

Structuring your Winter Term class: Possible structures to consider

A) Synchronous: all students together (F2F or online) for whole 3-hour class period.

A structure that is most like traditional winter term, in which the class meeting is divided into “chunks” of 15-40 minutes that interweave active learning and instructor-focused presentation, differently each day, depending on specific learning goals. The format is intentionally varied (regularly changing up between individual, large group, and small group work) to align with learning goals while also helping maintain energy levels and attention throughout a long class session. **Considerations:** Need to design alternative or make-up assignments for students who are absent, quarantined or remote.

Sample of one class meeting (note the next day might be entirely different)

Time	Activity	Format	Why/goal
10 min	In-class write/quiz	Individual	Assess understanding of reading/prep
30+ min	Active Exercise using/building upon class prep; each group then trades its product/answers/questions with another group	Small groups then join with another small group	Use what students read to connect to course themes; instructor reinforces solid understanding and addresses questions
30 min - 5 min poll - 20-5 min lecture - 5 min poll - 10 min discussion	Interactive Lecture – starting with a prediction poll; ending with poll and discussion question	Large group together	Introduce new material
10 min	Break		
50 min - 10 min individual reading/thinking - 15 min small groups - 25 min groups sharing	New source, case, problem, situation, etc. to analyze – then call on some groups to show their work (on whiteboards or shared docs) to the whole class	Individual, small groups, then large group (instructor moving around groups)	Introduce new material and skill building w/formative feedback from instructor
15+ min	Self-evaluation of work or a project using criteria (or project time)	Individual	Practice for larger assessment, understanding expectations, Prompt Metacognition
10 min	Wrapping up – quick summary by instructor and/or students and looking ahead to next class	Large group	Student understanding of big picture (Metacognition) - Connecting class to whole course

B) Synchronous, but split: 2 hours synchronous for all students (F2F in classroom or Zoom), 1/3 of class period work done remotely

A structure that builds on the Example A, but can accommodate students who are in quarantine, fully remote or ill. This structure would work for instructors who need to divide classes because of room size as well as to those have a room big enough to accommodate all students but prefer to offer some portions of class meeting remotely to increase distancing and students’ engagement with the professor in a somewhat more intimate setting.

Time	Activity	Format	Why/goal
45-50 min of instructional time	Interactive lecture or facilitated discussion using, for example, any combination of active learning exercises with entire class, focusing on X material .	Whole class synchronous (in class or online)	Introduce and learn X material together , perhaps to provide a foundation for independent smaller group work on subsequent material
10 min	Break		
45-50 min of instructional time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ½ of class stays in room and works w/instructor on Y material - ½ of class works more independently or in groups on Z material and share work with instructor on Moodle, OneDrive or Google 	<p>½ of class synchronous</p> <p>½ of class remote or asynchronous</p>	Opportunity to learn Y material in a smaller cohort with more opportunity for discussion and formative feedback from instructor, or to learn Z material via independent or small group learning and asynchronous feedback
10-15 min	Break & time to switch		
45-50 min of instructional time	Students switch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - instructor works on Y material with other ½ of students; - ½ works on Z material more independently or ongoing groups 	<p>½ of class synchronous</p> <p>½ of class remote or asynchronous</p>	Opportunity to learn Y material in a smaller cohort with more opportunity for discussion and formative feedback from instructor, or to learn Z material via independent or small group learning and asynchronous feedback

Considerations:

- Possible adaptations for those who are ill and can’t attend: record hour 1; share directions for working with Y material and ask for evidence of the work done asynchronously; share same directions you gave class for work Z.
- Order of blocks could shift, depending on whether the content and learning goals for whole class instruction make the most sense at the start or the end of the day.

C) Structuring around a scaffolded project or experience: (F2F/Zoom) class together for 2 hours, 1-hour flexible for project

A class structure that would work well for courses with a fairly substantial project which requires a lot of scaffolding, including time for groups to conduct research, discuss findings, and prepare and revise the project. Instructors would need to require frequent updates and schedule check-ins with groups on the progress. Also works for instructors who want students to do a lot of independent work in small groups. This structure could be adapted for experiential learning or for contract-based learning modules in hour 3.

Time	Activity	Format	Why/goal
50-55 min of instructional time	Quiz/Poll/Freewrite assessing student preparation; Active learning to use/apply/build upon student preparation and/or practice skills	Whole class synchronous (in class or online)	Using Outside of Class Preparation Assess student preparation; Active learning to use/apply/build upon student preparation and/or practice skills
10-15 min	Break		
50-55 min	First presentation/ demonstration etc. Then students actively discuss, work with, apply, reflect upon new content	Whole class synchronous (in class or online)	Introduce and apply new content
1 hour	Range of activities scaffolding work on group project over time. Groups work together setting expectations, conducting research together, sharing and discussing findings, drafting and revising products, practicing presentations, sharing progress with and meeting with instructor	Student groups may meet in classroom or elsewhere (in breakout rooms or by phone or in campus spaces) Instructor availability in room or Zoom with regular and scheduled check-ins	Scaffolded project work (or Experiential learning) Students submit progress reports and interim work for instructor feedback

D) Structuring for more independent learning and choice (with elements of flipped instruction or contract-based grading)

This sample structure is the most complicated but also provides the most flexibility and choice for students.

Flipped approaches hold students accountable for pre-class preparation (reading, recorded lectures, videos) and devote class time to activities where students practice/apply that knowledge and instructors can give real-time feedback and guidance. In this example, flipped elements can decrease the number of students in class for a segment of time, creating optional time/activities for students to ask questions about or practice applying concepts from pre-class preparation at the beginning of the period.

Contract-based: Contract-based or other alternative grading approaches stipulate the activities students must engage in to receive their chosen grade. Here, for instance, students who seek to achieve a B grade or lower might leave the class after 2.5 hours, while those seeking to achieve an A in the course stay for a final activity at a higher level of difficulty or additional content.

Time	Activity	Format	Why/goal
30 min	Questions and discussion on the material prepared for class	Optional attendance , F2F or online (for students who want to ask questions or feel more confident)	Flipped Beginning of class period for review Student choice/agency
20 min	Quiz, writing, or other product	Required for all synchronously - Assessment closed in Moodle after deadline (extended time or deadline for some students with disabilities or illness)	Assessment of understanding of class prep
30 min+	Demonstration, lecture, case, film, or students teach one another	Done synchronously Materials available (recorded demonstration, or slides provided, etc.) for those who are ill and those who want to return to them later	Presentation of new content
10-15 min	Individual asked to analyze, reflect, connect, problem solve, question, etc.	Done synchronously , and could be done silently	Individual engagement w/new content in real time and as a kind of “parallel play”
30 min	Discussion, application, analysis, or practice	Small groups F2F, breakout rooms in Zoom, discussion board for those remote – all students must show some evidence of the engagement	Engagement with other students on new content
10 min	Instructor mini-lecture and summary	Recorded or otherwise shared on Moodle for those not present	Looking ahead/tasks for next class
30 min	Bonus content/activity for those who want a higher grade or challenge	Synchronous – optional attendance	Student choice/agency , connected to contract-based grading

