Synchronous vs. Asynchronous: Why and How

Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Teaching

	Synchronous	Asynchronous
Strengths	• Creates community: when students are under stay at home orders, synchronous meetings are the only way they meet you and other students • Allows for real-time interaction and questions • Provides an opportunity for quick assessments of student understanding	• Learners can access at any time • Allows for editing questions and/or responses • Provides flexibility for students in uncertain times • Provides more reflection/processing time for content being introduced
Challenges	• Requires specific times • Technology glitches can interfere • The cognitive load of web-based learning is higher, so cannot be sustained in the same way as face-to-face instruction	• Harder to create community and connection • Calendars and navigation must be clear • Students must be diligent with managing their time and creating routines
Equity	• Doesn't always allow for equal participation • Difficult to caption real-time discussions • Can benefit students who want connection	• Students can feel isolated • Instructional technology may be difficult to use • Can be easier for students who are language learners
Best Practices	• Plan several short sessions at a variety of times during a week or throughout the quarter and let students choose which one they will attend • Ask student volunteers to help manage the online meeting space and participants • Record all synchronous meetings and make them available with captions • Don't require synchronous attendance	• Create short, captioned videos for instruction and pair them with a transcript • Let students help structure the schedule each week • Create chances for students to interact with you, with individual classmates, and with groups of classmates • Record feedback and ask for recorded discussions or demonstrations, but provide tech support and alternate options