plans.

*To engage and maintain interest:*

- Incorporate interactive features that involve students in practice, reflective thinking, and problem-solving
- Specify the learning outcomes and their long-term benefit
- Challenge student responses in discussion threads by posing questions that have students consider the topic at a deeper level

*To establish relevance:*

- Appeal to, and encourage sharing of, students' life experiences as they relate to the course content and outcomes
- Provide real life scenarios, case studies, and examples that your students can connect with

To set expectations for time:

- Use your course's calendar function to post due dates for activities and assignments
- Let students know an estimate of time for each activity or assignment
- At the beginning of the course, provide students with a course overview that helps them navigate the course material and resources, according to the course schedule, at a reasonable pace
- Provide the students with a module-by-module guide to assist them with readings and assignments (for term-based courses)

To provide continuous encouragement:

- Post course announcements for your students
- Post module summaries or discussion thread responses that articulate student contributions and achievements to date

Incorporate journaling into your student assignments (have students email you summaries of their progress or concerns a few times throughout the course)

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### Adding motivational strategies to your course plans

Plan to include motivational strategies in your classes throughout the term.

#### At the beginning

Most decisions to leave a course are made by students in the first few weeks of the course. They then sit, unmotivated, throughout the rest of the term. You must pay particular attention to motivational strategies at the beginning of term. For example:

- Get to know the students individually through their transcripts, private interviews, or a non-graded paper
- Be explicit about your expectations and classroom policies
- Teach students the study skills they will need—they may not know how to do assignments, take notes, or work in groups (resource materials on developing study skills are available from the Learning and Teaching Centre)

#### In the middle

To maintain high motivation as the course proceeds you can:

- Give assignments or quizzes every couple of weeks so students know where they stand
- Offer help outside of class and make personal contact with students

- Show students respect—be collegial and don't "talk down" to them
- Model high standards in all activities
- Use visuals to clarify concepts and emphasize key points
- Use examples and anecdotes to keep students mentally engaged with the subject matter

At the end

To maintain student motivation as they leave your classes, in the last week you can:

- Review what they have learned—help them to pull together the concepts and issues
- Show them how these concepts and issues can help them in their future
- Inform them about related courses that follow yours

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### Adding motivational strategies to your lesson plans

To increase your ability to inspire motivation in your students you need not throw out all your old lesson plans. Strategies may be added to existing plans quite simply. Use the following list to step through this process.

*To ensure my lesson plans contain motivational strategies, I have:*

- Specified the learning outcomes in each lesson plan
- Estimated the amount of class time to spend on each topic
- Checked my plans against possible motivational strategies
- Added motivational strategies in any areas not covered
- Checked that I have included motivational strategies at the beginning, the middle, and the end of my lessons

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### How to Keep Online Students Motivated

For those with experience of face-to-face teaching, a useful technique for understanding online learning issues is to relate them to a similar scenario in face-to-face learning. How do students stay motivated in a face-to-face environment? Students may feel motivated if:

- They have a clear understanding of the relevance and purpose of the study
- The study is varied, interesting and challenging
- They feel comfortable in the learning environment
- They feel a sense of achievement and that they are progressing and learning
- They feel they are being listened to and that their contributions have value

- There is opportunity for personal interaction and socialisation
- They have adequate support when they encounter problems
- They enjoy the learning process

These issues are no different in an online environment and can be addressed through course and activity design and through the relationships built between teacher and student and between students.

### **Relevance and purpose**

There are several ways students can be encouraged to see the relevance and purpose of online study. These can include:

- Clear information at the start about what the course is, where it can lead and its validity as an online alternative.
- Clear information as to the learning objectives and the assessment criteria of the course.
- An indication of how each activity relates to the learning objectives.
- Activities that relate to the student's own experience or have a practical application.

This can be encompassed in the information students receive at the start of the course, in the information given with each activity or through summaries or reflection at the end of each section or module. As an example, the teacher could send an email at the end of each section that confirms each student's successful completion of the segment and also reflects on the relevance of the tasks accomplished in terms of practical application and also learning objectives.

### **Varied, interesting and challenging**

Use of a variety of styles of activity and interaction can help maintain interest and can also allow a course to cater for different learning styles. Variety can help students remain oriented in the online environment, as a succession of similar tasks can be repetitive, and also can deter plagiarism by requiring students to communicate on different levels and with different 'voices'. Varying the sequence of activity types can also help students and teachers manage their workload by avoiding having several time consuming tasks in a row.

Different activity types can include:

- Individual, paired or group tasks
- Essays, reports or short answers tests
- Discussions, debates, collaborative tasks (where a final product has to be devised), case studies or role plays
- Multiple choice quizzes, games, self-assessed quizzes, webquests, weblogs, interactive exercises such as 'drag-and-drop'.

Online delivery could also allow you to offer activities of varying difficulty to suit those at higher levels. An example would be to have additional optional quizzes, games or individual tasks of increasing difficulty for students who have accomplished the set tasks and need further challenges.

### **Comfortable in the learning environment**

Unless students have studied online before, they are liable to fear that they are not 'doing it right'. Even experienced online students can have this insecurity at the start of a new course so it is important to ensure all students are comfortable in the online learning environment in order to encourage quality learning. The following are some ways to help students feel comfortable and confident:

- Provide an appropriate induction so that they feel confident with the technology and what is expected of them. Induction can include:
  - How to access the class online
  - The details of the class including deadlines and expectations
  - Getting to know their teacher
  - Getting to know their peers
  - How to understand and use the technology
  - How to seek help
- Try and predict what problems may occur or insecurities students may have so these can be pre-empted through course design or information sharing.
- Respond promptly to emails, especially at the start of a course
- Make sure responses are personalised and directly address any concerns expressed by the student
- Intervene quickly and supportively if the student seems to be having problems
- Reassure students as to their ability to work well online
- Give overt praise where it is due
- Direct students to further help if needed

### **Being listened to and having value**

The nature of a student's contribution to a class can affect their motivation, as can the response they receive. The teacher's relationship with each student, and the nature of their interaction with them, may have the greatest impact and this is made more problematic by the lack of non-verbal communication in the online environment e.g. no body language, facial expression or voice tone. The teacher can help students feel they are being listened to by:

- Giving swift responses, even if only to acknowledge receipt of work.
- Giving constructive and positive feedback.
- Giving clear and unambiguous directions if work needs to be redone or supplemented.
- Making sure responses are personalised so the student feels the teacher has listened to them as an individual.
- Showing a willingness to engage in any discussion or exploration over and above the minimum required if it is relevant to the course aims.
- Being alert to problems with the course design or content that need to be corrected
- Being alert to inappropriate or negative behaviour from other students.

The teacher can't guarantee positive or thoughtful responses from peers but a constructive group dynamic can be encouraged. This can be done through an appropriate induction that allows students to get to know each other and to build a rapport. 'Ground rules' for appropriate behaviour can also be explored during induction

and can be reinforced by the modelling of ideal behaviour by the teacher. Allowing some social interaction can also help build positive relationships as well as provide a controlled outlet for inevitable social tangents (the equivalent of chatting or passing notes in a classroom).

### **Sense of achievement and progress**

Only the most mature and confident online students will be able to make a contribution without fearing they have misunderstood the topic or that they are the least experienced and skilled in their group. The teacher can have a considerable impact on a student's confidence in their progress and abilities through the nature of their interactions with students. The following are some techniques to encourage this:

- Respond constructively and positively to student work. An example of a constructive response technique is to use a 'praise sandwich' where any criticism is sandwiched between two positive comments. This helps students recognise their strengths and feel more optimistic about their weaknesses.
- Give regular updates on each student's progress with positive acknowledgements of their achievements. This could be done through an email at the end of each section that confirms the successful completion of the segment, highlights any work that was of a high standard, the particular strengths of the student and any areas that need to be improved.
- Design courses with learning in manageable 'chunks' so students can see their progress as they complete each section.
- Design activities that, at regular intervals, encourage students to summarise or reflect on what they have learned.
- Integrate regular self-assessed tasks, such as automated quizzes, so that students can consolidate what they have learned and confirm their progress.
- Help students manage their workload so they don't fall behind and feel discouraged. Techniques for this include having a clear course structure with regular, enforced deadlines or synchronisation points, giving regular reminders of deadlines, contacting students who are falling behind and sharing good time and information management techniques.

### **Personal interaction and socialisation**

Personal interaction can form a large part of the learning experience in face to face learning so should be encouraged online in a manner that doesn't detract from educational aims. Students will ask questions of their peers that they may be reticent to ask teachers and scheduled interaction can prevent covert socialisation that gets in the way of study.

Social interaction online doesn't always happen spontaneously as it does in a face-to-face environment. This can be because students don't know each other or are afraid to make the first move because they can't see the familiar marker points that tell them what the social structure is. There are various methods for encouraging interaction, including:



- Setting 'icebreaker' tasks at the start of a course. These can encompass email or discussion based games designed to encourage the sharing of personal information, such as:
  - A list of questions to be answered and shared
  - A 'round robin' quiz where each answers a question then poses another
  - Web searches for facts of personal interest
  - True/False quizzes
  - Description of yourself using a song/book/film/animal
- Set activities that require students to work in pairs or groups to share ideas or to collaborate on an outcome.
- Providing a space for non-work related interaction such as a 'Café' conference in a discussion board or a social chat room.
- Having occasional or initial face-to-face meetings so that students can interact on a more familiar level.

### **Adequate support**

There are few things less motivating, especially when using technology that can be unreliable, than having problems that aren't being addressed. It is important to have adequate support mechanisms for students, to ensure that they know how to access them and, to help teachers manage their workload, to encourage alternative support resources. Some strategies for providing adequate support include:

- Clear information provided at the start of a course as to the process students need to go through to access support, including contact details of support staff.
- Help or Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) sections on the class web site for common and recurring problems.
- The building of a rapport between student and teacher so students are confident to ask questions or voice concerns.
- Provision of prompt responses to problems.
- Encouragement of peer interaction so students can provide support for each other.

### **Enjoyment**

All of the above should lead to a successful learning experience but don't forget also to make the learning fun. This can be through:

- The use of humour and light-hearted interaction
- Using quizzes and games for learning
- Encouraging informal interaction
- Applying learning to everyday situations
- Being enthusiastic

Online learning may not suit all students and there are no guarantees that any course design or delivery will suit all learning styles but it is possible for course designers and teachers to help students stay motivated in an online environment through an understanding of what makes learning interesting. The application of skills learned through face-to-face teaching combined with an understanding of the experience of the

online student will help create programmes that retain a student's interest and help them gain confidence in their abilities

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### Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation

Motivation is affected by several factors, including reinforcement for behavior, but especially also students' goals, interests, and sense of self-efficacy and self-determination. The factors combine to create two general sources of motivation: students' expectation of success and the value that students place on a goal. Viewing motivation in this way is often called the expectancy-value model of motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002; Wigfield, Tonk, & Eccles, 2004), and sometimes written with a multiplicative formula:  $\text{expectancy} \times \text{value} = \text{motivation}$ . The relationship between expectation and value is "multiplicative" rather than additive because in order to be motivated, it is necessary for a person to have at least a modest expectation of success and to assign a task at least some positive value. If you have high expectations of success but do not value a task at all (mentally assign it a "0" value), then you will not feel motivated at all. Likewise, if you value a task highly but have no expectation of success about completing it (assign it a "0" expectancy), then you also will not feel motivated at all.

Expectancies are the result of various factors, but particularly the goals held by a student, and the student's self-efficacy. A student with mastery goals and strong self-efficacy for a task, for example, is likely to hold high expectations for success—almost by definition. Values are also the result of various factors, but especially students' interests and feelings of self-determination. A student who has a lasting personal interest in a task or topic and is allowed to choose it freely is especially likely to value the task—and therefore to feel motivated.

Ideally both expectancies and values are high in students on any key learning task. The reality, however, is that students sometimes do not expect success, nor do they necessarily value it when success is possible. How can a teacher respond to low expectations and low valuing? In brief, raising low expectations depends on adjusting task difficulty so that success becomes a reasonable prospect: a teacher must make tasks neither too hard nor too easy. Reaching this general goal depends in turn on thoughtful, appropriate planning, selecting reasonable objectives, adjusting them on the basis of experience, finding supportive materials, and providing students with help when needed.

Raising the value of academic tasks is equally important, but the general strategies for doing so are different than for raising expectations. Increasing value requires linking the task to students' personal interests and prior knowledge, showing the utility of the task to students' future goals, and showing that the task is valuable to other people whom students' respect.

### References

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### ARCS Model of Motivational Design (Keller)

The ARCS Model of Motivational Design was created by John Keller while he was researching ways to supplement the learning process with motivation. The model is based on Tolman's and Lewin's expectancy-value theory, which presumes that people are motivated to learn if there is value in the knowledge presented (i.e. it fulfills personal needs) and if there is an optimistic expectation for success.<sup>[61]</sup> The model consists of four main areas: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction.

Attention and relevance according to John Keller's ARCS motivational theory are essential to learning. The first 2 of 4 key components for motivating learners, attention and relevance can be considered the backbone of the ARCS theory, the latter components relying upon the former.

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TARGET: a model for integrating ideas about motivation

<b>Attention</b>	<b>Relevance</b>	<b>Confidence</b>	<b>Satisfaction</b>
<p><b>Perceptual Arousal</b></p> <p>Provide novelty and surprise</p>	<p><b>Goal Orientation</b></p> <p>Present objectives and useful purpose of instruction and specific methods for successful achievement</p>	<p><b>Learning Requirements</b></p> <p>Inform students about learning and performance requirements and assessment criteria</p>	<p><b>Intrinsic Reinforcement</b></p> <p>Encourage and support intrinsic enjoyment of the learning experience</p>
<p><b>Inquiry Arousal</b></p> <p>Stimulate curiosity by posing questions or problems to solve</p>	<p><b>Motive Matching</b></p> <p>Match objectives to student needs and motives</p>	<p><b>Successful Opportunities</b></p> <p>Provide challenging and meaningful opportunities for successful learning</p>	<p><b>Extrinsic Rewards</b></p> <p>Provide positive reinforcement and motivational feedback</p>
<p><b>Variability</b></p> <p>Incorporate a range of methods and media to meet students' varying needs</p>	<p><b>Familiarity</b></p> <p>Present content in ways that are understandable and that related to the learners' experiences and values</p>	<p><b>Personal Responsibility</b></p> <p>Link learning success to students' personal effort and ability</p>	<p><b>Equity</b></p> <p>Maintain consistent standards and consequences for success</p>

## 1. Attention

- According to the Keller model attention can be gained in two ways: (1) Perceptual arousal – uses surprise or uncertainty to gain interest. Uses novel, surprising, incongruous, and uncertain events; or (2) Inquiry arousal – stimulates curiosity by posing challenging questions or problems to be solved.
- Methods include the use of:
  - Active participation - such as games, roleplay or other methods to get learners involved with the material or subject matter.
  - Variability – To highlight materials and account for differences in learning styles, use a variety of methods (e.g. use of videos, short lectures, mini-discussion groups).
  - Humor -Use a small amount of humor to gain interest (too much may be disrupting)
  - Incongruity and Conflict – Posting statements that go against a learner's past experiences to cause critical thinking.
  - Specific examples – Use a visual stimuli, story, or biography.
  - Inquiry – Ask questions or problems for the students to answer.

## 2. Relevance

- Establish relevance to increase a learner's motivation. Use existing language with examples. Six major strategies described by Keller include:
  - Experience – Explain to students that they will use their newly learned skills with existing skills. Students learn well by bringing being able to use existing skills/contexts with newly acquired skills.
  - Present Worth – How will this knowledge help me?
  - Future Usefulness – How will this knowledge help me in the future?
  - Needs Matching –Benefit from the dynamics of achievement, risk taking, power, and affiliation.
  - Modeling – Show students how you want them to respond/act – lead the way. You may also include strategies such as guest speakers, videos, and having the learners who finish their work first to serve as tutors.
  - Choice – Provide students with options or methods to pursuing their work (ie. Reflective journal or video blog).

### 3. Confidence

- Help students understand that they can indeed be successful in the subject. If students feel they cannot meet the objectives or that the time or effort is too high, their motivation will decrease.
- Provide clear objectives and reiterate any required prerequisites – enable students estimate their likelihood of success by giving requirements and an evaluation criteria.
- Make sure there is meaning in the success (how it will help them in the future).
- Scaffold the learning – build small steps of growth during the learning process.
- Feedback – Provide feedback and acknowledgements for success.
- Locus of Control – Student should feel some control over their learning and assessment. They should believe that their success is a direct result of the amount of effort they have put forth.

### 4. Satisfaction

- Reward students learning, whether it's praise or simple acknowledgement of a job well done.
- Provide opportunity for the students to see how their learning is meaningful by providing opportunity's to use their new acquired skills in a real life setting
- Provide feedback and reinforcement. When students can see results, they will be motivated to continue learning. Fulfilment is based upon motivation, which can be intrinsic or extrinsic.
- Do not patronize the learner by over-rewarding easy tasks.

*For more information:*

John Keller's book: [Motivational Design for Learning and Performance: The ARCS Model Approach](#).

## TARGET: a model for integrating ideas about motivation

A model of motivation that integrates many ideas about motivation, including those in this chapter, has been developed by Carole Ames (1990, 1992). The acronym or abbreviated name for the program is TARGET, which stands for six elements of effective motivation:

- Task
- Authority
- Recognition
- Grouping
- Evaluating
- Time

Each of the elements contributes to students' motivation either directly or indirectly.

### Task

As explained earlier, students experience tasks in terms of their value, their expectation of success, and their authenticity. The value of a task is assessed by its importance, interest to the student, usefulness or utility, and the cost in terms of effort and time to achieve it. Expectation of success is assessed by a student's perception of the difficulty of a task. Generally a middling level of difficulty is optimal for students; too easy, and the task seems trivial (not valuable or meaningful), and too hard, and the task seems unlikely to succeed and in this sense useless. Authenticity refers to how much a task relates to real-life experiences of students; the more it does so, the more it can build on students' interests and goals, and the more meaningful and motivating it becomes.

### Autonomy

Motivation is enhanced if students feel a degree of autonomy or responsibility for a learning task. Autonomy strengthens self-efficacy and self-determination—two valued and motivating attitudes described earlier in this chapter. Where possible, teachers can enhance autonomy by offering students' choices about assignments and by encouraging them to take initiative about their own learning.

### Recognition

Teachers can support students' motivation by recognizing their achievements appropriately. Much depends, however, on how this is done; as discussed earlier, praise sometimes undermines performance. It is not especially effective if praise is very general and lacking in detailed reasons for the praise; or if praise is for qualities which a student cannot influence (like intelligence instead of effort); or if praise is offered so widely that it loses meaning or even becomes a signal

that performance has been substandard. Many of these paradoxical effects are described by self-determination and self-efficacy theory (and were explained earlier in this chapter).

### Grouping

Motivation is affected by how students are grouped together for their work. There are many ways to group students, but they tend to fall into three types: cooperative, competitive, and individualistic (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). In cooperative learning, a set of students work together to achieve a common goal (for example, producing a group presentation for the class); often they receive a final grade, or part of a final grade, in common. In competitive learning, students work individually, and their grades reflect comparisons among the students (for example, their performances are ranked relative to each other, or they are “graded on a curve”). In individualistic learning, students work by themselves, but their grades are unrelated to the performance of classmates. Research that compares these three forms of grouping tends to favor cooperative learning groups, which apparently supports students’ need for belonging—an idea important in self-determination theory discussed earlier in this chapter.

### Evaluation

Grouping structures obviously affect how students’ efforts are evaluated. A focus on comparing students, as happens with competitive structures, can distract students from thinking about the material to be learned, and to focus instead on how they appear to external authorities; the question shifts from “What am I learning?” to “What will the teacher think about my performance?” A focus on cooperative learning, on the other hand, can have double-edged effects: students are encouraged to help their group mates, but may also be tempted to rely excessively on others’ efforts or alternatively to ignore each other’s contributions and overspecialize their own contributions. Some compromise between cooperative and individualistic structures seems to create optimal motivation for learning (Slavin, 1995).

### Time

As every teacher knows, students vary in the amount of time needed to learn almost any material or task. Accommodating the differences can be challenging, but also important for maximizing students’ motivation. School days are often filled with interruptions and fixed intervals of time devoted to non-academic activities—facts that make it difficult to be flexible about granting individuals different amounts of time to complete academic tasks. Nonetheless a degree of flexibility is usually possible: larger blocks of time can sometimes be created for important activities (for example, writing an essay), and sometimes enrichment activities can be arranged for some students while others receive extra attention from the teacher on core or basic tasks.

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The bottom line about motivation: sustaining focus on learning

Sooner or later when you teach, there will be situations appropriate for each perspective about motivation described in this chapter. There will be times when focusing exclusively on students' appropriate behavior (or lack thereof) will be both necessary and sufficient evidence of motivation. But there will be other times when it is important to encourage students' beliefs that they can accomplish specific tasks, and still other times when providing for students' underlying needs for competence or social connection is important. Think of these perspectives as alternatives to be used either singly or in combination when the time is right.

Because of your own values, attitudes, or beliefs, you may find one perspective more personally compatible than another. Even if you settle on favorite ways of motivating students, though, we encourage you to keep the other, less favored approaches in reserve anyway, and to experiment with them. We believe that an eclectic approach to motivation will enrich your teaching the most, and enrich your students' motivation and learning as well. If there is a single lesson from the concepts about motivation outlined in this chapter, it is this: academic motivation has no single source, and teachers motivate students the best when they assume motivation is complex. The next two chapters look at ways of realizing such "broad-mindedness" in practice, first when you prepare activities and classes and later when you actually teach them.

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## IDEAS and GUIDELINES FOR WEEKLY DISCUSSION FORUMS

An instructor should post weekly (or have the students post) a discussion question to the forum that all students are asked to respond to. This includes one original comment and responses to others posts. Having a weekly discussion topic provided students an opportunity similar to a traditional classroom discussion and is very important to provide a sense of community and ongoing motivation. These weekly discussions should focus (if applicable and possible) on the chapter and have a grade. The followings are suggestions for each discussion.

- What did you find most interesting in this week's reading?
- Are there any ideas from this week's readings that you had heard or read about in the past?
- How could what you read this week be used in real life, in work or in the work for this course?



- What are your thoughts about this week's readings (how does it resonate with you or impact your thoughts/actions).

You may need to remind students to take care in their writing and use netiquette. Also taking care in what they say, as not all in the class will have the same viewpoints. Be sensitive and reflective to what others are saying.

- Don't use all caps. It is the equivalent of screaming.
- Don't use extreme emotion or opinion.
- Think before you hit the post (enter/reply) button. You can't take it back!
- Don't use aggressive language.
- Use clear subject lines.
- Don't use abbreviations or acronyms unless the entire class knows them.
- Be compassionate. Anyone can make a mistake.
- Keep the dialogue collegial and professional.

## Design for Engagement

### Design for Engagement

Keeping students motivated throughout weeks can be a daunting task, whether it be in a traditional face to face course or an online course. However, with the right systems, assignments and content in place it doesn't have to be. We need to accept that not ALL students are going to be engaged (for a myriad of reasons), however, working with the willing and providing an online environment that fosters and grows engagement will serve you and the students. Some ideas and strategies that provide effective and pedagogical sound concepts are:

- Do not limit your course web pages to blocks of dense text and sparse images. There are many ways to create an engaging design for your course pages. Rely on use of imagery, video, audio, music and interactive features. If possible, work with an instructional designer to create these features.
- Use video of yourself introducing course content
- Use video of exciting topics in your course, such as this videos
- Use Case studies that involve role-playing and opportunities to synthesize various materials around a central topic
- Ask for students' input on class topics and assignments (Dennis et al. 2007)
- Use of "gateway" assignments, which students must complete before proceeding in the course can be effective in some situations.
- Adopt instructional methods that emphasize "guiding students toward their own discoveries of facts and relationships" (Alutu 2006) (Such as, "While you're reading this assignment, think about how it relates to \_\_\_\_\_.")

- Use discussion boards to create a sense of community and promote active engagement with the course topics.
  - Create course topics and readings that are current. Incorporate recent news events and magazine articles into existing course topics (Dennis et al. 2007).
  - Assign roles in discussion assignments, especially for provocative discussions based on current events, case studies or policy issues.
  - Set up peer groups - extrinsically motivated students are motivated by achievement in relation to their peers; intrinsically motivated students are able to interact with peer groups to gain more insight – both types of students benefit from working in peer groups. (Moore 2006)
  - If possible and applicable, hold a face-to-face meeting for a critical activity such as a field trip or as check-in throughout the course (via Skype, etc.).
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