Thank you, ---, for inviting me as a consultant into your process of moving the --- 302-01 course online. My recommendations are based on my observations and my knowledge of teaching and learning best practices, but they remain simply that—viz., suggestions. So, accept whichever suggestions make sense to you and discard the rest.

To clarify, I am responding to your specified request to consider what sort of modifications I would suggest for improving student engagement and learning outcomes should you ever teach this course as an asynchronous online format. I've enjoyed looking at your course because it has a good foundation on which to build an online course. Specifically, I am referring to the amount of information already available in the form of reading assignments (PDFs), familiarity with Assignments/Dropbox, and creating assessments in the Quizzes tool. What I perceive to be your central task is creating a linear course structure with weekly modules.

That said, there are two types of modules that I think would be helpful: (1) a Getting Started Module (which you'll only create once) and (2) weekly modules (one per each week the course runs).

Getting Started Module
I recommend these elements as a minimum for the Getting Started Module:
1. Module description
2. Checklist for the getting started module
3. Intro to Course video
4. Syllabus
5. Getting Started Quiz

Module description. The module description is simply that: a summary of what the module contains. For this Getting Started Module, it doesn't have to be as thorough as I would recommend for the weekly modules. I have kept the description pretty short and to the point because all of the material in the Getting Started Module is introductory in nature. Below is a snip of what I've written.

Hi, students! Here is the getting started module. In this module are the following items:

- an introductory video
- the course syllabus
- a quiz that tests you on your understanding of the course

So, there's a little to watch, a little to read, and little to assess. You will need to score at least 80% or above to open the next module.

Checklist. The checklist is something I recommend for *every* module. It goes right under the module description and simply lists the things a student must complete. To this end, a checklist

provides a great overview of the course and allows the student to get some idea of how much time they should make room in their schedules for completing the module. You'll see "Checklist" at the top of the list for my description of what goes in the other (weekly) modules. It looks like this and begins with verbs (watch, read, take).

Getting Started Module

☐ Watch Introduction to Course Video		Due May 24, 2020 11:59 PM
☐ Read syllabus		Due May 24, 2020 11:59 PM
☐ Take Getting Started Quiz		Due May 24, 2020 11:59 PM

Intro to course video. The introductory video tells me that you have some experience making videos already, which is great. It also tells me that you're not afraid of facing a camera, which is also great! You'll want to make a new video that focuses on introducing the online version of the course. I would not advise pulling the video from the Express course into the online one but do keep the same upbeat energy as you do in the first.

Syllabus. I would post the syllabus here. I know that you can place it in a documents module, but it makes more sense to keep the syllabus in the Getting Started Module because it's one of the first things that instructors look at with students. You have seen in the checklist that students are to read the syllabus. What I would recommend to enhance the syllabus experience is going over the syllabus with a screen capturing device such as Kaltura.

Getting Started Quiz. As a general rule, everything that you post should elicit a response of some kind from the students. A response can be a quiz—as I have created here—but you can also choose a written response that students can upload to the Assignments/Dropbox, a written discussion post, or a video discussion post through Flipgrid. As someone who loves writing, I try to remember that (1) not everyone loves writing and (2) I want to grade thoughtful, meaningful writing assignments. I don't find my syllabus to be a meaningful writing prompt, so I've chosen a quiz that the LMS will grade automatically. I've also set up the following module ("Week 1") so that the module does not open until the student scores 80% or above on the Getting Started Quiz.

Nota bene: To really get students to know your syllabus, set up the quiz to be created using a "question pool" and enable students to take the quiz several times. This scenario focuses less on assessment and more on learning. To watch a video on how to create a quiz using a question pool, click on the video below.
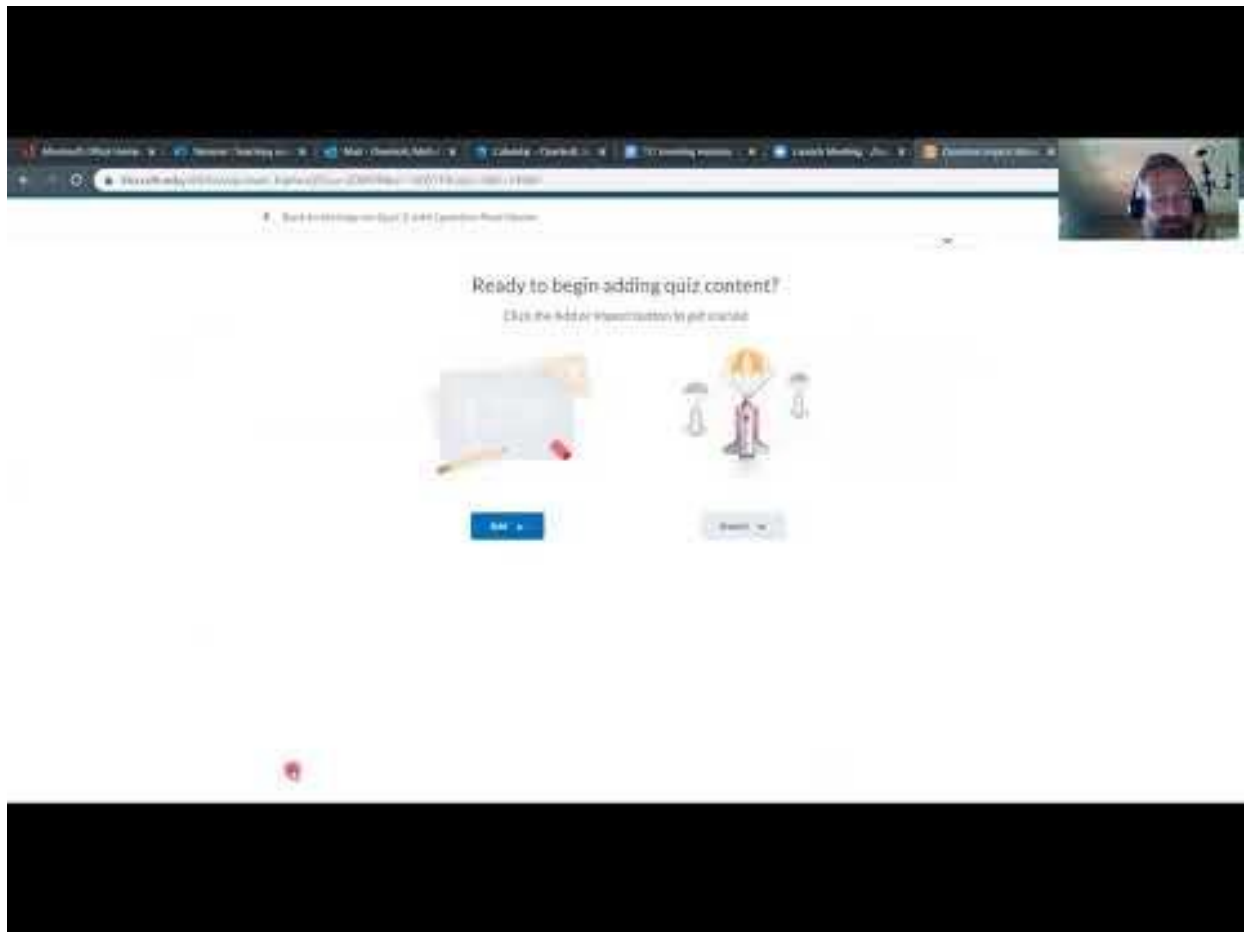
The Weekly Module

I have found it best to divide online courses by weeks, which means you will create a module for each week that the course runs. It is divided into roughly four parts:

1. Module description and learning objective
2. Task checklist
3. Course activities and assessments
4. Content and media

Module description and learning objective. Just like the Getting Started Module, I believe a description of the module with a single, over-arching learning objective at the end is essential. The description should be longer than the one that I created for the Getting Started Module and provide all of the necessary information students need to know before diving into the content. As for the learning objective in the module description, keep it general. Your individual activities will each have their unique objectives. The learning objective I created for Week 1 module is "By the end of this module, you will have read, discussed, and evaluated a key source in ancient philosophy that will begin informing you about self-care practices and purposes in the ancient world" (*nota bene: the course I've created is on ancient philosophy*).

**Task checklist.** Same function as above.

Course activities and assessments. As I recommended above, every assignment should elicit a student response, but there is a lot of room for creativity here. You can apply this in a 1:1 ratio so that every reading assignment, video, or audio file requires a response, or you can group content so that several readings can be addressed in one response. What I recommend is that these initial activities have some sort of response for every document read, every video watched, every lecture watched, and every audio file listened to. That is, of course, a general rule. There are several reasons for this rule. First of all, having a 1:1 intake to response ratio forces us as instructors to take extra care in what we assign. The ratio keeps us from flippantly assigning readings or videos because we're more careful with what we assign if we know we have to set up a quiz or grade a response. There is *always* more information that students could read for their benefit—that's a given—but focused readings with meaningful responses is always better. Always. The second reason is attention. Students are more focused learners when we allow them to respond in different ways to what we are assigning. The responses are ways to chunk our information delivery like we would in a lecture. That said, there are a variety of ways to get responses. Here are several.

- **Quizzes.** I am a big fan of creating quizzes that are focused on learning as opposed to assessment. One reason is that it removes the fear of students cheating and another is that it can achieve the testing effect. Let them take the quiz open-book. Just be sure to (1) create quizzes that are created using question pools and (2) explain to students how they are to be used. For a demonstration of this use of quizzes, you can watch my presentation from TLTCon below and/or read my blog post on this practice called "Thinking Outside the Assessment Box."

There are ways to create quizzes comprised of HOT (higher order thinking) questions, but they take time and are best used in conjunction with factual questions. I have created a video of a workshop I led on creating HOT questions (embedded below as "Analysis of Visuals Question") along with a cheat sheet for creating HOT questions.
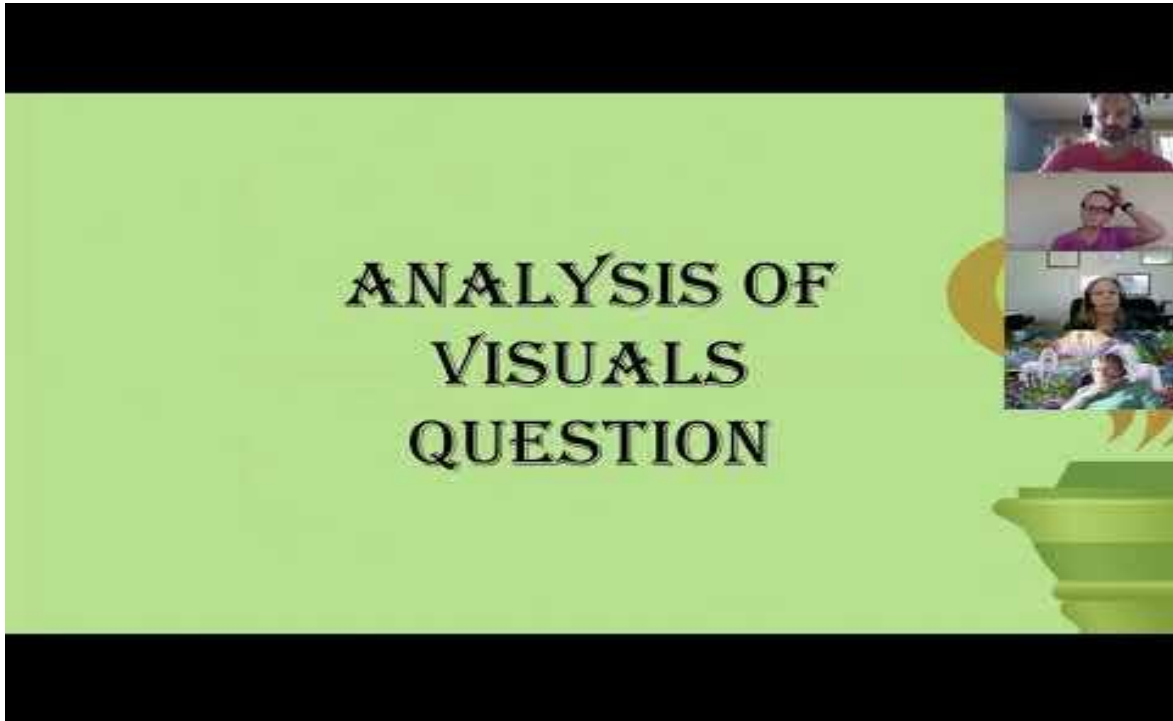
- **Flipgrid discussions.** If you're not familiar with Flipgrid, I would highly recommend using it for informal conversations. They are asynchronous, video discussions. It's a free service for anyone with a Microsoft (CofC faculty) or Google (student) accounts that students can access via mobile device or computer. The greatest difficulty an instructor faces is how to grade the plethora of contributions that students make. But that's an easy fix and is preferable to constantly reminding students to post their discussions. I want to stress, nevertheless, that Flipgrid is best used as an informal discussion resource that allows student → teacher, teacher → student, and student → student interactions. It's a lot more fun than OAKS discussion boards (and a lot easier to grade!).
- **OAKS discussions.** That said, OAKS discussion boards have their place. If you want a more formal, well-articulated response, choose OAKS instead of Flipgrid. Just know that you should be grading specific outcomes (content, ideas, sentence fluency, outline, voice, etc.) besides grammar and punctuation. If there's any hesitation to grading writing mechanics for a discussion, I'd recommend Flipgrid in a heartbeat and let the students have a verbal discussion.
- **Assignments/Dropbox.** There's no real reason to discuss this feature as I know that you have used it already. I do advise some sort of reflective space at the end of each module so that students can synthesize the content and learn via writing.
- **Scheduled Zoom meetings.** Because of our (now) contract with Zoom, holding discussions with students is a great way to facilitate responses because the recordings can be recorded and distributed to only the students in the course. Make sure to give students

options and inform them that the session is recorded. For those who can't attend, assign a Flipgrid response.

Learning objectives. With every activity and assessment, you should make sure that there is at least one learning objective linked. You can do this a couple of different ways, but the central point is that students know why they are reading, discussing, testing, or completing an assignment. The most basic way is to identify an objective in the description, which is what I've already demonstrated for you. It looks like this:

> The purpose of this quiz is to supplement your abilities to remember and understand the content of this module. Thus, you are encouraged to take it as often as allowed (5 times). It is, however, created using a question pool, which means that (1) every quiz is unique, (2) questions in this quiz are helpful for understanding the module, and (3) questions may appear in later assessments. Nevertheless, the questions here do not limit me to asking other questions later on that concern what I perceive to be important information in our quest for understanding the care of the self. You must score 80% or higher on at least one attempt in order to open up the Level 2 quiz that follows.
>
> _Learning Objective_: by the end of this quiz, students will increase the abilities to recall and explain the content of Week 1.

A second (and perhaps more professional) route is to use the **Competency - Learning Objectives – Completion Summary** tool at the bottom of an item. You'll have to create your learning objectives first, which you can do in the Competencies section of the Management>Edit Course>Assessment section of OAKS. Here is what those look like.

Activity Details	Learning Objectives	Completion Summary

Add Learning Objectives

BRT 1 - Remembering ∨

This objective is not evaluated.

BRT 2 - Understanding ∨

This objective is not evaluated.

You'll notice that I've used Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (BRT) to identify what general learning objectives are in place. These are being used to supplement the more specific objective articulated in the item description. You could, of course, decide to be much more specific with your Learning Objectives. Just be aware that they are less flexible and more easy to use as general course objectives. Consider this option: the Learning Objectives tool would be a great place to articulate the broad course objectives that usually appear in a course syllabus and, thus, point students' attention to what an item is aiming at in the overall completion of a course.

Content and media. I recommend a variety of media as opposed to pushing just one form. I see that in your Express course that you use PDFs exclusively. As you move to the online format, you will want to have a variety of ways to deliver content. You can deliver lectures using [VoiceThread](#) or [Kaltura](#), and there are a number of meaningful videos and documentaries found in [Kanopy](#) as supplements. I would also recommend looking for podcasts (Podbean, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, NPR, etc.). But again, whatever you assign, have some sort of response that allows students to process the information, test themselves, and learn from their mistakes. Instructional design models usually recommend a minimum of one recording per module. I would recommend at least one recording for every two readings.

Final thoughts

There are two primary principles that should direct your course design. With the first, I've been forthright: ***everything that you post should elicit a response of some kind from the students.*** Checking to see that students have clicked on it or monitoring views are not accurate indicators of student learning; receiving a direct response from students can be. The second principle has not been as obvious but is nevertheless actively working in the background, and that is this: ***create spaces for your students to learn from their mistakes.*** This principle is certainly at work in the way that I've suggested you use online quizzes. Currently, online, high-stakes testing is not a suitable method for assessing student work, but online, low-stakes testing that prioritizes learning over assessment is. This scenario does require you to develop a final assessment that does not come in the form of a test. For such an assessment, I recommend a final project that students can deliver digitally, whether it be an essay, video, podcast, portfolio, etc. [My interview with Liana Hakobyan on her digital final project may be a great option](#). I've also created podcasting resources: [how to create a podcast](#) for students as well as a sample [podcast assignment](#) for instructors. Each of the digital options can fulfill Bloom's Revised Taxonomy's ultimate level, the creative, and instructors can more easily encourage and ascertain original work by students. In other words, it's harder to cheat and usually a lot more meaningful that taking an hour-long final exam.

I hope you find these suggestions helpful, ---. Don't hesitate to reach out to me as you develop the online version of this course.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Overholt, PhD