

**ALYSHEA
CUMMINS:**

Hi, there. My name is Alyshea Cummins, and I am an instructor in the Department of Religion in the College of Humanities. I teach the second-year course, Religion and Society, which is shared by the Religion and Anthropology Departments. I normally teach this course in person, and I've always wanted to teach it online. And, like many of you, now I have to.

Switching to an online format was both exciting and challenging for various reasons. I very much enjoy developing content. But doing so under pressure had its challenges. My advice to everyone is to keep things simple. See your course as version 1.0, which you will later amend and improve in subsequent deliveries.

I recorded all of my lectures in five to 20 minute videos using Kaltura Capture. Before recording, I created detailed scripts, which helped me to stay on point. Since Kaltura Capture does not have an editing feature built in, I highly recommend creating scripts to avoid frustration. I also recommend maintaining consistent communication with your students using the announcement feature on cuLearn.

Remember to force a subscription, though. This ensures that the announcements go straight to student emails. Again, be consistent. Each week on the same day, I formulated one announcement highlighting expectations for the modules ahead. There, and I included updates and due dates and friendly reminders to ask me questions about the course via the Ask the Instructor Forum.

Forums are probably my most favorite feature that cuLearn offers. The Ask the Instructor Forum that I created allowed me to respond to student questions about the course. But remember to force a subscription here as well. You will always have students emailing you privately about course questions, but gently remind them to use the forum as a response to their question may benefit other students.

I also had a Student Coffee Shop Forum where students could introduce themselves, meet other students, discuss course content, and share learning resources. We did an icebreaker in the first week where I ask students to share two truths and a lie. This was a fun activity and helped us all to get to know one another.

I also use the forum feature for graded course discussions. Each week, students

were expected to create a post about the course and facility for their discussion. What I like most about this forum feature is that you were able to assign a grade directly inside the forum. This made marking student discussions quick and easy. But remember to create discussion rubrics so that students are well aware of the word limits and other expectations.

Another feature, as you learned that I used weekly, was the quiz feature. Each module had a corresponding quiz that needed to be completed the following week. There, I would formulate multiple choice questions, true, false, and fill in the blank questions, which were automatically graded by cuLearn. This feature saved me a lot of grading time and also encouraged students to keep on top of their readings.

I also created a syllabus quiz. Students needed to complete this quiz prior to being able to access the modules. This encouraged students to read over the syllabus carefully and to ensure they fully understood course expectations.

One thing that I would do differently next time is create a welcome video introducing myself and introducing the course, sending some expectations about the course, how to navigate cuLearn, and briefly go over the instruments of evaluation. While I don't think this video is entirely necessary, I do believe that it would add value, especially consider that this course was delivered entirely asynchronously.

I think it's a quick and easy way to introduce myself and the course to students and to facilitate a sense of togetherness. Otherwise, I believe that the delivery of my first online course went fairly well, although I do look forward to developing Version 2.0.