Question Themes from:  
Moving a Case Class Online Webinar

We are addressing themes that emerged from questions attendees asked during our webinars. We continue to share these and other resources for moving your classroom online, including tips for using Zoom and other technologies, at our Moving Your Classroom Online resources page.

Professor Bill Schiano, provides his insights on 3 themes that arose from the questions we did not have time to answer during the Moving a Case Class Online webinar.

Reading the Room
Many of us fear the loss of the wealth of non-verbal signals we regularly rely on in our traditional classrooms to assess how engaged our students are, and what they might be thinking about the current topic. When we move online, we can still gather that information, using a range of techniques:

- **Watch their video.** In most videoconferencing platforms, you can enlarge your view of students’ video. Use the largest monitor you can, turn off your view of your own picture, and shrink the size of other elements. You won’t see them as well as in your traditional classroom, but you can still pick up a lot – surprise, discomfort, disagreement, boredom, and many other reactions can be read surprisingly well from even a postage-stamp sized video feed.

- **Ask them.** We do this routinely in traditional classrooms, with everything from a quick show of hands, to probing questions. Online, it’s even easier to do. Open a discussion thread, a chat window, or a poll.

- **Check response time in synchronous meetings.** How quickly do they respond to impromptu polls? If you suspect technical issues are causing the cause, run two polls in quick succession and see if the same students lag in the second poll.

- **Course analytics.** In most learning management systems, you can easily see when students are logging in, what they are looking at, and the extent to which they are participating and when.

Board Planning
For many of us, the boards in a traditional classroom are the way we organize discussion. When videoconferencing, with some adjustments and practice, you can apply your board management to the benefit of your students and you. Here are some options, and tips for making the most of them:

- **Videoconferencing Platform’s Whiteboard.** You can handwritten, draw, or type on this with a mouse or touchpad, but it is far easier to write legibly if you have a stylus and a tablet or
touchscreen. Most platforms allow you to add additional boards and move between them. The platform’s own whiteboard is usually more responsive than if you use your own software. On some platforms, there may be a lag between when you write and when it appears on the screen; make sure you can tolerate this.

- **PowerPoint.** You can treat each slide as a board, and draw, type, and pre-load diagrams and other structures. Harvard Business School has kindly shared a set of templates for various board layouts at [https://s3.amazonaws.com/he-product-images/docs/Slide+Templates+for+Converting+Board+Plans.pptx](https://s3.amazonaws.com/he-product-images/docs/Slide+Templates+for+Converting+Board+Plans.pptx). Use the navigation pane to move between “boards.” Be careful not to let your preplanned PowerPoint structure dictate the flow of your discussion.

- **Word Processor/Note Taking Software.** You can type in the platform’s whiteboard, but here you get all the tools you are used to for formatting, outlining, and editing. Be sure to choose a font size that can be seen on your students’ screens. Change your page size to correspond to the screen size if you’d like to separate boards, or let it flow continuously.

### Pacing

It is difficult to cover the same amount of material in a videoconference as you could in person. The difference is greatest when the class first meets. Scale back your teaching plans a bit, but close the gap between your traditional and online teaching by:

- **Setting the stage.** Do as much pre-work as you can. Load polls ahead of time. Warm call students before class starts so you have opportunities to develop topics quickly.

- **Watching the clock.** First, literally have a clock visible on your screen. It’s easy to get wrapped up in all the things to think about when teaching via videoconferencing. If you have a large monitor, put a clock near the camera so you don’t need to look off camera for time checks. Use that awareness of the time to keep yourself on pace. It’s easy to “go long” on topics online because you have to work harder to get cues from the audience on when it’s time to move on.

- **Minimizing technical issues.** Survey students to learn about their setups. Encourage practicing with the technology and testing before class starts. Students who are comfortable using the controls, and remember to unmute and speak into the microphone will be better conversationalists.

- **Fostering productive norms.** Preparation for class, attentiveness, hand raising (and nearly as important, hand lowering), and not calling out in the audio channel will all help the flow and accelerate the pace.

- **Avoiding lulls.** Ask clear, concise questions to minimize confusion and get more immediate responses. Reduce abrupt cold calling of students; they will often need to scramble to unmute,
and may not have been paying close attention or even heard the question. Give them at least a few seconds of notice and the conversation will flow more smoothly.