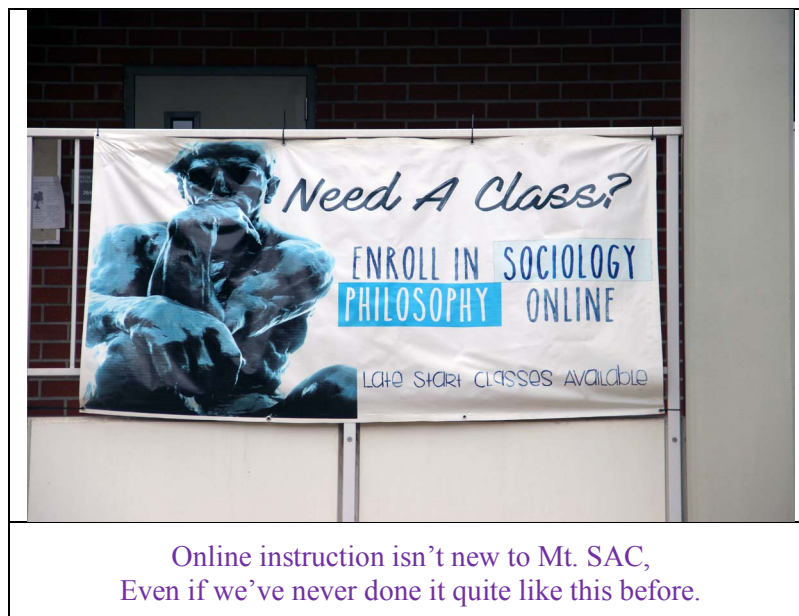


30 March 2020

Colleagues~

First, I want to say how much I recognize and appreciate the *enormous effort* that has taken place over the past two weeks as faculty have moved their courses online and staff have supported those efforts. This is a demanding process in the *best* of circumstances, which is not where we are now. I especially appreciate the support of the DL Committee and the FCLT staff, who have been working *so* hard to answer questions, provide guidance, and get faculty ready.



I taught my first online course 20 years ago; I taught my most recent online class last summer even as I was adjusting to Mt. SAC. I make the following suggestions to lighten your burden.

1. **Go easy on yourself:** When a tool is new, it is easy to make simple mistakes. I created a Canvas class earlier this semester to share coronavirus information among the deans and I forgot to publish the content. You will make predictable mistakes: forgive yourself and forgive your students when they make similar errors. See the good intentions in yourself and the patient striving of students and honor both.
2. **Sages & guides:** The direction of higher education has been steadily moving away from recitation of information: the “flipped” classroom, teaching “from the back of the room,” leaving your role as the “sage on the stage” to become the “guide on the side.” The reality is that students *do better* when they have to manipulate the information you provide in their own thoughts and words. This is not unique to Canvas or teaching online but helpful to remember in this moment. Do what you know is right for your students; don't worry about what you think someone else expects you to do.

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3. **Your students need you:** Now more than ever. Self-confidence is perhaps the quality many of our students most need, and this transition to “temporary remote instruction” may make them feel even less capable. Our message needs always to be a balance of the rigor of our disciplines but equally our confidence that our students are capable and can rise to the challenge. Don’t be afraid to acknowledge your own frustrations and challenges and tell students that you know that they can do it.

I found excellent advice on a Facebook post to a colleague from an experienced Mt. SAC online instructor—it’s stellar advice (I quote with permission of the author, who wishes to remain anonymous):

“DON’T try to replicate modes of classroom instruction (e.g., recording lectures that then need captioning). Giving students tasks, places to go for information, and opportunities to analyze/synthesize that information keeps them active and moves the instructor to the side to guide the process. Trying to do synchronous class sessions, “lectures,” and office hours is like trying to shoe-horn a face-to-face paradigm into a DL teaching mode where it doesn’t fit. Feel free to chuck the old models and explore all the different modes that are now available to you and the students.”

I’ve had only the tiniest peek into the many conversations I know are going on across campus, but that small peek makes it clear all of us are trying to keep our students first. That’s the spirit I found when I arrived on campus and I am even more impressed with the hard work and commitment I see now.