# How to improve discussion over Zoom

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# Overview

In this workshop, we will:

1. welcome questions about current problems instructors face regarding discussion.

2. discuss what it means to have "in-class" discussions over Zoom.

3. offer general methods of improving discussion over Zoom.

We welcome any questions or advice you may wish to share!

**What problems are you facing regarding discussion in your remote classes?**

**What are our <u>goals</u> for discussion?**

**How do we meet these goals in a traditional "in-class" discussion?**

**What "in-class" discussion strategies transfer to remote learning?**

# How can we accomplish our goals for discussion over Zoom?

# How can we get students to connect with the material and with each other over Zoom?

**1** | Expand our definition of discussion

- What methods and mediums of communication are available to us while we teach remotely that will similarly benefit students?

**2** | Incorporate flexible discussion tools

- Zoom chat
- Zoom breakout rooms
- Shared Google doc
- Padlet
- Canvas/Sakai Forums

**3** | Model the discussion you want to see

- Lead by example! Any example! It doesn't have to be yours.
- Participate even more so than you might think is necessary.
- Incorporate community-building.

# 1. Expanding our definition of discussion

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What methods and mediums of communication are available to us while we teach remotely that will similarly benefit students?

# 2. Incorporate flexible discussion tools
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- Which mediums will similarly benefit students?

  - <u>Zoom chat</u> — one feature of Zoom; can be used to have para-conversations that can be looped into the main conversation; can also be used by students who can't respond verbally; must be moderated during class to fully integrate the chat as a discussion tool
    *Consider incentivizing the moderator position by offering extra credit to students who volunteer

  - <u>Zoom breakout rooms</u> — another feature of Zoom; can be used to facilitate small group discussion; will likely feel more comfortable to the students than speaking up in the main Zoom "class"; ask students to share what they discuss in the breakout room in the main class

# 2. Incorporate flexible discussion tools
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- Which mediums will similarly benefit students?

  - <u>Canvas/Sakai discussion forums</u> — can be used to have students synthesize ideas ahead of class time; ask students to share these same ideas in discussion; students already have something to say that might inspire other students to respond or share their own discussion posts.

  - <u>Shared Google doc</u> — can be used similar to the chat and the discussion forums; a class document that everyone can edit, adding notes and ideas; must be moderated if you want to address students' ideas in class; can be used sync/async; easy to navigate for all

  - <u>Padlet</u> — similar to discussion forums and a shared doc; an app that allows students to respond to prompts in a dynamic way; can be used sync/async; easy to add posts and comment

# 2. Incorporate flexible discussion tools

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**EXAMPLE**

**Google Docs**

**October 15, 2020: Posthuman Subjects and Being Prey**

**Greenland Shark**

- Creatures that **make memories and perceive time through their bodies**. It doesn't need to be conceptual, like in humans. This is **distributed cognition**. How they perceive their environment through their senses. How these creatures may **integrate the environment into their cognition**. The creature can perceive difference even if it cannot remark on that difference.

    - Erin: I might be off here because I don't have a strong understanding of distributed cognition, but can we make a case that the **Greenland shark represents the posthuman subject as possessing both distributed ability and distributed cognition?**

        - Yes! That's a great way of putting it.
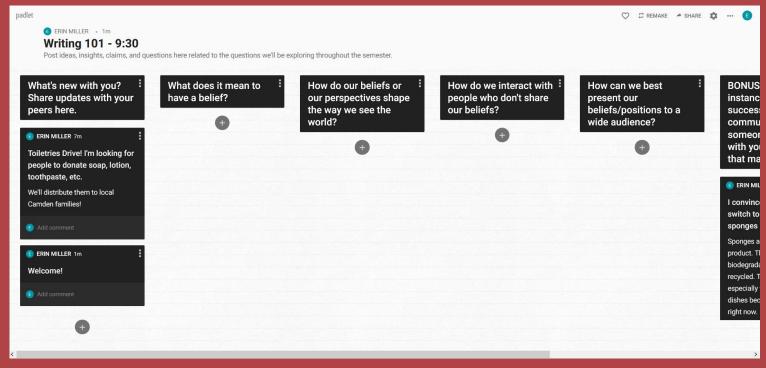
        - Thanks, Jean!

**Posthuman Subject**

- The posthuman subject is a theory of the self that acknowledges the subject as **insufficient**, but still **embodied and embedded**. That is **affected and affects**. **Participating in a network of relationships**. It is an always **virtual subject** (because it cannot manifest the 'we' of its relationality), but that **activates its subjectivity through a constant process of becoming.**

    - Braidotti would also argue that the posthuman subject is always localized.

- Briadotti theory of the subject is a practical response. It is theoretically insufficient, but it wants us to get our boots on the ground and actually do something. In order for there to be a posthumanist politics, there must be a posthuman subject. One that acts accounting for the depth of its relationality.

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# 2. Incorporate flexible discussion tools

## EXAMPLE

## PADLET

# 2. Incorporate flexible discussion tools

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**REVIEW**

Students might not be comfortable communicating over Zoom, especially when it comes to trying out ideas like they would in a f2f class, but **using mediums that promote para-conversations** in class is another way we can get students to discuss.

Although these are discussions in their own right, **para-conversations can be monitored to loop into a verbal discussion.**

A space to first write out ideas before sharing them in verbal discussion may make students more comfortable discussing in class.

Open these spaces for written communication and then **ask students to elaborate on the ideas they've shared in the chat/doc/padlet.**

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# 3. Model the discussion you want to see

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- General tips

  - Model discussion more than you think is necessary
  - Offer examples of the type of discussion you want to see
  - Participate in the discussion
  - Actively review the discussion

- Why?

  - Competing for attention in a remote environment
  - Poor internet connection or phone reception
  - More opportunity for students to get to know you

# 3. Model the discussion you want to see

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What types of discussions do you want students to engage in?

Consider *rebranding* these discussions into easily understood formats:

- Sharing insights or analysis from the texts = mic-drop moments
- Sharing research or close reading observations = "did you know…?" segment
- Asking students to form an arguable position = a debate

*Require that everyone bring a "mic-drop moment" or a "did you know…?" shareable. For debates, require that every member on each team voices a point.*

# 3. Model the discussion you want to see

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**EXAMPLE**

<u>Mic-drop moments</u>

After reading the first half of *The Crucible*, please share what you believe to be a "mic-drop moment." A mic-drop moment is a unique realization or insight you have about the text that can be supported by the text. ***It is not,*** "Abigail reminds me of my friend from middle school." ***It is,*** "Abigail lies about being hurt by the women of the town to get to the man she wants. Reverend Parris uses his power to stamp out the women he perceives as a threat. The people in this town abuse their power for their own personal and political reasons."

Please share your mic-drop moments, with your evidence preceding your mic-dropping claim, on Padlet. We will share our mic-drop moments in class.

# 3. Model the discussion you want to see

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**EXAMPLE**

<u>Debate</u>

We finished *The Crucible* and we have feelings we need to discuss. Rather than commiserating about how much we despise Abigail, we will discuss a central claim that the play evokes: "The play shows that ethos, one's credibility, is what drives the characters to act in their community."

Half of the class will try to prove this statement is correct, and half of the class will try to disprove it (groups listed below). Please bring two points to prove your stance. You will have ten minutes to form an argument with your group, five minutes to present your argument, and ten minutes of open-floor, where both groups can speak. Each member of the group must articulate a point in favor of their position at some point during the debate.

# Additional Resources

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How to Overcome Classroom Zoom Fatigue, Elizabeth Stone

Zoom: Teach Online Class Sessions, University of Minnesota IT

In-depth Guide: Using Zoom to Teach Online Class Sessions, Harvard IT

How to Teach Remotely with Padlet, New EdTech Classroom