Flexible Course Design

with

Liesl Wuest, Associate Director of Learning Design & Technology (she/her)
Alicia Lane, Graduate Student Assistant LDT (she/her)
Agenda

Why flexible course design?

Where are places that we can be flexible?

Using Canvas to support a flexible course
Why flexible course design?

- Accessibility
- Improves engagement
- Meet student needs
- Students learn in different ways
- Reuse in future years
- Students' mental health
- Important for an inclusive classroom
- Accommodating variance in students' learning of various topics
- Supporting students

→ Things come up!
Why flexible course design?

- **Covid still present** - students may still be out of the classroom more than in the past
- **Supports accessibility** - students have different schedules – classes, sports, work etc.—this can help them balance their individual needs without have to choose where to focus their energy
- **Supports student autonomy** – choice—helps with internal motivation and feeling connected to the course and material (*self-determination theory*)
- **Supports “just right challenge”** – students can choose material and projects that are the level appropriate for their learning (*zone of proximal development, self-determination theory*)
  - Too easy and they will be bored
  - Too hard and they will be discouraged
- **Can support belonging** – students are able to choose pathways to the course and material that matter to them; work in groups on projects that matter to them (*self-determination theory*)
Where can we be flexible?

- deadlines
- assessment type
- multi-communication avenues
- delivery methods for content
- Ways to participate
- group work vs individual work
Where can we be flexible?

- **Consider: is the learning objective about CONTENT or SKILL?**
  - Content: flexible in format
  - Skill: flexible in topic

- **Consider: What is the purpose of class time?**
  - If you are lecturing, that is one-way content- they could get it in class OR out of class; is attendance necessary?
  - If it is discussion-based, can you also create a discussion space online to support the in-class discussion and account for necessary absences (i.e. illness, sports travel)
  - If you are using activities, are students able to do any of this outside of class? Are you able to provide feedback in multiple ways? Think about having the group members be responsible for getting feedback to students who are absent
Where can we be flexible?

- **Assignments**
  - **Kind**: exam, essay, project, individual, group, format – formal vs informal, audience, online and in person (discussions!)
  - **Number**: 5 options, complete 3/5
  - **Due dates**: could they choose their own due date within a range?
  - **Topic**: when they need to practice a skill (writing, coding etc.) can they choose the topic?

- **Content**
  - Are there areas where they can choose how to get the content?
    - Readings/recordings/websites/mini-lectures/class lecture

- **Participation** *(more on this tomorrow!)*
  - Poll Everywhere
    - Polls throughout class
    - Open response for students to ask questions or share thoughts
  - Discussions both online and in person
  - Group work (coming prepared, observed participation)
Where can we be flexible?

If you need to run a hybrid class- in person and via Zoom, use universal tools/approaches

- Canvas
- Poll Everywhere
- Google tools (docs, sheets, jam board)
- Group work – breakout rooms online, groups in class
  - If you have only 1 or 2 students online, choose one group to include them, allow them to meet in a quieter space – (hallway, empty room) so that they can hear
Using Canvas to support Flexible Course Design

You’ve been added to two Canvas sites:
• Flexible Course Design
• Weekly Course Template