# TEACHING/LEARNING MATTERS

## IN THIS ISSUE

## Chair's Corner



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May 2020

Teaching and learning in pandemic times presents unprecedented challenges. While we struggle to make sense of new realities and support students through emergency remote education, budgets for many of our institutions are being cut leaving our most vulnerable students more so.

In the past few months, we have found ways to cope, transitioned our courses quickly to a new medium that may or may not be accessible for our students,

and tried to get through each day during a health crisis. We do this without our normal workplaces, our offices, classrooms and campuses and with all the comfort and distraction of our homes and families. The toll on faculty has extended well beyond what our "teaching loads" indicate.

We have also learned that our annual ASA meeting has been cancelled. I will miss seeing all of you in San Francisco, connecting with section members, and learning from you in our section sessions. We are figuring out the best ways to rethink our meeting sessions in the necessary online format and working to balance opportunity to participate in conference activities while being mindful of the multiple burdens on trying to do this work from our homes and in different time zones.

As teacher-scholars, we are in a unique position in sociology to rethink teaching and learning as we work in spite of this pandemic. In the absence of meeting and talking in person this summer, let us find alternative ways to connect to create and explore new methods of engaging our students in sociological thinking, research, and analysis. In addition to great ASA resources like TRAILS, we could share resources informally (perhaps engaging with the section on twitter @ASATeaching) and work together to develop classes in new formats that benefit our students and ourselves. How can we help each other, both as sociology professors and as people, during this difficult time? In doing this, how can we center taking care of ourselves and others through these challenges?

In thinking about how our new realities of our teaching and professional lives now taking place primarily over emails and (so many) Zoom meetings, I keep returning to thinking about kindness. At every turn, when faced with a decision about how to do things that just some months ago would have been laughably unthinkable, what always tips the scale for me is what decisions would be the kindest for those they impact. These moves centering kindness are central to both my work and home life during this time, and are directed at my students, my colleagues, my family, and perhaps most importantly, myself. I hope you can find kindness around you and find new ways to share kindness with others.

As I have been writing this, one song is on a repeat loop in my head, Frank Turner's "Be More Kind." An excerpt of lyrics follows. Wishing you a summer filled with health, leisure, and kindness.

So before you go out searching
Don't decide what you will find
Be more kind, my friends, try to be more kind
[...]
Like a beacon reaching out
To you and yours from me and mine
Be more kind, my friends, try to be more kind
(Frank Turner, "Be More Kind," 2018)

**Postscript,** June 2020. This column was written in May, before the death of George Floyd in police custody and the subsequent protests for racial justice around the country. A separate column addressing Black Lives Matter in and outside of the classroom appears in this newsletter as well.



Teaching & Learning Section Donates to the ASA's

# MINORITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

## IN THE AMOUNT OF $1500

The amount originally budgeted for our 2020 section reception.

The Council hopes this is a concrete statement of action in support and solidarity with the scholars of color in sociology.



SPREAD
*Kindness*

## Editor's Introduction

Jessica Leveto, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Sociology
Kent State University at Ashtabula

The editorial team and I hoped to have our spring newsletter out earlier, that obviously did not happen. In the span of a few months, our normalcy moved to chaos. The act of teaching for many of us transitioned from the classroom to the "zoom room." For some of us, our first (masked) steps into public space found us in the center of a powerful uprising to end police brutality, standing in solidarity with the Black community.

When COVID-19 hit the shockwaves rippled throughout the country, even for those already teaching online, we were not exempt from the disruption. Students left campuses, and/or never returned from spring break. Some had internet access – others did not. Students that were 'essential' workers were asked to risk their lives, often for little compensation. Students and faculty alike found themselves woefully underprepared to be homeschooling our own children, and for many of us, productivity came to a screeching halt.

It seemed like daily recommendations and restrictions shifted, and the hope of clear federal guidance faded when weeks turned to months, and it never came. In many ways, we still don't know what the fall will look, we remain in a state of upheaval. The messaging from the top of my institution, be kind, and take care of one another. I tried hard to do just that. I altered my expectations for students, provided at minimum weekly check-in linking them to support groups and mental health resources. I extended deadlines. I even excused one assignment during the shift online and labeled it "Pandemic Relief" in the grade book. I worried about a student when she, her mother, and her sister all tested positive to COVID (they have all recovered). Universities have closed, departments collapsed, faculty have been asked to give up pay, and words like "retrenchment" are part of our vernacular. Twenty-twenty is upon us, as we now know, the chaos, trauma, and turmoil of COVID was just the beginning.

Just as we began to adapt to life during the times of COVID, we witnessed the all too frequent acts of state sanctioned brutality against Black lives in this country. Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd's deaths all reminded us that systemic violence against the Black community is pervasive, systemic, and unacceptable. Instantly, people filled the streets in protest, demanding justice and an end to police brutality and 400 years of oppression. I had several current and former students reach out to me for resources, ways to engage, and I watched (proudly) as many of them engaged in public sociology. Students are challenging racism and oppression while standing up for justice and equality. They are using their sociological toolkit, including a sociological perspective and peer-reviewed research, to advocate for an end to injustice.

As sociologists, every turn of the last few months has reminded us just how critical it is for our students to understand the structural forces, the systemic patterns, and the public health implications of living in society. It was hard to organize a newsletter that could give justice to the chaos, trauma, and upheaval that we find ourselves in today.

In this special edition, we have gathered a variety of resources to teach institutional discrimination, and the Black Lives Matters movement. Additionally, we have compiled a variety of COVID related submissions to help integrate the global pandemic in your teaching. I hope that we continue to be innovative, understanding, and adaptable in our pedagogy during these times of uncertainty. I hope we can continue to educate our students on how to utilize the sociological toolkit to dismantle systemic oppression.

**WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER**

#BLACKLIVESMATTER

## 2020 Election Results: Teaching & Learning Section

Congratulations to our new Chair-Elect and Council Members

Chair-Elect (3-year term begins in 2020)
Julie A Pelton, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Council Members (2-year school) (3-year term begins in 2020) Sharon Yee, Glendale Community College

Council Members (4-year school) (3-year term begins in 2020) Molly Dingel, University of Minnesota Rochester

Council Members (University) (3-year term begins in 2020) Amanda M. Jungels, Rice University, Center for Teaching Excellence

Council Member, Student (2-year term begins in 2020) Ayrlia Welch, Ball State University

Bylaws Amendment - APPROVED



## August 2019 to August 2020 STLS Officers / Council Members

OFFICERS
**Chair:** Alison Better, Kingsborough Community College, CUNY
**Chair-Elect:** Stephanie Medley-Rath, Indiana University-Kokomo 2020
**Past Chair:** Melinda Messineo, Ball State University
**Section Secretary/Treasurer:** Stacy Evans, Berkshire Community College 2021

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Sarah Hoiland
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**Section Council Member, 2 Year School:** Megan Kathleen Allen, Gaston College 2021
**Section Council Member, 2 Year School:** Lisa Handler, Community College of Philadelphia 2020
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**Section Council Member, University:** Sarah Nell Epplen, Minnesota State University, Mankato 2021
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**Section Council Member, University:** Mindy Stombler, Georgia State University 2020

SECTION COMMITTEES
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**Program Chair:** Stephanie Medley-Rath
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**Nominations Chair:** Melinda Messineo
**Contingent Faculty:** Kim Hennessee-Sherman
**Graduate Student Concerns:** Jacob Hammond
**Sage Awards:** Kathleen Korgen
**Pre-Conference Program Planning:** Kathy Rowell and Greg Kordsmeier

# Online Webinars & Resources from
# The American Sociological Association

**Webinar: Transitioning to Online Teaching in the Face of COVID-19**

Many instructors have been asked to move their face-to-face courses online in a short amount of time, often with little guidance for this process. This panel will discuss strategies for managing the transition and facilitating students' continued learning in the online environment. Recorded March 19, 2020 https://www.asanet.org/teaching-learning/faculty/teaching-online

Panelists: **Melinda Messineo**, professor of sociology at Ball State University. ASA Taskforce on Liberal Learning, Subcommittee on Online Learning, **Kimberly Alecia Singletary,** Instructional Designer, Educational Consultant. **Matt Rafalow**, Social Scientist at Google. Author of forthcoming book on EdTech and inequality

**Best Practices and Strategies for Successful Online Teaching**

Because of COVID-19, faculty have quickly moved their courses online, and their immediate focus is getting through the crisis. As institutions look beyond the current semester, a growing number are moving summer courses online and some are planning for this possibility for fall. In this webinar, **Melinda Messineo** will cover best practices for online teaching and learning, as well as sociology-specific recommendations to help faculty prepare for and improve their online teaching. Dr. Messineo is a professor of sociology at Ball State University. She was a member of ASA's Task Force on Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major, where she was part of the subcommittee on online learning. Recorded April 22, 2020 https://www.asanet.org/best-practices-and-strategies-successful-online-teaching

**American Sociological Association COVID Resources for Sociologists**: Helpful resources for sociologists to continue our work during this time.

# COVID-19 Relevant: Teaching Sociology Journal Articles

As part of ASA's efforts to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, we partnered with our journal editors to identify existing articles in ASA journals that could be of use to those trying to develop responses to, and cope with, the enormous disruptions this pandemic has produced. The articles below are freely available to all users. For complete collection please visit ASA Journal Articles Related to COVID-19. Below we have shared those from Teaching Sociology.

**Real Problems, Virtual Solutions: Engaging Students Online**
A. Fiona Pearson
*Teaching Sociology* (2010)

**Should We Talk about the Pain? Personalizing Sociology in the Medical Sociology Classroom**
Alexandra C. H. Nowakowski and J. E. Sumerau
*Teaching Sociology* (2015)

**Incorporating Online and In-person Book Clubs into Sociology Courses**
Amanda Wyant and Sarah Bowen
*Teaching Sociology* (2018)

**Analyzing the Social Construction of Media Claims: Enhancing Media Literacy in Social Problems Classes**
Todd K. Platts
*Teaching Sociology* (2019)

# Black Lives Matter in Teaching and Learning



Vondora Wilson-Corzen, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Sociology
Nassau Community College



Alison Better, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Sociology Area Coordinator
Kingsborough Community College, CUNY

In light of ongoing Black Lives Matter protests around the country, we as educators and sociologists cannot be silent on these issues.

As members of the American Sociological Association, we stand in solidarity with the millions of people across the country who condemn the killing of Mr. George Floyd, Ms. Breonna Taylor among others, and the ongoing problem of unequal justice in America. However, as sociologists, we know the problem is far more pervasive than police brutality. While most political pundits have stressed links between our unequal criminal justice system and the treatment of Black and Brown people, we know this intersectionality is more profound and leaves many parts of our diverse society out of the discussion. The inequality of Black, Brown, women, and the working class was highlighted during the

COVID pandemic with blaming of victims for high blood pressure, poverty, diabetes, and heart disease instead of the effects of race, class, and gender on our interactions with the medical system. The US is suffering from two viruses COVID and Racism. It is exemplified by the militarization of the police, the defunding of education, youth programming, housing, and healthcare especially for Black and Brown communities.

Education provides an avenue for social change as well. As teachers of sociology, we have the ability to help our students and our colleagues understand the ways these injustices impact our lives and our communities. Our classrooms can be a space of radical hope. The sociological imagination allows our sociology students to see and analyze things that had previously gone unnoticed or unstudied. Yet many other poor and disenfranchised communities are ignored and suffering from these problems. In order to fix our social structure, we as sociologists must be active in our classrooms and we as a society must be active in our communities and find ways to make our voices heard both through teaching and working to vote to change the political representatives who do not have our best interests at heart, for us our silence only equals our death. We can't let these moments of unrest go unnoticed and hopefully, through activism and education, we can see real social change.

## Black Lives Matter Teaching Resources

The Radical Teacher: A Socialist, Feminist, and Anti-Racist Journal on the Theory and Practice of Teaching, Issue 106: Teaching Black Lives Matter

Black Lives Matter: Race, Policing, and Protest, Wellesley Research Guides

Innovating the Teach-In to Transform the Faculty: Findings From a #BlackLivesMatter Teach-In

How Sociology Can Support Black Lives Matter

Scaffolding Anti-Racist Resources: This is a working document for scaffolding anti-racism resources.

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## A Case for Historical Sociology: COVID-19 in Context and Comparison

Amy E. Traver, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Sociology
Queensborough Community College, CUNY

Many Introduction to Sociology courses begin with an emphasis on history. For example, the first chapters of most Introductory textbooks define sociology by grounding the discipline in early sociologically-oriented questions and an account of the development of relevant scholars, scholarly works, and intellectual schools of thought. Likewise, many Introduction to Sociology instructors begin their courses by assigning the first chapter of C. Wright Mills' (1959:4) *The Sociological Imagination*, which emphasizes sociologists' grasp of the "intricate connection between the patterns of (our) own lives and the course of world history." In fact, in the first few weeks of any sociology course, I frequently ask students to plot on a timeline the world-historical events that led to their presence on campus that day. In the diverse classrooms of Queensborough Community College of the City University of New York (CUNY), these events tend to span the globe and the course of modern history. Read together, they illustrate, at the very beginning of our collective sociological journey, the larger forces and flows that mediate our seemingly particular experiences.

Notably, at the time of this writing, my sociology students and I are far from our Queens campus and the start of the spring term. Yet, as we experience the COVID-19 pandemic's radical restructuring of our city,

we understand now, more than ever, that we make and are made by world-historical events. Students' organic recognition of this fact, as well as their desire to know how societies have coped and emerged from similarly devastating periods, have only solidified my commitment to the historical reflectiveness and methodologies of our discipline. In this brief article, I offer resources for incorporating historical materials on pandemics into upcoming sociology coursework. It is my firm belief that—in the midst of essential but overwhelming statistical representations of COVID-19's shape and social impacts—we need to make space for humanistic content and methods.

According to Kristen Luker (2008:191), sociologists turn to historical methods "to answer one of two questions: either (a) what events in the past shaped how this turned out in the present? or (b) why did things turn out this way in one place and another way in another place?" In the process, we often draw on historical materials sourced from individuals or institutional archives, and we frequently engage in comparative and/or case-study analyses.

Libraries and archives around the United States offer significant digital opportunities for students' comparative-historical sociological exploration of pandemics, social responses, and the impacts of both. For example, the University of Michigan Library has digitized more than 15,000 historical materials from the American influenza outbreak of 1918-1919. Visitors can explore the collection using keywords or subject categories, and comparative analyses of cities' experiences and responses—both *then* and in contrast to municipalities *today*—are made possible through a search by "place." Historical newspapers archived by Chronicling America, as well as curated materials from the National Archives and Records Administration's Deadly Virus exhibit, the Digital Public Library's America During the 1918 Influenza Pandemic exhibition, and the Contagious Cities project, could deepen this study of the 1918 flu. Likewise, efforts to compare/contrast the social roots and effects of the 1918 flu to the range of pandemics reflected in the primary source materials of Harvard

University's online Contagion collection, or in the U.S. National Library of Medicine's Cholera Online exhibit, could prove sociologically interesting, as well.

The digital holdings of the AIDS History Project at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) can also be analyzed using comparative-historical sociological methods. For instance, the Project's Ephemera Collection could be coupled with the AIDS education poster collections of the Wellcome Library, the U.S. National Library of Medicine, and the University of Rochester, and then juxtaposed against contemporary COVID-19 public health campaigns, to illustrate how educative efforts vary across time, space, community, and public perceptions of a disease and its victims. Insights could also be gleaned by comparing UCSF materials to collections from the online African American AIDS History Project while simultaneously considering the disparate impacts of COVID-19. In addition, the UCSF ACT-UP Golden Gate Records collection and the ACT UP Oral History Project could be used to highlight social movement organizing around pandemics, and UCSF's collection of personal papers and oral histories could help to reveal patterns within and across the experiences of HIV/AIDS patients, treatment providers, and organizational leaders.

Students might also learn from the act of contributing to an archive of COVID-19 experiences, helping to build—in the spirit of civic engagement pedagogies and the research of Eric Klinenberg (2018)—the nation's social infrastructure. Public libraries around the country, like Kingsport Public Library in Tennessee and Queens Public Library in New York City, are creating digital archives of community insights and experiences, and many academic libraries, at institutions like Carnegie Mellon University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, CUNY, and more, are doing the same. Instructors might consider modeling primary-source creation by contributing to efforts like The COVID 19 Chroniclers or A Journal of the Plague Year: An Archive of COVID-19. These contributions stand to impact our social connectedness and sense of agency while, at the same time, augmenting our current and future understandings of this moment and our place in it.

Instructors interested in incorporating additional historical and humanistic content on pandemics into sociology coursework are recommended to the crowdsourced Humanities Coronavirus Syllabus, initiated by faculty at Northeastern University.

### References

Klinenberg, Eric. 2018. Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life. New York, NY: Crown.

Luker, Kristin. 2008. Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. The Sociological Imagination. New York, NY: Oxford University Press

The Society Pages
Teaching TSP
Three Reasons You Might Be Exhausted Right Now
Erika Sanborne on April 15, 2020
https://thesocietypages.org/teaching/2020/04/15/three-reasons-you-might-be-exhausted-right-now/

https://thesocietypages.org/teaching/2020/04/15/three-reasons-you-might-be-exhausted-right-now/

## Sociology: An Essential Discipline in the Time of Coronavirus

Mateo Sancho Cardiel
Adjunct Lecturer, CUNY

Every semester, there is a moment in my sociology courses when I invoke Mark Zuckerberg to highlight the advantages of learning this discipline. I explain to my students how he used his Harvard's sociological background to become a billionaire. Selling our privacy, which a real sociologist would never endorse, I add. This Spring 2020, there is no need to use that joke to illustrate the utility of the course. Sociology, during the COVID-19 outbreak, has become an "essential" course in a time where the word has taken on new meaning. Today, students come to our classes looking for some explanation that ameliorates their uncertainty and a compass that can guide them through anxiety.

I teach four Introduction to Sociology courses at City University of New York institutions: Hostos Community College and Borough of Manhattan Community College, and, beyond the Zuckerberg gag, I always tell my students that this course is not only about building content-area knowledge, it's about *creating a pair of glasses* with lenses that will help them to decode society, and, as a consequence, see their realities. Shall we expect structural downwards social mobility because of the outbreak? Isn't Governor Cuomo mastering the combination of quantitative and qualitative information when he is providing all the numbers and also addressing human stories? Can we find a more relatable example of resocialization than the New York's Stay at Home Order? Is there an impact on societal identities driven by social distancing? This looks like a bizarre social experiment driven by Philip Zimbardo's wildest dreams.

Beyond this 101 application of sociological terms, that pair of glasses must be progressive, as they also allow us to see further landscapes. We see clearly how the act of teaching, especially underserved communities, has a latent function: social work. During this distance learning period, we confirmed (with half pride/half heartbreak) the fact that some students come to class looking forward to finding some structure, protection, and emotional relief. Much to our amazement, despite technological hardships and emotional despair, the predicted attendance fallout didn't happen. Students show up to online classes seeking structure, connection, and a sense of belonging. They interact and participate, and their sociological glasses are firmly in place, ready to see, question, and analyze.

When I was studying journalism, I always partially disagreed with Marshall McLuhan's motto, "the medium is the message," but these days, as a sociologist, I retract. Some students that were silent in face-to-face classes lead the conversations online. Actually, our students can adjust their lenses much more quickly than we can as faculty. For instance, this semester, I have merged my own interest in film with campus streaming services. Sociological glasses are also useful to see the omnipresent screens with more definition. In a premonitory way, the film selection included two movies about confinement: Dogtooth (Kynódontas, Yorgos Lanthimos, 2009) to explain language and counterculture, and Room (Lenny Abrahamson, 2015) to explore self-development and agents of socialization. The students' positive reactions to these films brought me to add *The Exterminating Angel* (El ángel exterminador, Luis Buñuel, 1962) to explain social stratification. Not only were the online debates on fire, but students requested more movies to watch during spring break. This positive reaction to these unconventional texts (one film is in Greek, another one in Spanish, and two of them use unorthodox narratives) inspired me to explore new languages as well in my teaching. I've created new YouTube videos explaining most of the content in an asynchronous way. This online material includes inserts from students' idol Cardi B –who embodies the nuances of Max Weber's class, status group, and power- or illustrates meritocracy with Rihanna and Drake singing "Work." Thus, McLuhan defeated me. This

online modality (the medium) has sent a clear message: our students can adapt and shine (and so do we) with non-traditional texts such as film and popular music.

Of course, it is undeniable that this unexpected turn of the events comes with complications, tons of extra work, and emotional distress, but precisely because of that we need to embrace the opportunities of the situation, as it enhances the importance of knowledge in general and sociology in particular; it is truly an essential discipline in the time of COV-19. And, it sends us a very clear reminder of how this job we call teaching is actually a never-ending learning process that compels us to constantly readjust our own sociological glasses.

## *Spring 2020 Reflections*
## Tracking Student Silence

### Jamie Kucinskas
### Department of Sociology, Hamilton College

Since our campus shutdown about 20% of my students (thus far) have already been severely impacted by COVID-19. Some have parents who have lost their jobs and have had to take on full-time employment. Others have been taking care of sick parents and basic household maintenance, like cooking and cleaning. Still others have lost members of their extended family. However, I do not think I would know this if I hadn't started tracking and inquiring about their silences. Although I am a mindfulness scholar, this exercise requires paying attention to very different kinds of silences. To do so requires tracking their attendance and Zoom classroom participation more closely than I might do otherwise. It also requires setting more time aside to reach out to those who have not been visible, or I have not heard from. This changes the relationships I typically have with the students and opens more doors and windows to what is going on in their private lives than I normally might under more favorable conditions. However, I think this is the most successful thing I've done since we went online. It's not only enabled me to help support students in need more but allowed me to set the example to students of what is most important during these trying times. It's not the grades or the content they are learning in class. It's how we treat and support each other.

## Maintaining Student Focus: Research on COVID-19



### Diane G. Symbaluk
Professor of Sociology at MacEwan University in Edmonton



### Robyn Hall
Librarian at MacEwan University

The following describes an assignment from a research methods course created in response to upheavals and opportunities presented by COVID-19. During the final weeks of class, fifty-eight undergraduate sociology majors attending MacEwan University in Edmonton, Alberta, were expected to design and carry out a content analysis aimed at describing key ideas contained in social media forums or in public posts to controversial news stories. Although students had settled on a range of topics such as responses to Internet influencers, public opinions towards police use of facial-recognition software, and Indigenous Peoples' views on the importance of traditional practices, they were also regularly discussing amongst themselves the potential dangers posed by the novel coronavirus. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic, putting to rest skepticism about how far-reaching the implications might be. On March 12, the students wrote their second midterm, and on March 14, they

learned that classes were canceled indefinitely, but they could still complete their courses remotely.

Alongside the option to pursue their earlier topic, the professor (first author) made available an opportunity to learn more about the all-encompassing events unfolding as a result of COVID-19 through a social lens. The revamped project unfolded in two parts: Part A became a short literature review assignment asking students to engage with previous research to help them frame their own interests into a research question. To facilitate this process, the sociology subject librarian (second author) created an online course guide using Springshare LibGuides software that replaced a previously planned in-person information literacy session. The guide included tips, strategies, and short videos from NC State University Libraries, and walked students through the process of locating, evaluating, and engaging with relevant literature to help inform social research exploring a current event. After working through the steps laid out in the guide, students completed reports that explained how their study would build upon at least two peer-reviewed research studies to answer their own research question.

This first part of the assignment conceptualized and introduced the students' proposed projects which then allowed the professor to interject with individual help, feedback and guidance on the most appropriate design and data sources for answering the formulated questions. Part B entailed designing the study, carrying out the research, and writing up the formal report. Students were directed to an appropriate source such as comments at the bottom of a recent online news article on their area of interest. Students then carried out an analysis of recent posts and summarized the findings in a formal report. Guidelines were provided for what to include in each section. For example, students were prompted under the method section to describe the sample that formed the basis of their study, to describe how the sample was selected (e.g. which comments they included), to describe any relevant inclusion or exclusion criteria, and to describe the procedure followed to code at least 50 posts.

While slightly pared down from what one might expect under other circumstances, students deeply reflected on COVID-19 relative to social research focused on other pandemics such as SARS and HINI, and proposed projects that resonated with them during this crisis. For example, some students decided to focus on racist comments towards the Asian community in response to Tweets originating with Donald Trump. Others identified themes in news headlines about COVID-19 to see how different media outlets framed the pandemic. A few also looked at public responses to news stories involving COVID-19 to see how the medical community, politicians, and/or the general public were responding to the pandemic evolving before them. Against the backdrop of a global crisis, students were presented with an opportunity to focus their attentions in a critical and productive manner, gaining deeper insights and perspectives into events unfolding around them while also learning how to conduct basic social research and better understand its important role in interpreting and understanding the world around us. As one of the students put it in an email appreciation note after the course ended, "I never thought I would be interested in research, but this class changed my mind!"

## Flipping Out in Times of COVID: Designing Flexibility Through Flipped-Class Pedagogy



Erin Heinz
Ph.D. Candidate, School of Sociology
University of Arizona

COVID-19 has cast a net of uncertainty on what form course-delivery will take in the Fall term. Universities and colleges grappling with student well-being and dire financial prognoses are postponing decisions and changing strategies weekly (for a view of the landscape, see List of Colleges' Plans for Reopening in the Fall in *The Chronicle*). Planning for the abruptly shifting policy tides, the best strategy is to design courses that can adapt to online, hybrid or in-person

delivery. The best vessel to weather these seas? The flipped classroom.

The flipped design "flips" the space and order of traditional lectures and post-class homework. Flipping a course moves content-delivery from the group classroom to individual preparatory activities that students complete *before* synchronous meetings. Students watch lectures, read or otherwise engage with material for the first time not from a live instructor-led delivery, but in a self-paced solo endeavor (Lage, Platt and Treglia 2000, Talbert and Bergmann 2017). The time in-class is then used to do the more difficult active learning, application, discussion and synthesis thereby nudging learners up Bloom's Taxonomy (Talbert and Bergmann 2017). The philosophy of flipped classrooms takes a learner-centered approach (Weimer, 2013) and places the ownership and onus of learning onto the student.

Flexibility is inherent in design of the flipped classroom. Instructors design content that can be accessed by students outside of the course. This could take the form of pre-recorded lectures, readings, films, vignettes or other virtual content that might otherwise be delivered during the weekly meetings in a traditional lecture-based course. Because the content is already prepared to be delivered in a virtual environment, an instructor can switch to a fully online course with short notice. The in-person discussions might then be facilitated through online conferences or small-group student meetings with little upheaval. For a readable and comprehensive discussion on the flipped classroom design look to Robert Talbert and Jon Bergmann's 2017 book: *Flipped Learning: A Guide for Faculty Teaching Face-To-Face, Online, and Hybrid Courses.* Talbert and Bergmann explain the limitations of traditional direct instruction and argue that when student are introduced to new concepts outside of class they can participate more actively in group spaces where they have the resources of peers and an expert faculty to support higher-level learning (2017). Gems from this book include a detailed two-chapter discussion ("Designing Flipped Learning Experiences Part I and II") of how to design a flipped lesson plan, replete with a review of writing useful learning objectives and specific strategies to keep students accountable to their class preparations.

Perhaps the flipped design is not your preferred means of instruction but given the uncertainty of course delivery options in the fall term, it may be the best vessel to weather the uncertain waters ahead. The alternative is being adrift come the beginning of term as instructional constraints change and you are cast out to navigate virtual waters in an unsuitable raft.

## Playing Protest: An Online Game for Teaching Social Movements/Collective Action

### Robert Biggert & James Petullo
### Assumption College

Analyzing protest is important for understanding society. A brief tour of current events in the media supports this proposition. However, teaching about this topic is challenging and becoming more so. Like many social phenomena we discuss, students have not experienced them directly. The ongoing pandemic makes this more difficult. This spring, most colleges abruptly shifted from in-class to online instruction, a reality we must adjust to.

Given this obstacle, the goal of this article is to briefly overview and discuss an online game we have developed to teach about social movements and collective action. Our game is anchored in the history and analysis of protest in the United States, especially the post-WWII period. However, the game is adaptable to a variety of international and historical contexts. We further focus on nonviolent protest. Protestors typically choose nonviolent tactics and, within capitalist democracies, the police usually respond with nonviolent methods of control.

We begin by theoretically anchoring our simulation in game theory using Dennis Chong's book, *Collective Action, and the Civil Rights Movement* (1991). He considers solutions to the collective action "dilemma" in the production of problem goods. Chong applies this approach to the nonviolent strategy of the civil rights movement and its tactical choices. He views this as a strategic interaction between protestors and police defined as a "public relations" game. The key

choice for each actor is whether to engage in nonviolent or violent collective action.

This framework is useful for several reasons. The game is active and participatory. Students are able to role play as one of two actors and see the world from their perspective. This includes assessing their internal constitution and surveying the external environment. The game focuses on decision-making, which is the raison d'etre of individual and social actors. Students can use their fellow protestors or police officers and the actions of their opponents to evaluate the costs and benefits of their collective action choice. Further, the game incorporates two helpful features. It allows the actors to communicate with each other through a chat function. The game also enables the protestors and police to interact over an extended period through repeated play.

What follows is a quick game overview. Prior to play, students are assigned to the role of protestors or police. Playing the game assumes students have a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or desktop computer to use, and internet access is available. The professor then asks the students to access the game online, giving them a URL.

Two types of information are provided before play begins. One is the historical context for the game. Currently, we are using Hong Kong as our backdrop. The professor can adapt the case study to his/her educational goals. Background and information can easily be moved in and out of the game. Another is the game instructions. Upon login using an email address as an identifier, their role is revealed. They are told what the objective of their player is and the choice they need to make. The former means they are opposing or supporting a particular policy proposal. The latter both involve acting and reacting non-violently or violently. The choices are aggregated from individual selections, and the most popular one is assigned to the player. There is a scoreboard on the game dashboard identifying the accumulated points for each side.

Play is sequential with the protestors acting first and the police reacting second. As we discussed, players can use the chat function to signal and speak to their fellow players and opponents. Once the final round is played, the final score is displayed with a win, lose, or draw as outcome possibilities. A prize of some sort can be attached to play to incentivize commitment to the game.

Following the game, play can be debriefed in a number of ways. So far, we have focused on three questions of interest. First, why do protesters engage in nonviolent protest? This is a high-cost activity given, if it proceeds predictably, police will eventually target protesters with violence, including beatings, tear gas, and arrests (see McAdam, 1986). Second, why is nonviolent protest effective? An emerging consensus is that non-violence is preferable to violence related to a range of social movement outcomes (see Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011). Third, what happens when nonviolent protest becomes violent? This is perhaps the most important and more complicated question (see McAdam and Tarrow, 2000).

So far, we believe there are three significant upsides to our game. The first is flexibility. While our original and primary intent was to teach protest, the game can be adapted to different purposes and scenarios. The game's built-in feedback mechanism is helpful as well. Given the importance of assessment, the post-game survey allows for immediate feedback. The third advantage is engagement. The authors, one professor and one student are acutely aware of the shift from in-class to online education. This is a short-term reality and perhaps a long-term trend. This game is useful adaptation to these developments.

If readers are interested, they can contact Robert Biggert at rbiggert@assumption.edu, and we can provide a demonstration version of the game.

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## Using the COVID Pandemic to Teach Cultural Concepts

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Faculty members may be wondering whether to discuss the Covid Pandemic and how to initiate such a discussion. Culture is a regular topic for most Introduction to Sociology courses, and it often comes up in other sociology courses. The Covid Pandemic, which has upended higher education, has led to the creation of new, distinct cultural components – new symbols, rituals, norms, ideologies. Using the Covid Pandemic to illustrate each of these cultural components offers an opportunity to discuss the pandemic analytically, yet in a way that should be accessible and inclusive to all students.

Culture usually refers to things made by people, both tangible and intangible, that create meaning for a society or a group. Atul Gawande recently (2020) argued that culture will be an important component in regulating Covid-19 protection practices successfully. For example, putting on a face mask when out in public is becoming a new, accepted social norm. The social norms about face masks can be rigidly enforced laws (in some cities) or more loosely enforced folkways (as in some local neighborhoods). Face masks themselves can be thought of as one of the symbols of the new Covid Pandemic culture. People who wear face masks symbolize an acceptance of the new Covid Pandemic culture, in particular, that it is important to protect others from one's own possible infection. Ideologies of modern medicine, science, and epidemiology are supporting the Covid Pandemic culture.

Another example of a Covid Pandemic norm is frequent hand washing, especially washing hands after being out in the world and coming home. The ritual of singing a song like "Happy Birthday" while washing one's hands can help to make sure that the handwashing lasts the recommended twenty seconds.

In addition to the broad cultural components of the Covid Pandemic, it can be fruitful to discuss differences – perhaps by U.S. region or type of community (rural, urban, suburban).
Furthermore, how are gender, race, ethnicity, income, education related to the ways people accept and use Covid Pandemic cultural concepts? For example, are there gendered face masks? Who wears cloth face masks? Who wears disposable face masks? Who follows social distancing norms (guidelines)? Students from other countries, notably Asian countries, could discuss their normative experiences wearing face masks during flu and cold season.

In addition to motivating a class discussion, this topic could also become the source of a class assignment. Students could spend a certain amount of time observing others outdoors and write a short paper outlining their results and connect to the text they are reading.

This type of assignment is a good early in the semester as it begins to develop students' "Sociological Imaginations."

The Covid-19 Pandemic has challenged everyone to rethink and refresh our pedagogy and course content and provide new, contemporary ways to make classic ideas come alive. Our students are looking for ways to make sense of this time and for ways to make their contributions. It is our job to get them started.

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## Maintaining the Student's Community Despite Remote Learning

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## Introduction/State the Problem

It was just a few days before Spring Break when the University informed us that we will move to an online model for two weeks rather than return to campus after the break. This was the initial response to the deadly COVID-19 virus crisis. Unfortunately, we never went back on the ground in Spring 2020. As sociologists, passioned by social relations, interactions and network links, foremost among our concerns going online was maintaining a sense of community among students that we worked to build prior to the pandemic.

Sociologists have long been fascinated with and attended to the concept of community and the resulting social problems of its (perceived) absence (Durkheim). More recent scholars (for instance, Alonso and Oiarzabal 2010) explore community in the new digital age. Notions of community, collective identity and community building on college campuses have also been explored. The new question that emerges in this time of rapid change is how can we translate ideas of community—cohesion, sense of belonging, and the like-- to this new environment of remote online learning? The response—maintain connections and foster team-building between students in our classes.

## Responding to the Problem

Scholars have pointed to the numerous factors that (may) facilitate "community at a distance" (Rovai 2002). Among the key influencing factors for community building (i.e. development, cultivation, and retention) in the online realm involve "social presence," group activities, and group facilitation (Rovai 2002). Fueled by our sociological perspectives and our University's liberal arts mission, we were responsive to this new call.

### Social Presence

The gist of *social presence* is simply finding ways to be there as an instructor, a class, a department, and a University. We think of this as a social anchoring but one that is not stale and stagnant. Rather social presence is interactive and engaging and alive. At the same time the parameters are somewhat routine. We initially set the time for and the amount of time the class meetings are/will be and meetings and group timeframes are set by both faculty and students. Routine and structure supports the engagement of students in groups as part of the community of learners.

### Group Activities

After talking through the current situation with students, we explained that we were committed to maintaining the connections that students formed during the first half of the semester. Our aim was not simply to cover academic work but also to keep students' wellness in focus and foster a sense of community. To this end, we extended and created new team work exercises/assignments, student led discussions, presentations, quizzes and the final exam. One of us even offered the opportunity for students to take quizzes and the exams as a group. Using the available platforms (including Blackboard, Google Classroom, Google Docs) we encouraged students to exchange information, sign up for teams, explore conversations together.

Despite this being a great opportunity for students to be able to increase their grades, and despite the numerous group work already done in class since the start of the semester, we did experience resistance from some students. Unsurprisingly, there were

some who voiced concern about "free riders." Our response to individualistic resistance was simple. We restated our commitment to the principle of a liberal arts education and developing team-work skills (e.g. communication, problem-solving, and leadership) and we made the new teams optional. The group work that had been in place pre-Covid-19 remained but new commitments were made optional. We made this optional because of the unfortunate inequalities in technology and access to wifi, physical space, and other homelife responsibilities.

*Group Facilitation*

As mentioned we both did encourage them to work with their peers regardless of the situation. However, during the pandemic shut-down it was challenging to mandate. To facilitate we spent considerable time articulating the liberal arts mission and the value of group work. We created structure to 'sign-up' for teams and/or groups (i.e. google docs is perfect for this) and we reminded them via email to be sure to join. We saw our role as facilitator to their independent educational success. To that end, we encouraged their work in groups or teams. During this heightened level of uncertainty and fear a significant part of the aim was for connection. We wanted to encourage connection and community so that the students who were floundering could latch on to the anchor of each other, us, the class, our university community.

## Assessment and Conclusion:

One of us (Professor Simon) encouraged that they take the final exam as a group. One student explained that by working "with others in a group, I can learn from what others has to say. We can have a discussion with others providing all the pros and cons of what we think the answer is." This experience helps students to have a deeper understanding of the material. And in addition, it can decrease the level of stress associated with the individual level process and increase student success in term of grade, self-confidence.

Students also used this opportunity to develop their network, or social capital as they were thinking about possible future support in their academic or professional life. One student commented that they thought it was important to "establish a trustworthy

networking resource for the future. Afterall, we are all going into the same field." Encouraging students to work in group during evaluation can also help underserved students who cannot afford the course material. One of a student explained: "I took the exam in a group because I did not purchase the book for this class. I knew classmates that had to book so we took the exam together so we could all utilize the book."

Finally, the most important reason to promote work in group during this difficult time period is to fight against social isolation and provide emotional support. "It's been an isolating time so it was just nice to have people to stay in touch with and not feel so alone on my own." "We did it as a group for emotional support because being in quarantine is really isolating so it helps knowing we are in this together."
Views on group work tend to split. Some like it (a lot) and some do not. At minimum we would argue that for the benefit of floundering students, having some option for team or group work is a positive in an online classroom environment. Requiring at least some group work is also encouraged for the benefit that only social interaction can produce. As Wellman and Gulia (1999) stated: "even when online groups are not designed to be supportive, they tend to be" (p. 173).

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# From Surviving to Thriving in Remote Education: Tips for Promoting Engagement and Combatting Academic Dishonesty

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Submitting final grades at the end of spring semester is always satisfying. However, I found the moment particularly momentous this year. In many ways I felt like I had just been through remote education boot camp. Although I was proud of completing a challenging semester, I was tired! I was also craving time to reflect on my remote teaching experience, knowing I had a lot more to learn. With that in mind, I began reviewing essays on best practices in remote and online instruction. The articles I selected addressed two primary concerns: 1) promoting student engagement, and 2) combatting academic dishonesty. Here is a brief summary of what I learned. Since I elected to teach my classes using live Zoom meetings, I focused on suggestions pertaining to remote instruction, though some are also applicable to asynchronous online courses.

## Promoting Student Engagement

Remote education clearly poses challenges to maintaining student engagement. What can we do to keep students connected, engaged and motivated? First, we can make ourselves available outside of scheduled class times. This could mean hosting virtual office hours, but it can also involve logging in early to class meetings and staying after the class concludes. Being present during these less structured times can help us build relationships with students and a sense of community in our classes (4, 3). Second, during class we can use the break-out room feature in Zoom to give students the ability to talk and build meaningful connections with each other. Third, we can set clear course norms aimed at simulating an in-person class experience. For example, we might ask students to keep their video on, maintain eye contact, avoid multitasking, and refrain from reclining or laying down on comfortable furniture or a bed (4, 2, 3). In particular, having students remain visible can help them stay focused, and it allows us as instructors to access the informal feedback we would typically receive in the classroom, such as reading facial expressions and body language to gauge engagement and comprehension (4). Finally, with an awareness that energy is often diminished in a Zoom class, we can compensate by training ourselves to become more animated (e.g., smiling more, being more expressive, varying our voice intonation, or accentuating nonverbal feedback such as head nods)(4).

## Combatting Academic Dishonesty

Online education also offers instructional challenges pertaining to preventing academic dishonesty on tests and assignments. What can we do to combat cheating on online tests? First, high-stakes tests are particularly prone to generating academic dishonesty. Therefore, we can structure our courses to have more assignments and assessments, each being worth a smaller portion of the course grade. Research also indicates students learn best from this type of course structure, so we can kill two birds with one stone (7). Second, objective questions are easier for students to cheat on than subjective questions. However, this doesn't mean there is nothing you can do to target-harden objective portions of tests. For example, most LMS systems allow the ability to randomize the questions students see, the order of the questions, or the order of response items (7). Also, we can limit the number of questions per page. Online test questions can be screen-grabbed and shared. If we limit each page to one question, this can still happen, but it is much more labor-intensive than if we have multiple questions on a single page (1). Finally, we can review feedback settings (7). While feedback in general is positive, in an online format releasing verbatim questions and answers can present problems. For assignments, we can create application assignments with unique wording that is difficult to find answers to online. We can also break up large assignments into multiple, smaller assignments in order to check for inconsistencies in the progression of student work, and we can check for plagiarism using plugins such as SafeAssign or Turnitin (7). Finally, we can create assignments requiring presentations, forcing students to prove their knowledge (1).

Online spaces create unique challenges for promoting engagement and maintaining academic integrity. Hopefully this essay will give you a step in the right direction. Best of luck to you all as we venture into this new educational landscape together!

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