Teachers' tips

This page serves as space, where the teachers can share their opinions, tips, and feedback regarding online teaching. Those may be short paragraphs and tips on how to approach particular issues or longer articles on how to deal with online teaching as a whole. Contact Jakub Sichta if you want to contribute.

Engaging small students group (Denis Alekseev)

As of engaging strategies, in small groups, I tried to give students some short exercises (make a graph, solve a short problem, etc) and then send their solution to my messenger (e.g., WhatsApp). So, it looks like a good alternative to personal participation in class, but only applicable to small groups.

Jan Zápal's approach to asynchronous classes

1. What I describe below is my (Jan Zapal) 'teaching setup' I used in the spring of 2020 to teach microeconomics 2 (first year of the PhD) and political economy (second year of the PhD). The setup is optimized relative to my preferences, needs, and teaching style. Namely, I write a lot on the board, but also use slides. I did not want to use extensive time to 'redesign' my course. Least effort was the guiding principle. Another goal was to have a setup that was independent of CERGE/Lifesize - I wanted to avoid scheduling problems stemming from the limited number of rooms within Lifesize - and would allow me to teach both at the office and at home.

2. I use Zoom. When I teach, students are connected and can interact with me in 'real-time'. In order to minimize connection problems and background noise, the only camera and microphone that are on are mine. Students unmute when and only when asking questions. I record the lectures. Students report using the recordings even having been at the lecture (e.g, to check something they did not understand during the lecture). Absent students clearly benefit from the recordings. A free version of Zoom limits meetings to 40 minutes. The Charles University Zoom Licence is available to CERGE-EI faculty.

3. In terms of the technology, what I need as a minimum is a whiteboard, in front of which I put a camera and wear wireless headphones with a microphone. Camera resolution is important for what I write on the board to be readable. I bought Logitech HD Pro Webcam C920. Headphone microphone quality is important for what you say to be heard. I bought Sony WI-XB400. Putting the technology to work might take time, tweaking, experimenting, and further bits and pieces of hardware and/or software. These are specific to your system and you will discover what you need by yourself. (E.g., USB Bluetooth adapter to connect the headphones, software to turn off the autofocus of the camera so that what you write on the board is not out of focus when you step in front of the board.) Total setup costs were about 5000CZK.

4. Zoom allows one to record meetings. What ends up being recorded is what you show via the camera, what you show via the shared screen and any audio. All additional cameras (e.g., of the students) are also recorded, which is one more reason to keep them off since you don't want your slides showing small because there is another recorded window of a student staring at you. Storing the recordings might be an issue but all CERGE/Charles employees should have access to CESNET. An example of a recorded lecture is here. Uploading and sharing the video is done in a couple of minutes

once you have CESNET access.

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