The Value of Instructor Presence

The Institute for Law Teaching & Learning

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"IMG_2254 Luke Fildes. 1843-1927. Le docteur impuissant. The Doctor exhibited. 1891. Londres. Tate Britain." by jean louis mazeres is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.
Ellen Murphy, JD MEd
Associate Dean, Strategic Initiatives
Professor of the Practice
A Few Terms
Online Classroom  

Traditional Residential Classroom
Synchronous
Layer of Mediation b/c Time & Place

Asynchronous
Layer of Mediation b/c Place

Synchronous
Layer of Mediation in Fully Online Classroom

Exacerbated Remoteness (physical and otherwise)
Use instructor presence to mitigate this layer of mediation.
What is social presence?*

• “The specific actions and behaviors taken by the instructor that project him/herself as a real person.” Richardson, et al. (2015)

• “[H]aving perceived authenticity among a community of learners and validating one's personal identity by formally acknowledging and conducting their role through various strategies.” Martin, et al. (2018)

• Social presence captures the extent to which the teacher or students are able to project their true selves to the community. Conklin & Dikkers (2021)

*The study of social presence in the classroom dates to mid-1970’s (see Short et al.).
“The Community of Inquiry theoretical framework represents a process of creating a deep and meaningful (collaborative-constructivist) learning experience through the development of three interdependent elements: social, cognitive and teaching presence.”

http://www.thecommunityofinquiry.org/coi

See also:
The Community of Inquiry
http://www.thecommunityofinquiry.org/coi

- Social Presence
  - Engagement with Participants
  - Supporting Discourse
  - Educational Experience
  - Setting Climate
  - Regulating Learning
  - Engagement re: Goals/Direction

- Cognitive Presence
  - Engagement with Content

- Teaching Presence
“Social presence refers to the ability to perceive others in an online environment as “real” and the projection of oneself as a real person. Social presence involves open communication, affective expression, and group cohesion.”

Instructor Presence (for purposes of our session)

“The specific actions and behaviors taken by the instructor that project [them]self as a real person.”
Richardson et al. (2015)
Why is instructor social presence important?
Instructor presence:

• relates to students' success or satisfaction in online courses (Brinkerhoff & Koroghlanian, 2007)
• enhances student motivation to learn, increases the depth and quality of students' interactions and discussions (Dennen, 2011)
• reduces the sense of isolation and improves student performance (Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fich, 2006; Benbunan-Fich & Hiltz, 2003)
Use instructor presence to mitigate this layer of mediation.
How?
What is it that professors do in the online classroom that lets you know that they are "right there with you" in the process of learning?
Ayesha Nizhoni is a rising 3L at Wake Forest University School of Law with a passion for workers' rights. She is currently interning at a firm in New York City.

Prior to law school, Ayesha earned an MFA in Film from Ohio University. She is originally from Los Angeles, CA.
Matthew Stella is the proud Dad of a 13-year old son and an 11-year old daughter. As the National Policy & Advocacy Director; Oncology @ Johnson & Johnson (for 23 Years!), Matthew is responsible for developing and managing strategic alliances with all advocacy partners (patient and physician) across the therapeutic area of Oncology.

He has a Bachelor of Science (BS) (with a focus in Business Management and Psychology) from Pennsylvania State University and is a candidate for the Wake Forest School of Law Master of Studies in Law in Health Law and Policy.
What other students have to say (about feedback).

• “I really like the use of the video clip when providing feedback on assignments. It gave me that face-to-face experience.”

• Providing personalized comments when responding to assignments has “helped to bridge the personal connection.”

• Personalized feedback videos “[are] powerful way to connect with students and allows us to get to know [the instructor]. [I]t’s also a way for the students to know that you’re willing to invest the time and effort to make their learning experiences exceptional.’

• Providing timely feedback is “a sign of respect for...students; [the instructor holds themselves] to the same standard [they] hold students.”
• “Since online learning obstructs some of the natural signals that students aren't tracking, polling and cold calling are great resources to moderate learning and keep the class engaged.”

• “The thing I found most effective was re-centering the class every time we convened. I think people speak up less online than in person because of the necessity to generally stay muted. Cold calling is...important in online courses when it forces students to pay attention and participate.”

• “Delegating discussion to small groups or lecturing without any opportunity for student engagement are what I believe to be the major factors contributing to the feeling that professors ‘aren’t there.’”

• “When professors rely on Powerpoint to teach the class, to the exclusion of any real face time just talking to students, things tend to go downhill and become boring.”
What other students have to say (about the asynchronous classroom).

• “The weekly welcome videos were...helpful to set the stage on the materials that would be covered, but it also incorporated real-time acknowledgement on significant social issues that impacted not just students, but family, friends, ...(i.e. pandemic response, remote working, social injustices, etc).”
• “New weekly updates...give the class a more personable touch and less of a cookie-cutter feel.”
• “Professors who check in with the class often and offer consistently positive encouragement are those to whom I respond well. It makes me feel as though they care whether students succeed (or not), and it allows students to feel ‘safe’ in reaching out to ask for help if needed.”
• “Check in calls” via telephone/video conference or periodic “office hours” create presence.
Every student is unique.
How do you create social presence in your synchronous online classroom?
https://padlet.com/murphyme2/v52k0kww75e75nt8

How do you create social presence in your asynchronous online classroom?
https://padlet.com/murphyme2/pzwgg2owr77xf7s
“Presence is the mindfulness that one individual brings to an encounter with another. It’s a defining element of human connection.”

https://www.statnews.com/2021/04/11/old-painting-offers-lessons-for-clinicians-being-present/


A Few Articles of Interest
(in addition to the websites included throughout)
Questions?

Ellen Murphy, JD MEd
Associate Dean, Strategic Initiatives
Professor of the Practice
murphyme@wfu.edu
Twitter: @iteravi