

**DANIELLE  
KINSEY:**

Thank you for this opportunity to talk about my online course. My name is Danielle Kinsey, and I'm an assistant professor in the Department of History. The course I want to talk about today is the History of the Body. I put it fully online in 2015 and have taught it every year since then. The courses capped at 65 students because it's a third-year course, and I hope by talking about the specifics of this course, I can gesture out to talking about online teaching more broadly.

The reason I initially put it online in 2015, I'll be honest was to increase enrollments, and it certainly did that, particularly for history courses that don't have war or Hitler in the title. It did the trick there. But the second reason I wanted to put it online was because in that 2014-2015 moment, a lot of folks in history and probably the humanities broadly were talking about online teaching but in a way with a lot of suspicion we'll say.

I had a few people tell me that they didn't think that online teaching was real teaching, and so I went into the whole experiment with a lot of skepticism. I wanted to see for myself and develop my own thoughts about online thinking from a place of firsthand experience. I went in as a skeptic, but I came out as a convert. So I want to share that experience with you today.

Because of this I would argue that online teaching isn't categorically different from face-to-face teaching. Yes, the technology-- mastering the technology-- mastering might be a strong word-- but engaging with the technology certainly has a learning curve to it, and there are things you have to know to translate what you do in the face-to-face classroom online. It's not a simple translation. Those differences are real, but there's a lot of things that are transferable.

Some students will really thrive online, and some won't. But if you think about it, that's the same as face-to-face courses. Some will seek a lot of help from you. Others won't, same as face-to-face courses.

Some will do all the readings and watch all the videos and stay up with the course very consistently, and in my experience in face-to-face courses, others won't. So there's a lot that can be transferred over. The online world was not such a foreign

country to me.

In terms of the specifics of my course, I wanted it to reflect the face-to-face iteration as much as possible, and so a weekly rollout made sense to me.

So the course was designed to be asynchronous-- that means that students could work at their own pace-- but asynchronous in weekly chunks. So by Sunday, they had to have weekly assignments in as you can see from the course breakdown here. Each weekly module was divided into one body part for the history of the body. I thought that would be a little bit fun if it was a body part a week.

And so within each of the weekly modules, students had to do a number of different things that I'll talk about in a second and then complete those assignments and hand them in by Sunday night at 11:55 PM for maximum drama. By those assignments, I mean a weekly quiz that would basically be on the module content for the week and a smaller group discussion forum that would be on a reading each week.

So that's the breakdown of each module. Start with an introduction video, there would be two to three mini lectures. I tried to keep those little mini lecture videos to be about 10 minutes. I often failed at that, but I tried. There would be a reading, and then they would do a small group discussion forum on that reading that those small group discussion forums were moderated by a TA. So I wanted to make them as near to RTA discussion sections in a face-to-face course. That's what they were supposed to function like.

After that, there would be a couple more lecture videos or a podcast that the students had to engage with, a quiz on the entire content of the module, and then an optional course wide discussion on current events at the time. Keeping each module each week consistent in terms of how it was set up and what they had to do each week was important for keeping students in the flow of the course, having them settle into the flow of that course.

And it was these small group discussion forums that really made me a convert to online teaching. So at the beginning of the course, you learn has the capacity to divide up the class into-- here I picked 11 groups of about six students each. They stayed in those groups for the entire semester. The TA assigned a discussion leader

each week, and students respond to the discussion leader and to one another with, again, 100-word posts.

What impressed me so much about these forums is that they were getting to a level of depth and sophisticated analysis with these discussion posts more so than anything I had ever seen before in face-to-face. They were able to cover a lot more material, and they were doing so in better ways. As well in face-to-face discussion groups, I've sometimes-- I sometimes see how the most gregarious people come to dominate the group. In online forums, this wasn't necessarily the case. A lot of different voices were happening in those smaller discussion groups, so it actually was to my mind a superior way to do discussion than I was seeing in my face-to-face sections.

I also-- because I wanted this to mirror TA discussion groups completely, I also gave those small group discussion forums a large weight in the overall grade so about 25% to 30% of the grade happened in those small discussion groups, and I think the students rose to that waiting. A challenge I had in the course, probably the main challenge for online teaching in general was just the amount of work that has to be done upfront by the instructor. You have to plan everything ahead of time. You have to know all of the assignments. You have to have grading rubrics in place ideally before the class starts but at least you know a week ahead of when that material has to be.

The medium is not one that rewards spontaneity. You can't do things on the fly as easily. And so you have to be-- you have to use your experience that you gained in the face-to-face situations and use that to anticipate how students will react to material in the online world, and that can be really stressful, just needing to have everything done up front. I look forward to our discussion.