Best Practices for Teaching Remotely

Determine Your Approach

There are two options for teaching remotely: synchronous or asynchronous.

- **Synchronous**: the instructor and students meet (virtually) in real time. This approach allows for more interaction, but has the potential for more technical challenges.
- **Asynchronous**: Instructors share course materials with students, who consume and interact with the content on their own schedule. With this approach, instructors have more control over the content and students can choose when and how long they interact with the material, but there is less social connection between students and with the instructor.

Classes can be held live (synchronously) using Zoom with instructors hosting a video conference and students logging in to watch a lecture or have discussions. Alternatively, instructors can pre-record videos using Panopto and share them with the class, to be watched at a later time (asynchronously). Depending on the course, video may not be the optimal method of instruction, and sharing files, facilitating online discussions, and creating online assignments and assessments may be better.

See the Resources for Teaching Remotely page for more information on available tools.

Set Expectations for Students

If teaching remotely isn't part of the normal routine, students may need guidance for communication and participation in the class. Let students know what you expect from them.

Set Expectations for Yourself

It is time consuming to create polished videos. It can take experience to facilitate effective online class discussions or video conferences. Review the expected outcomes for your course and figure out what approaches will be most likely to lead to the desired results. Spending hours editing a video to increase the visual appeal may be less important to the educational outcomes of the class than time spent reframing assignments or holding online office hours with students.

Take advantage of existing resources

If you already use Moodle for your course content, look at tools such as online assignments, discussion forums, quizzes, and the gradebook to handle tasks remotely.

Look to existing resources to replace the need to create new online content. MERLOT, MIT OpenCourseWare, and discipline-specific repositories may have content that can be repurposed for your class.

Handling Accommodations

Changing the format of the class or using different technology can present accessibility challenges. Check with Student Disability Services or accessibility @swarthmore.edu with questions or concerns.

Resources from Other Schools

Stanford has an informative site for faculty teaching remotely, including a set of best practices for lectures, lab activities, fostering collaboration among students, and assessing student work.