

Handling Hot Moments in Online Classrooms

Summer Professional Development for Remote Learning
& Teaching

Hosted by TILT & Online Teaching

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Facilitated by:

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Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

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Pronouns: Any version of She/They/Per



Land Acknowledgement

Colorado State University acknowledges, with respect, that the land we are on today is the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute Nations and peoples. This was also a site of trade, gathering, and healing for numerous other Native tribes. We recognize the Indigenous peoples as original stewards of this land and all the relatives within it. As these words of acknowledgment are spoken and heard, the ties Nations have to their traditional homelands are renewed and reaffirmed.

CSU is founded as a land-grant institution, and we accept that our mission must encompass access to education and inclusion. And, significantly, that our founding came at a dire cost to Native Nations and peoples whose land this University was built upon. This acknowledgment is the education and inclusion we must practice in recognizing our institutional history, responsibility, and commitment

<https://landacknowledgment.colostate.edu/>

Learning Outcomes & Overview



- Instructors will learn strategies for creating and maintaining an inclusive, democratic, and rigorous synchronous & asynchronous learning environments.
 - Participants will learn how to move through challenging moments that are not aligned with CSU's Principles of Community.
- Introduction & Framing
 - What are "Hot Moments"?
 - Strategies:
 - Proactive
 - During
 - After
 - Application
 - Practice
 - Group Brainstorm/Q&A

Guiding Assumptions + Group Commitments

- Participants are contributors
- Practice respect
- Maintain confidentiality
- Conflict is the “juicy” part
- Honest dialogue welcome
- Approach each other
- On Your Own reference
- WAIT –
 - Why Am I Talking?
 - Why Aren’t I Talking?

Virtual/Online Platforms

- Mute and unmute
- Utilize the chat
- Participate in the virtual breakout groups
 - Facilitator pop-in
- Writing utensil and paper/ digital notebook
- Electronic evaluations

Introductions



In the Chat:

- Name
- Department/Office
- Pronouns
- What do hope to gain?
- Email (if you want us to send you slides and additional materials after today's session)

A few people can vocalize their introductions.

What are "Hot Moments"?



Defining Hot Moments

You make a remark that instigates a strong emotional reaction in a student or group of students.

A student offers a comment that marginalizes a range of people and perspectives.

Someone is wearing a piece of clothing or taking up space in a way that surfaces ideological disagreement.

- "moments in the classroom when the emotions of students and/or faculty escalate to a level that threatens teaching and learning, usually triggered by a comment on a sensitive issue"
- "sudden eruption of tension and conflict in classroom discussion...These moments can derail the conversation, make the classroom environment toxic, and can be harmful to students if not handled appropriately "
- "Unanticipated classroom situation laden with tension or conflict" (Yarlap, 2013)

<https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/navigating-difficult-moments>

https://www.elon.edu/u/academics/catl/wp-content/uploads/sites/126/2017/04/Managing-Hot-Moments-in-the-Classroom-Harvard_University.pdf

<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/inclusive-classrooms/hot-moments/>

Defining Hot Moments

- Intense, emotional responses
 - *Can show up/manifest in very different ways*
 - *Might not be easily noticeable (to us)*
 - *Internal vs external conflict*
- Expand definition of 'hot moments' to consider multiple forms of overt & covert harm
- Responsibility of instructors to notice harm even when the students' responses might not call attention to the harm
 - Do we have their back?



Microaggressions

Microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward people who are marginalized.

Perpetrators of microaggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications when they interact with marginalized populations.

(Sue et al. 2007)



On Your Own: [https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/ELAMICRO%20A Guide to Responding to Microaggressions.pdf](https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/ELAMICRO%20A%20Guide%20to%20Responding%20to%20Microaggressions.pdf)

Small Group Discussions

If you have experienced a hot moment in a classroom (as an instructor or student)...

- **What sparked the hot moment?**
- **What did it feel like to experience that moment?**
- **What immediate and long-term impact did the hot moment have?**

Hot Moments in Online Classrooms

Synchronous

- Missing nonverbal cues, video turned off, private chats, simultaneous activity

Asynchronous

- Less urgency & and potentially more space/time to respond thoughtfully
- Things escalate before instructor notices harm and can intervene (e.g. large enrollment class, over the weekend)
- Misinterpretation of mostly text-based communication
- Emotional responses can manifest through text communication in very different ways
- "permanence" feels risky: student participation is recorded, archived, public
- Class size & instructor bandwidth
 - If an instructor cannot clarify/address conflict in the moment, this could lead to high volumes of emails to respond to
 - changing an assignment or the syllabus to address an issue may require more communication and lead to more confusion

Hot Moments in Online Classrooms

Anonymity + Distance

- Students more likely to engage in aggressive, inappropriate, etc. behavior than in-person
- Students may feel disconnected from their peers and the impact their comments have on others

COVID-19

- High stress, uncertainty, anxiety
 - For students and instructors
 - Stress can activate and increase reliance on automatic/unconscious biases leading to microaggressions
- Strong emotional responses to non-content issues (someone coughing in a hybrid class)

Responsibility to Engage; Consequences of Silence

"Professors and classroom leaders operate as the gatekeepers to the learning process, holding open or closed the doors to dialogue and collective learning" (Ortega et al, 2018)

You're not alone if you have found it very difficult to address hot moments or are worried about what might happen

Takeaway: Instructors must always respond to hot moments

- This session is about how to do that most effectively
- Not responding is a response - What message(s) does that send and reinforce for students?

Creating a positive social presence online is a part of online teaching

- Connecting with and supporting students has impact on belonging and retention and success

Strategies to Address Hot Moments

Before/Proactive

Engaging inclusive/anti-oppressive pedagogy means being prepared for when--not if--a microaggression/hot moment occurs

Creating an online classroom culture and using instructional technology intentionally to promote learning and maintain core values of inclusion, equity (Ortega et al, 2018)

Before/Proactive

Know yourself to alleviate the surprise

- What language, topics, dynamics will push you to your edge?
- What usually happens when you're at your edge/'triggered'?
- What are your biases?
- What strategies help you manage yourself?
- **prioritizing competing values

Provide multiple avenues for feedback and communication

- Especially important for students to have pathways to share in case you don't notice harm/hot moments
- E.g. Office hours, anonymous feedback form available all semester, regular reflection assignments
- Specifically solicit feedback about classroom dynamics, emotional responses, etc.

Before/Proactive

System for noticing potential issues

- How often can you realistically/sustainably review discussion boards to catch issues?
- Who is keeping tabs on the chat while you are lecturing?

Relationship building

- Mitigates feelings of anonymity and distance
- Icebreakers, group work, introduction videos*, weekly participant spotlight

Before/Proactive

Clear, transparent expectations for engagement

On Your Own:

Examples and Resources for Class Guidelines

- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1leSN9gyTn7jwNWUeV7AigOQNGzz6dyunTOZP4vpr1g/edit>
- <http://crlt.umich.edu/examples-discussion-guidelines>

Syllabus

- Acknowledge that the syllabus is flexible and may need to be updated to respond to the needs of the class (specifically mentioning that if there is conflict or tension that disrupts learning, it will be addressed in class)

Guidelines/Ground Rules for discussion

- Co-construct guidelines with class so students have buy-in and feel like their needs/input has been recognized
- A living document that is regularly referenced, revisited, and easily accessible

Instructions for discussion posts

- Reference class guidelines or provide specific guidelines on how you want students to engage disagreement respectfully and constructively
- Model what constructive conflict/disagreement looks like on a discussion post
- Encourage students to prewrite their discussion forum responses and self-reflectively read their work prior to posting publicly
- Require students to provide rationales for their arguments (even if those are lived experiences)

Asynchronous

- Instructor response with a video rather than text-based communication to capture more nuance if deeply inflammatory
- A written response could work – time to think, but still timely
- Less flexibility with asynchronous courses
 - Making changes to the syllabus/schedule (to take time to process a hot moment) can potentially increase student confusion
 - Provide clear communication about changes to the syllabus
 - Or build buffers into your syllabus so there's already space carved out to process anything that comes up unexpectedly



On Your Own:

Actively Engaging Students in Asynchronous Online Classes
https://www.ideaedu.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/IDEA%20Papers/IDEA%20Papers/PaperIDEA_64.pdf

Asynchronous

Create a separate chat/forum for students to process their personal reaction to the conflict/hot moment

- Consider making this an additional assignment rather than optional

Provide guiding questions to help students post thoughtfully

Assign additional material

- e.g. providing a reading about microaggressions so the class has shared language/understanding to continue engaging in conversation

On Your Own:

Potential Reflection Questions

- What was the experience like for you? How did it feel?
- Were you active in the discussion/conversation? Were you able to share what you wanted to? Did you leave class/the experience with additional thoughts that you would like to contribute here?
- What have other conversations around these topics] been like for you at CSU? How was this discussion similar or different?
- What can you contribute that might change the experience for you?

Synchronous

Immediately after the 'hot moment'

Take a moment

- Notice your reaction, emotions and thoughts
- What just happened? What exactly sparked the hot moment? What was the sequence of events that led us here?
- What is the subtext? What's happening underneath?
- **Invite the class to consider this with you

Name/Acknowledge what is happening

- Esp. important online to make sure everyone is on the same page
- "I'm noticing that this topic is raising discomfort and want to acknowledge that" "I sense some big emotions in the room"

Bring students to the same place if there are simultaneous conversations

- Ex) verbally acknowledge chat discussion, ask that students pause the chat

Decide if you ready/willing to engage right away

- If not, state that this is something that the class will come back to the next class/week and follow through
- If not, what preparation do you want the students to engage in before returning to this discussion?
- /

Gauge what the class needs

- Are some students still confused about what is happening?
- Do students want to talk about this immediately or later?

Synchronous

Engaging students in processing the 'hot moment'

Remind students of guidelines/discussion expectations

- "This seems like a good time to recall our [guideline] that we wouldn't interrupt one another"

Create a framework for the discussion that maintains focus and flow

- What's the scope of the conversation?
- How will you know if the discussion is 'off track'?

Facilitate the conversation

- (vs being a passive observer)
- Correct misinformation
- Reference and connect to course content
- Ask for clarification
- Summarize and review main point

Provide a common basis for understanding

- Assign readings, have students find and share their own readings/videos
- Mini-lecture

Include everyone

- Small groups, circle/go-around, think-pair-share
- Give students time to gather their thoughts
- Individual writing reflection: "Why is this topic so difficult to discuss?" What do you feel like you can't say aloud right now?"
- Collect these to read and make a plan OR read them aloud anonymously

Synchronous

On Your Own: Additional language and strategies



On your own:

<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/inclusive-classrooms/hot-moments/>

Respectfully challenging students

- “Let’s consider whose perspective that comment leaves out.” Or “You might not realize how those words sound, but here’s what I hear when you say them...”

Clarify comments

- Students sometimes say inadvertently insulting or marginalizing things when they are struggling to understand a new perspective or feeling the intellectual discomfort of having their familiar views challenged. If you think a comment is coming from such a place of cognitive struggle, you might give the student a chance to explain the thought process behind their remark
- “What do you mean by X?” or “I heard you saying Y; is that what you meant to say?”
- Ask them to rephrase if it’s evident they understand they made a misstep (“Do you want to try saying that differently?” And then, perhaps, “Let’s talk about why that initial phrasing felt so problematic.”).

Depersonalize

- **Try to depersonalize** insensitive or marginalizing statements. You can model for students how to acknowledge a comment’s potential insult or devaluing of other perspectives in ways that critique the statement and not the speaker: e.g., rather than “X’s comment,” you can refer to “the proposal that such-and-such...what does it leave out?” Or you might speak of the effect of “these words,” without attributing motive to the speaker: “When I hear these words, I respond like this...” You can also depersonalize by acknowledging, when appropriate, that a widely-held view has been raised: “Many people share this perspective. What might their reasons be?” And then: “And why might others disagree or object to this position?”

R.A.V.E.N. Approach for Online Teaching

Redirect – Intervene, correct

Ask probing questions for clarity

Value clarification – reconnect to group norms/guidelines; principles of community

Emphasize your own thoughts and feelings (Convey Empathy)

Next Steps Advice for the future, follow-up, grievance

On your Own:

- Free Speech, Harassment & Distance Learning <http://www.highereducationlaw.org/url/2020/3/24/free-speech-harassment-and-distance-learning.html>
- The Dilemma of Free Speech Lesson Plan <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons-plans/the-dilemma-of-protecting-free-speech/>

SOURCE/On Your Own:
Responding Racial Bias and
Microaggressions in Online
Environments

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cEWQJ32nqU&t=3595s>



Questions

Choose from
the lists

Create your
own that fit
your style and
personality

Evaluative Questions—Gauge emotions, anxiety levels, what is going well or not

- Is there anything else you would like to talk about?
- How are you feeling about this now?
- What was a high point for you? A low point?
- Where were you engaged? Disengaged?
- What excited you? Disappointed you?

Relational Questions—Ask for comparisons of themes, ideas, or issues

- Do you see a pattern here?
- How do you account for _____?
- What was significant about _____?
- What connections to you see?
- What does _____ suggest to you?
- Is there a connection between what you've just said and what _____ was saying earlier?

Questions

Exploratory Questions— Probe basic knowledge

What do you think about _____?

How does _____ make you feel?

What bothers/concerns/confuses you the most about _____?

What are some ways we might respond to _____?

Open-ended Questions—that don't require a detailed or specific kind of response

What is your understanding of _____?

What do you want to know about _____?

What is the first thing you think about in relation to _____?

What are some questions you have about _____?

State one image/scene/event/moment from your experience that relates to _____?

Challenge Questions—Examine assumptions, conclusions, and interpretations

What can we infer/conclude from _____?

Does _____ remind you of anything?

What principle do you see operating here?

What does this help you explain?

How does this relate to other experiences or things you already knew?

Questions

Cause and Effect Questions— Ask for causal relationships between ideas, actions, or events

How do you think _____ relates or
causes _____?

What are some consequences of
_____?

Where does _____ lead?

What are some pros and cons of
_____?

What is likely to be the effect of
_____?

Extension Questions—Expand the discussion

What do the rest of you think?

How do others feel?

What did you find noteworthy
about this comment?

How can we move forward?

Can you give some specific
examples of
_____?

How would you put that another
way?

Hypothetical Questions—Pose a change in the facts or issues

What if _____ were from a
different _____, how would
that change things?

Would it make a difference if we
were in a _____
society/culture?

How might this dialogue be different
if _____?

What might happen if we were to
_____?

How might your life be different if
_____?

Questions

Priority Questions—Seek to identify the most important issue

From all that we've talked about, what is the most important concept you see?

Considering the different ideas in the room, what do you see as the most critical issue?

What do you find yourself resonating with the most?

If you had to pick just one topic to continue talking about, what would it be?

Process Questions—Elicits satisfaction/buy-in/interest levels

Is this where we should be going?

How are people feeling about the direction of this dialogue?

What perspectives are missing from this dialogue?

Everyone has been _____ for awhile, why?

How would you summarize this dialogue so far?

How might splitting into groups/pairs affect our discussion?

Analytical Questions—Seek to apply concepts or principles to new or different situations

What are the main arguments for _____?

What are the assumptions underlying _____?

What questions arise for you as you think about _____?

What implications does _____ have? (for _____?)

Does this idea challenge or support what we've been talking about?

How does this idea/contribution add to what has already been said?

Questions

Diagnostic Questions—
Probe motives or causes

What brings you to say that?

What do you mean?

What led you to that conclusion?

Summary Questions—Elicit syntheses, what themes or lessons have emerged?

Where are we?

If you had to pick two themes from this dialogue, what would they be?

What did you learn?

What benefits did we gain today?

What remains unresolved? How can we better process this?

Based on our dialogue, what will you be thinking about after you leave?

Let me see if I understand what we've talked about so far... What have I missed?

Ok, this is what I've heard so far... Does anyone have anything to correct or add?

After Hot Moments

Following up with individuals as needed

Individual reflection/reflexive practice

- What worked and didn't work? What do you want to try next time?

Connect with your support networks

- What support/care/resources do you need if you feel directly impacted by the hot moment?
- Trusted colleague to process with who can give honest, challenging feedback (vs just affirmations)

Optional: Create a conversation that connects the hot moment and response to the course content

Need for Practice & Proactivity

Fluency with technology and navigating hot moments in person won't always translate to facilitating through online hot moments

Develop skills and gain confidence through practice

1. Share examples of hot moments to recognize the covert and overt ways harm can show up in classrooms
2. Think through examples to identify all the factors/moving pieces at play
3. Brainstorm and/or act out potential responses to the hot moment – what are the opportunities and limitations of each? How can they be used in combination?



Practice Worksheet

Strategy	<i>What specific language or tactics might you use if you pursued this strategy?</i>	<i>What are some pros and cons of using this strategy? Or factors to consider?</i>
Directly name behavior as problematic or unwelcome (e.g., say why it's inappropriate, and explain your expectations moving forward).		
Acknowledge disrespect or disruption with a smile or laugh and continue with lesson plan.		
Deflect confrontation with sympathetic response (e.g., acknowledge the student's frustration, or respond to a critique as a request for information).		

<http://crlt.umich.edu/sites/default/files/Respondingtodisrespect--strategiesworksheet.pdf>

Application

- Large group discussion
- Ask questions and share additional strategies

Closing Thoughts

Evaluations

Utilize Materials

Thank you!



Evaluation Link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1lvidOXoGGIPizXY4Byobx_uzGVTcpMYx6n4fVPFPKil/edit

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- Note about materials: Please note that training materials should be updated every 4-6 months, sometimes sooner based on needs and societal, legal and organizational changes.

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