

VIRTUAL COMMONS: ONLINE CLASSES AND PROGRAMMING

How do students and faculty come together when they aren't in
the same room?

**PRESENTATION
OUTLINE**

Virtual Advising: Jerry Van Hoy

Virtual Classroom: Laura DeSisto

Capstone Projects: Tristan Cabello

SESSION GOALS

- Discuss obstacles online GLS programs face in building community among students and faculty and potential solutions.
- Obstacles include lack of inclusion in on-campus programs, social isolation of students, poor communication between faculty/advisors and students, and problems putting together capstone project/thesis committees.
- Solutions to be explored include the use of social media, online tools and apps, group discussions, online office hours, online presentations and synchronous sessions.
- Note: All of our presentations focus on asynchronous online programming



VIRTUAL ADVISING

CHALLENGES

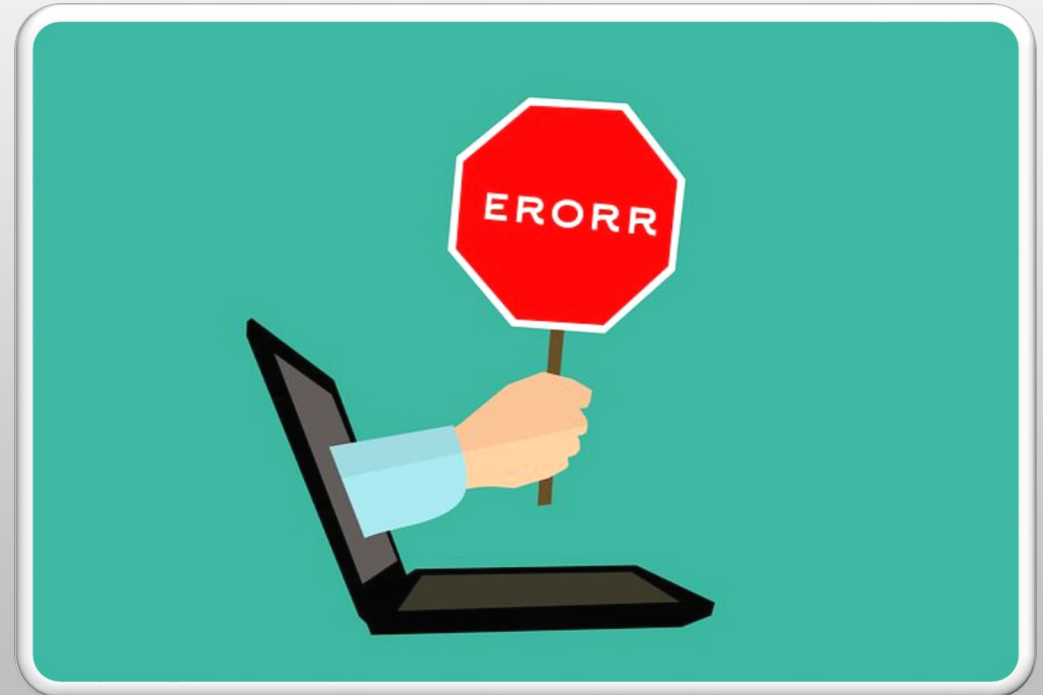
- Connecting with students who cannot stop by your office
- Developing trusting relationships in a virtual environment
- Disseminating important information to all students
- Making sure students do not feel isolated
- Developing a sense of community
- Documenting advising conversations

MY MISTAKES



ADVISING PRIMARILY BY EMAIL

- Students do not read email, especially university email (even when required!)
- Time consuming
- Difficult to interview students about their interests or needs
- Difficult to provide tutorials about university systems (portal, LMS, financial aid, plan of study)



ADVISING BY PHONE



- Can make a more personal connection with students
- Difficult to give tutorials (cannot see what the student is seeing)
- Lack of documentation: Students understand their next steps until they hang up
- Often experience poor cell phone connections, call interruptions or battery failure
- Program pays for long distance calls
- If you give students your personal phone number, expect 2:00am calls

LISTENING TO OUR ONLINE DIVISION

- Blackboard requires students to be enrolled in a course
- Blackboard 9.1 does not have built in video chatting capabilities
- Echo 360 (a video broadcasting and recording service) requires the advisor to be in a classroom fitted with special technology





BETTER EXPERIENCES

USING SKYPE OR ZOOM (OR SIMILAR SERVICES) FOR ADVISING MEETINGS



- Allows student and advisor to see each other (if desired)
- Can share screens for tutorials, discussion of classes, etc.
- Multiple people can be involved in the meeting (useful for introducing students to faculty, each other, negotiating independent study courses, etc.)

USING SKYPE OR ZOOM (OR SIMILAR SERVICE) FOR ADVISING MEETINGS



- Meetings can take place during office hours or be scheduled outside of office hours. (I have separate office hours for virtual meetings and face to face meetings to reduce interruptions.)
- No cost to use
- If you are not logged in, your sleep (or other meetings) will not be disturbed

USE SLACK TO ADVISE YOUR COMMUNITY



- Slack is a cloud-based collaboration service
- Teams or communities join a workspace by invitation
- Create channels for communication about different topics
- You can upload files to channels
- There are phone and desktop apps that provide notifications when when there are new posts

USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY

- Post to social media regularly
- Encourage students to follow your program
- Consider allowing students to post comments (but review comments before posting. Social media is visible to the public).



BE FLEXIBLE

- Some students may prefer to communicate via email or phone (some of my students still only have landline phones and old computers)
- Students enter DL programs for many reasons, including work or family schedules that make any meetings during the day difficult
- Advocate for online student needs: web forms, digital signatures, easier to use technology





PERSONALIZE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS

- Let students get to know you
- Get to know your students
- Require regular interactions (ask students to check-in at least a few times each term)

PERSONALIZE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS

- Listen to your students
- Invite online students to campus programs (most students in online programs live within 50 miles of their university)
- Simple gestures work with all students: My students are all getting Program tee shirts this year





EXERCISE ONE

- Discuss ways for directors/advisors to build community among students in your programs
- Make a list of community building methods for on-campus students
- Make a list of community building methods for off-campus students
- How much overlap is on the two lists?
- How much overlap should there be on the two lists?

THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

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FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS IN AN ASYNCHRONOUS VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

- **Intentional instructional design**
 - Lesson plans incorporate best practices in teaching and learning (backwards design, scaffolding, collaborative learning)
 - Clear communication of course expectations and learning outcomes
 - Consistent alignment across learning activities, assessments, and learning outcomes
- **Accessible and clear learning materials**
 - Class resources are clearly labeled and easy to navigate
 - Information is available in different formats (lesson modules, documents, video overviews, PowerPoint slides, checklists)
 - Universal Design used as a guiding principle
- **Visually diverse learning space**
 - Judicious use of multimedia (images, videos, hyperlinks)
 - Textual displays are balanced, consistently formatted, and well-suited to content

PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN ASYNCHRONOUS VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

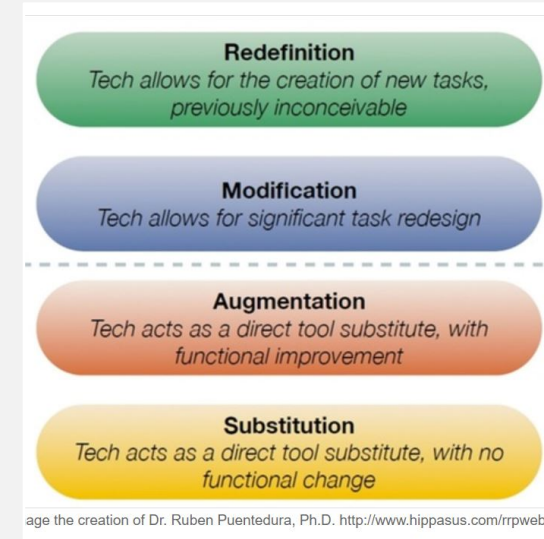
- **Build a sense of community in which students:**
 - Have consistent opportunities to connect with one another personally (ex: video introductions, open invitation – but optional and recorded - synchronous video conference “office hours” and roundtable discussions)
 - Share their unique voices and perspectives (open-ended discussion questions, self-chosen research/assignment topics, peer working groups, peer feedback, presentations)
- **Ascertain students’ needs, concerns, and expectations as soon as possible and consistently throughout semester**
 - Introductory prompts that create space for student input early on (ex: [Padlet](#))
 - Create opportunities throughout the semester for students to provide feedback on what is and isn’t working in the course, complete participation self-evaluations, and make choices about learning activities
- **Foster confidence and ownership in learning environment, as well as comfort in taking risks, making mistakes, & brainstorming in shared spaces**
 - Multiple low-stakes assignments that allow experimentation with all forms of technology that will be used in high-stakes assignments
 - Model your own use of technology to complete assignments (ex: [Popplet](#))
 - Provide prompt turn-around with comments/grading, especially for early assignments (meet students where they are, foster a growth mindset through feedback)

ALLOW LEARNING GOALS, STUDENT NEEDS, & PEDAGOGICAL STYLE TO DRIVE CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY

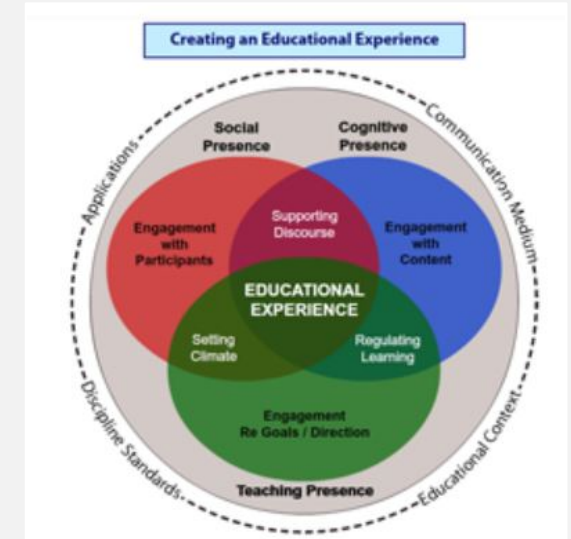
Multiple Resources Available:

- Your university's [Center for Teaching & Learning](#) and/or [Instructional Design](#)
- [SAMR Model](#) (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition)
- [Community of Inquiry](#)
- [Bloom's Taxonomy](#)
- [eLearning Toolkit](#) (Western University, Canada)
 - [Achieve Specific Outcomes](#)
 - [Rubric for eLearning Tool Evaluation](#) (visit <https://tinyurl.com/y3gcc68c>)
 - ["A Rubric for Evaluating E-Learning Tools in Higher Education"](#) by Lauren M. Anstey and Gavan P. L. Watsonm Published in EDUCAUSE Review, September 10, 2018
- [Blackboard Tool Guide](#)

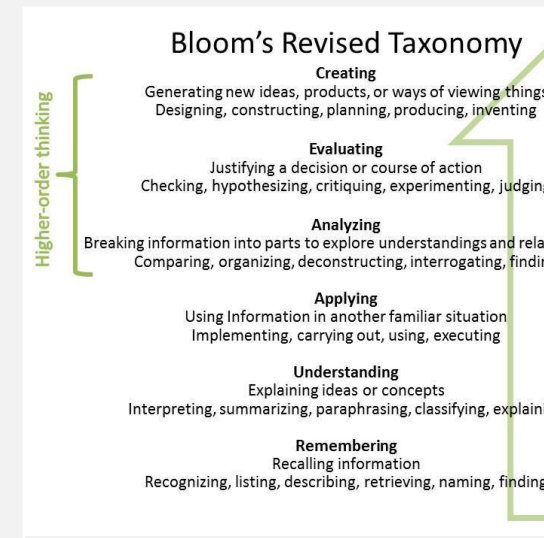
SAMR



COI



Bloom's Revised Taxonomy



eLearning Toolkit



OVERVIEW OF RUBRIC FOR ELEARNING TOOL EVALUATION

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Functionality

Accessibility

Technical

Mobile
Design

Privacy, Data
Protection, &
Rights

Social
Presence

Teaching
Presence

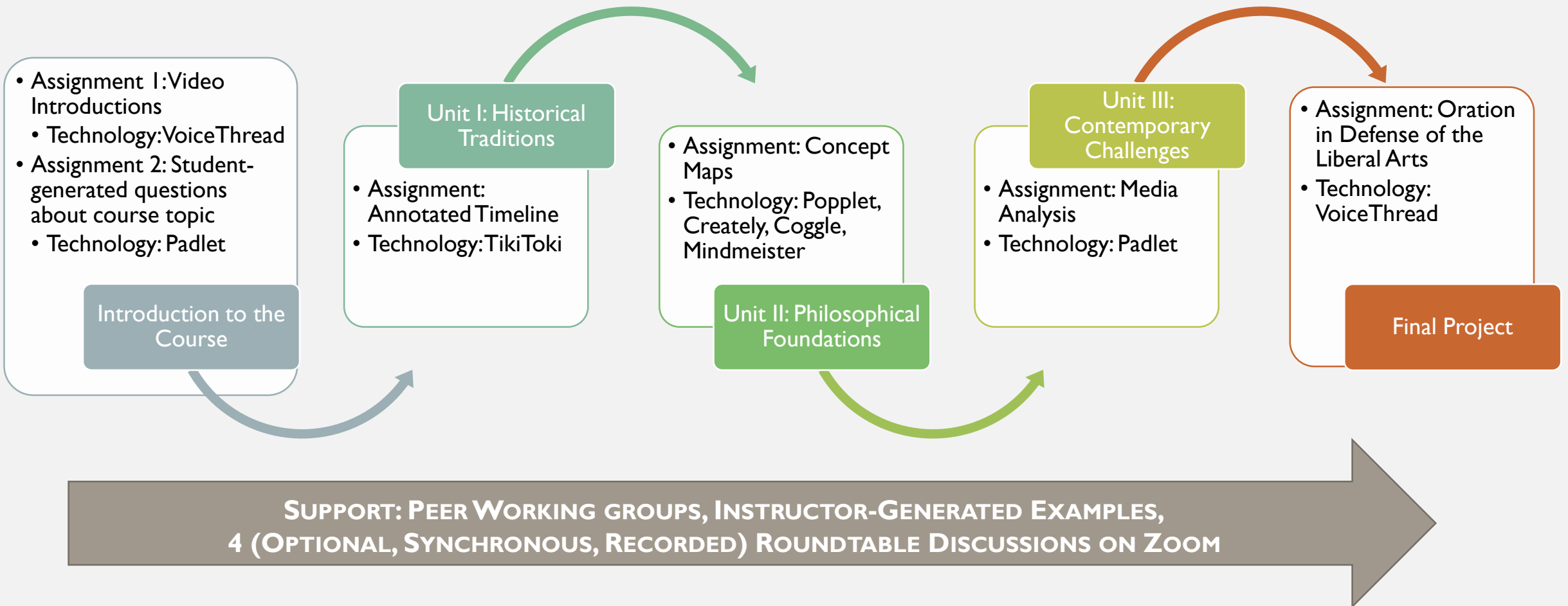
Cognitive
Presence

EXCERPT FROM RUBRIC FOR ELEARNING TOOL EVALUATION

Category	Factors	Works Well
Functionality	Scale	The tool can be scaled to accommodate any size class with the flexibility to create smaller sub-groups or communities of practice.
	Ease of Use	The tool has a user-friendly interface and it is easy for instructors and students to become skillful with in a personalized and intuitive manner.
	Tech Support/Help Availability	Campus-based technical support and /or help documentation is readily available and aids users in troubleshooting tasks or solving problems experienced; or, the tool provider offers a robust support platform.
	Hypermediality	The tool allows users to communicate through different channels (audio, visual, textual) and allows for non-sequential, flexible/adaptive engagement with material.
Teaching Presence	Facilitation	The tool has easy-to-use features that would significantly improve an instructor's ability to be present with learners via active management, monitoring, engagement, and feedback.
	Customization	Tool is adaptable to its environment: easily customized to suit the classroom context and targeted learning outcomes.
	Learning Analytics	Instructor can monitor learners' performance on a variety of responsive measures. These measures can be accessed through a user-friendly dashboard.

CASE STUDY: MLA CORE COURSE - WAYS OF KNOWING: HISTORICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE LIBERAL ARTS

Key Goal: Disrupt students' rote and formulaic practices of presenting their knowledge online (e.g. discussion boards and research papers) and encourage them to experiment with visual displays of information.



ACTIVITY: DEVELOPING A CREATIVE AND ENGAGING ASSIGNMENT FOR A VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

1. Identify a particularly strong assignment that you use in one of your face-to-face courses, or, if you teach online currently, select an assignment that you consider to be too “flat” and imagine a version of it that makes greater use of digital technology.
2. Use these 5 steps to creating an effective online assignment to translate that project into an assignment for a virtual classroom.
3. Consider the following questions:
 - i. Were there any aspects of the assignment that were lost in the translation?
 - ii. Were there new features to the assignment that were made available due to its digital/virtual characteristics?
 - iii. What do you consider to be the greatest challenges in translating your chosen assignment?
 - iv. What new opportunities for student learning and community-building are created through this exercise?
4. Share and discuss your ideas and responses in small groups.



Define Learning Objectives & Goals

- Differentiate between cognitive and affective goals
- What do you want the assignment to accomplish?: Synthesis? Analysis? Reflection? Ease of User-Interface?



Consider Purpose & Engagement

- Is this assignment process-oriented or product-oriented?
- Is there room for student choice or collaboration?
- Is it an individual, small group, or whole class project?



Determine How You Will Measure Success

- Identify essential characteristics of completed assignment.
- Provide rubric or evaluation criteria that differentiates between content and form.



Identify Technology Needs & Limitations

- Do you have resources to purchase access to new software, or do you have to work within your LMS?
- Consider your students' accessibility needs, computer skills, and access to hardware and software.



Envision the Assignment as a Collective Learning Activity

- Will students present their work with each other?
- Will there be opportunities for revision, peer feedback, or public display?

ADVISING CAPSTONE PROJECTS

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PREPARING STUDENTS AND ADVISORS FOR THE CAPSTONE



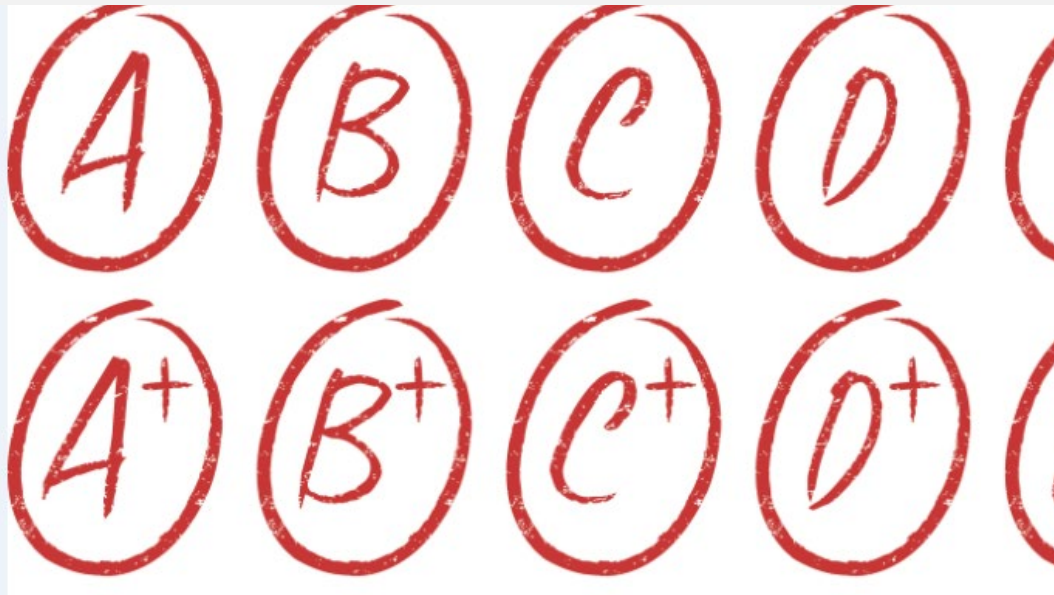
ADVISING STUDENTS

- Identifying an advisor and reading committee
- Writing a proposal
- Understanding expectations

ADVISING MENTORS

- Learning outcomes
- Framework and flexibility
- Deadlines

ADVISING DURING THE CAPSTONE

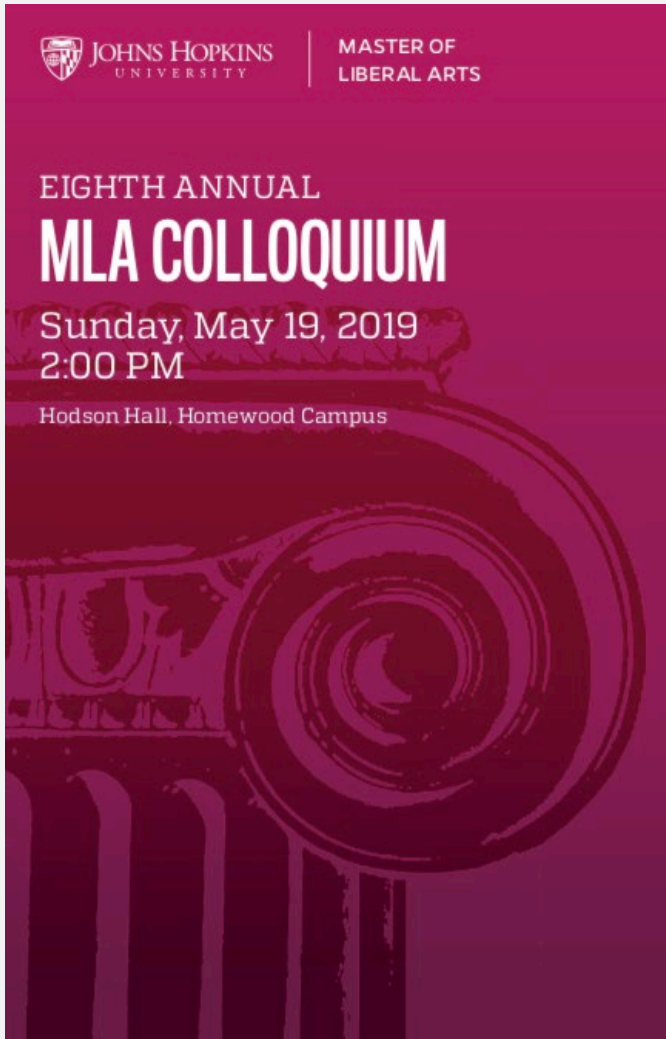


- Preferred mean of communication
- Frequency and length of meetings
- Giving feedback



BUILDING A COMMUNITY

- Building an annual colloquium
- Attending conferences
- Publishing articles



EXERCISE 3

BUILDING AN ANNUAL COLLOQUIUM

- What is the availability of presenters?
- Resources: Moderators, Travelling grants, Judges, Space.
- Marketing the event
- Availability for online students
- Prizes
- Post-colloquium reception
- Post-colloquium marketing