

Live and online: finding what works for synchronous class meetings

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Objectives

Discuss the role of synchronous class interactions in online learning

Identify when and how to plan for synchronous interaction as part of the course design

List strategies that help balance engagement in synchronous and asynchronous interactions

AGENDA



1. The change in context and its effect on the role of synchronous in online education
2. What is considered an online synchronous class meeting?
3. What does the literature say?
4. The change in context and its effects
5. Design recommendations for the new era
6. Planning for synchronous meetings





The history of
online education
is asynchronous.

There are many reasons
for that: technology and
audience.



The best practices we rely on today were
built based on this history and this
experience.

The impact of 2020...

Remote learning was introduced!

The influx of a new audience created an entire new set of requirements, demands, needs, etc.

There was no time for a need's analysis or course design.

Institutions were forced into a mode for which they were not prepared.

Most of all...

Students and faculty did not choose teaching and learning online. Independence from space and time was not their choice.



What this means...

We have a whole **new set of needs and requirements**.

For institutions with limited experience in online learning:

The intuitive approach is to transfer **everything** that was f2f to a synchronous meeting. And this is the **PITFALL**.

There is a need to rethink assumptions and revisit best practices.

1 step back... WHAT IS AN ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS CLASS MEETING?



The meeting is held within an online **SESSION**.

Participation happens at **a given TIME** and participants are **separated in SPACE**.

Those who are not able to be part of this **SESSION**, might see a recording, **BUT** are not able to **interact in real-time** as part of the session.

Technologies used are those that allow for a **session**. (Texting at the same time is **NOT** synchronous.)



Courses vary in **how many synchronous meetings** are part of the planning.

Synchronous online courses are those in which synchronous meetings are the **single means or the central component of class interaction**.

Collaborative work frequently might students meeting synchronously. This is **NOT** the focus of our conversation today.

What does the literature say up to now about use of synchronous?

The literature findings are useful and serve as an important base for current best practices

LITERATURE FINDINGS (prior to 2020)



Mostly focused on Col framework: social, cognitive and teaching presences.

Synchronous meetings enhance the sense of belonging, which affects confidence. Reduces isolation and frustration.

It thus helps teaching and social presence, which boost cognitive presence.



There is a need for good planning for active learning and integration with the rest of the course.

- Online tutoring
- Active learning
- Extra support for managing other functions.
- Less complex issues.
- Getting acquainted and planning tasks.



There are some challenges.

- Limits the conversations.
- Scheduling can be difficult.
- Requires a good set-up.
- Requires specific teacher training.
- Could be intimidating for some.

Lessons learned from 2020...

Not yet in the literature...

- Connectivity matters
- Support systems matter
- Self-directedness matters



CONTEXT: CONNECTIVITY & SUPPORT SYSTEMS



- Synchronous might represent a huge demand on connectivity
- Mostly offline models might be required.
- Going back to early distance education models might be at play.



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- Students might not have appropriate environments at home.
 - Depending on age, families are a huge part of the discussion.

The rest of this discussion assumes the basics are in place...

How Self-Directedness affects how students experience online learning

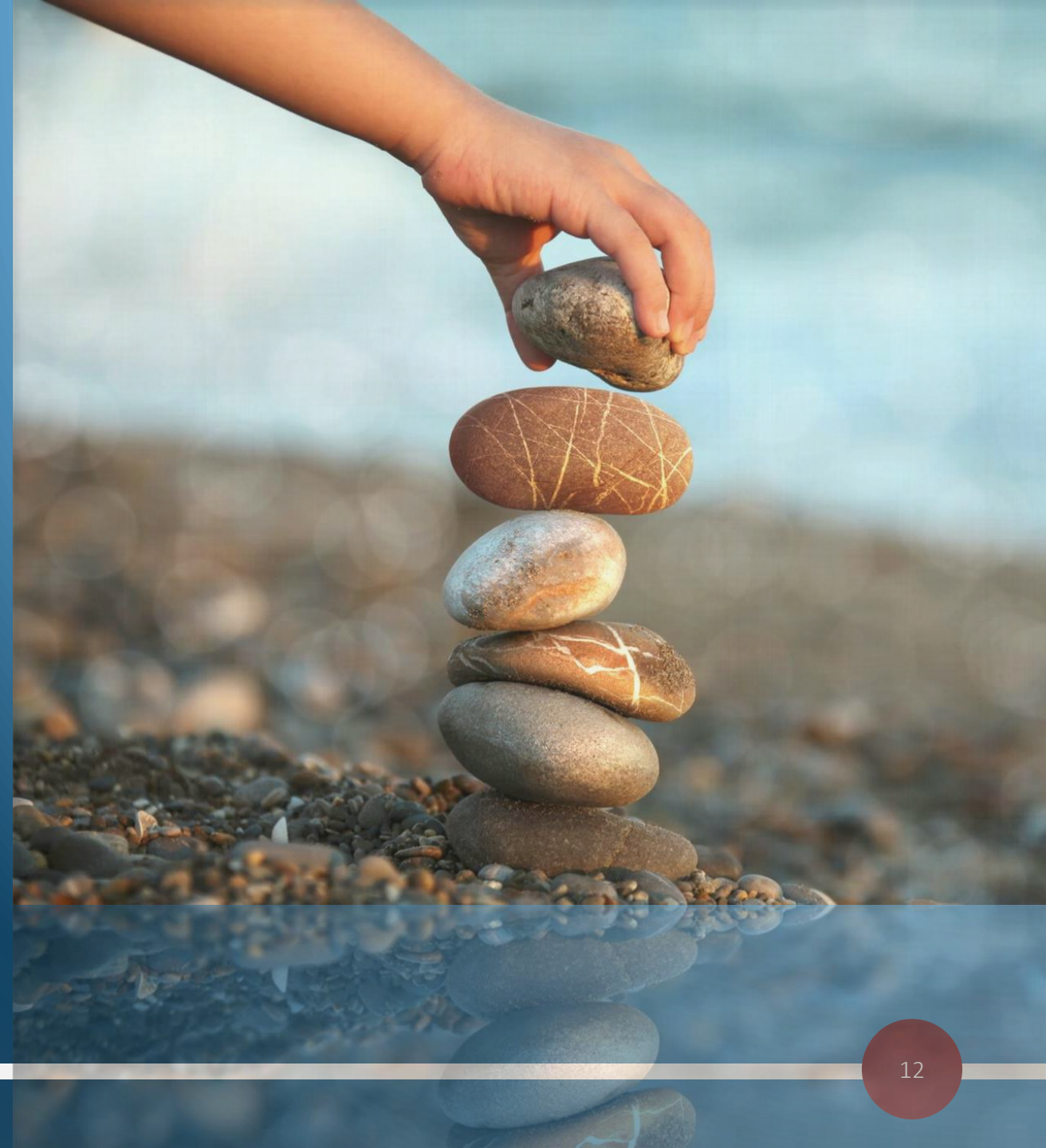
Online learning, especially asynchronous, assumes some level of self-directedness

In this new context we can assume:

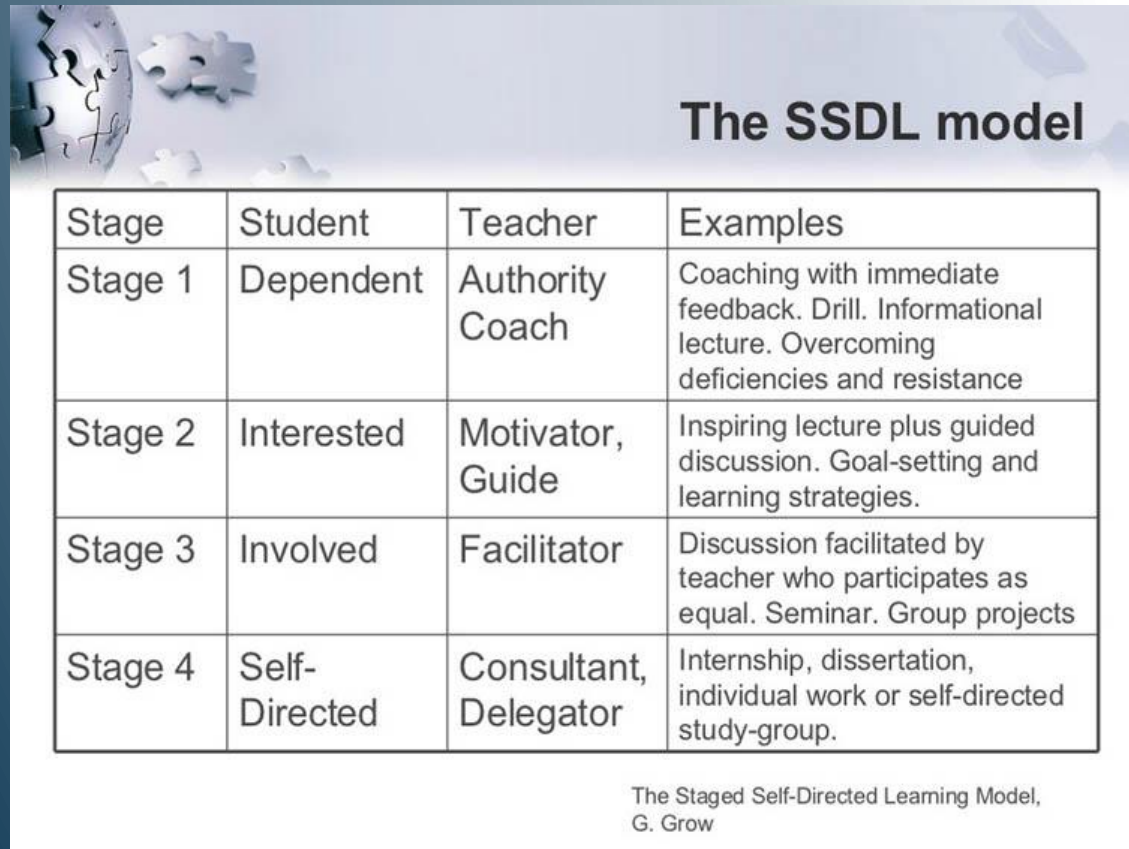
- Many students might be in first stages of self-directedness based on their exclusive f2f experience

- Many traditional f2f environments place students in Stage 1 in terms of the deployed strategies

Thus, the transition to online should take that into consideration



Synchronous might mitigate lack of self-directedness



The SSDL model

Stage	Student	Teacher	Examples
Stage 1	Dependent	Authority Coach	Coaching with immediate feedback. Drill. Informational lecture. Overcoming deficiencies and resistance
Stage 2	Interested	Motivator, Guide	Inspiring lecture plus guided discussion. Goal-setting and learning strategies.
Stage 3	Involved	Facilitator	Discussion facilitated by teacher who participates as equal. Seminar. Group projects
Stage 4	Self-Directed	Consultant, Delegator	Internship, dissertation, individual work or self-directed study-group.

The Staged Self-Directed Learning Model,
G. Grow

- Keeping synchronous mimicking f2f meetings is intuitive and less threatening
 - Schedules are kept.
 - Might require less change in habits.
- As students and faculty adapt to the online environment...
 - transition to less synchronous communication
 - Adoption of the best practices established in the literature.
- This does not mean eliminating synchronous, but it could assume less prominence, and learning can be more effective.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN STRATEGIES FOR SYNCHRONOUS CLASS MEETINGS



Transition from f2f to online might be done in iterations, where synchronous becomes less frequent as students become more independent.

When transitioning to asynchronous forms of communication, focus on:

- Critical thinking
- Analytical skills
- Cognitive presence
- Multiple threads of conversation



When **designing from scratch**, start all asynchronous, identify collaboration opportunities, and include synchronous class meetings at well suited moments:

- Working on complex problems
- Early social connections
- Wrap ups
- Student's presentations
- Housekeeping
- Debates




ACTIVE LEARNING IN SYNCHRONOUS CLASS MEETINGS

- Students are prepared prior to meeting.
- Shared screens with problems or white boards
- Polling
- Prompt questions
- Breakout rooms or working in pairs
- Minute paper
- Student presentations
- Promote the use of chat for immediate feedback and questions.
- Give students responsibilities and roles that support the class

Improving engagement during synchronous meetings

- There are many technologies to help engage students during synchronous meetings
 - Presenting content in an interesting fashion
- More importantly look for ACTIVE LEARNING opportunities
- INTERACTION
 - With content
 - With instructor
 - With colleagues
- Consider offline breaks for active learning
- Problem solving, reflection, collaboration, quick recall moments, etc.



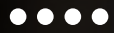


WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR
STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE IN
SYNCHRONOUS MEETINGS?



QUESTIONS?
COMMENTS?

THANK YOU



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