Using the Virtual to Keep Things Real: Fifteen Ways to Leave the “Remote” Out of Online Learning

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"Educational Diplomacy" via the Internet: A Transatlantic Citizens' Dialogue for Kosovo/a,² 2001

The American Academy in Berlin,³ Founder, Richard Holbrooke, 1994

Hans Arnhold Center, Berlin (Wannsee), Federal Republic of Germany

In 1995, we discovered a new world. A quarter century ago, my first teaching assignment in Budapest, Hungary introduced us to email and the experience of a previously only imagined online community.

Near the completion of my PhD studies in Government at Georgetown University,⁴ it was time to return to the Continent to begin the journey of a lifetime in higher learning.

As a Visiting Lecturer at the Budapest University of Economic Sciences,⁵ after the Cold War ended, my sense of community, formed at The Fletcher School,⁶ began to undergo a revolutionary transformation.

Takeaways from that era are particularly significant during the COVID-19 pandemic for the lessons to be learned about the distinct nature of integrating technology in the classroom to create a community.

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¹ https://www.shethepeople.tv/home-top-video/colette-mazzucelli-technology-mediated-learning
² http://users.skynet.be/bs974554/Kosovo-E/Tisk/Tisk0.htm
³ https://www.americanacademy.de/# and https://www.americanacademy.de/about/mission/
⁴ https://government.georgetown.edu/
⁵ http://isp.uni-corvinus.hu/index.php?id=55339
⁶ https://fletcher.tufts.edu/about/history-excellence
The fifteen observations that follow are gleaned from decades of practice, by trial and error, among diverse locales connected by steps in time, across space, uniting thousands of students for one purpose.

1 No place is foreign. A classroom in any country is a venue of potential to discover knowledge and meet people.

2 Active learning in any college or university needs the impetus of inquiry in classrooms that are open to society.

3 Each classroom that aspires to integrate virtual resources must aim to bridge the digital divide given the gap between those who readily access new communications technologies and those who cannot.

In 2000, we created a transatlantic Internet/multimedia seminar Southeastern Europe, an initiative to establish the first technology-mediated, transcontinental classroom in the history of Sciences Po Paris.

4 The virtual classroom is no substitute for the in-person experience; rather, its design builds on the passion for community among students dedicated to the study of a subject in a holistic manner.

5 Rely on the simplest technologies to provide the widest access in the world to level the playing field between the developed and developing countries, thereby increasing the plurality of voices in dialogue.

6 Design the syllabus to learn from the ground up with outreach to guest speakers from local areas using technology to broaden the conversation in the field while deepening the content under discussion.

In 2005, on faculty at New York University, opportunities to create innovative learning communities expanded as President Sexton reflected in 2010 on the structure of the Global Network University.

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7 http://www.timsse.com/
7 Experimentation facilitates innovation building on a foundation of blended learning, which is marked by in-person contact augmented judiciously with focused, technology-mediated interactions\(^{10}\).

8 Develop an *esprit de corps* in community without relying on a physical meeting space through in-depth study of a topic integrating technology to design a crisis scenario, which gives *participants a purpose*\(^{11}\).

9 Flip the classroom, folks, and deepen the dialogue in Zoom conference by manually creating rooms that break a larger group into smaller, intimate circles so that each voice is heard: the personal is plural.

In 2015, experiential learning, dating back 50 years to *Friends World College*,\(^{12}\) merges with international relations field placements in a *LIU Global syllabus designed for synchronous delivery on six continents*\(^{13}\).

10 Blended learning is a custom-made seminar design emphasizing individual student academic and professional development by fostering critical thinking to connect local experience and world education.

11 Technology-mediated learning, research, and service are the heart, mind, and soul of a College whose campus is the world and whose students are devoted to the postwar vision of *Morris Mitchell*\(^{14}\).

12 Immersive learning is our new normal integrating virtual reality to enrich the community experience in seminars that *visit multiple cities*\(^{15}\) and *explore virtual memorials*\(^{16}\) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, on the international relations faculty at *Pioneer Academics*,\(^{17}\) the world’s ONLY online research program with US college credit for high school students, *listening is the art of the possible in learning*\(^{18}\).

\(^{10}\) [https://mazzucelli.com/from-mailbox-to-inbox/](https://mazzucelli.com/from-mailbox-to-inbox/)


\(^{12}\) [https://www.liu.edu/Global/About](https://www.liu.edu/Global/About)


\(^{15}\) [https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/04/travel/airbnb-online-experiences-virus.html?referringSource=articleShare](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/04/travel/airbnb-online-experiences-virus.html?referringSource=articleShare)


\(^{17}\) [https://pioneeracademics.com/](https://pioneeracademics.com/) and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nO05iOR6QM&feature=em-upload_owner](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nO05iOR6QM&feature=em-upload_owner)

\(^{18}\) [https://www.globallisteningcentre.org/global-listening-board/academia/](https://www.globallisteningcentre.org/global-listening-board/academia/)
13 “Small is beautiful” in technology-mediated research mentoring with cohorts of six or less who learn from each other with anchored instruction provided by faculty to orient the next generation.

14 Forward-thinking in online learning is integral to address a gray rhino, defined as “a highly probable, high impact yet neglected threat,” i.e., the broken system of US education and student debt.

15 Online learning is a necessary bridge to span across generations in societies so the digital immigrants among the Baby Boomers may understand the educational needs of digital natives in Gen Z.

Ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning spoke to societal action in health security, i.e., Rotary’s eradication of polio or managing diabetes worldwide, in NYU’s Global Affairs curriculum.

Content is king in our learning whether virtual or real, as Professor David C. Unger, SAIS Bologna, and career editorial writer, The New York Times, reminds us when he joins communities we create.

Using the virtual keeps things real when the subject matter is compelling, engaging all involved because we are dispersed across continents, yet brought together simultaneously, in visual conversations.

20 https://www.wucker.com/writing/the-gray-rhino/
23 https://www.rotary.org/en/rotary-announces-us100-million-eradicate-polio
24 http://www.timsse.com/polio/
25 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEBwPi-sX1k
Professor Colette Mazzucelli is Senior Vice President (Academia), Global Listening Centre, and a member since 2004 of the Graduate Faculty at NYU New York. She is Lead Editor, with James Felton Keith, of the Anthem Press Ethics of Personal Data Collection Series. Colette teaches International Relations (Conflict Resolution/Europe) reaching students on six continents through her design and delivery of technology-mediated seminars for LIU Global as well as Pioneer Academics. Her longstanding experience developing the hybrid-flexibility (hy-flex) option defines Colette’s approach to the creation of content for courses that embody holistic learning in community.