

Humanizing Online Engagement

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With the leap to adjust learning to the abrupt COVID reality, educators around the world were forced to take their teaching online in a very "sink or swim" fashion. Many instructors needed to develop digital literacy very quickly and what became immediately apparent was how the human connection in education was being compromised, not just between teacher and student but also among students themselves. Developing learning experiences with a rich human connection considering the new realities becomes a priority for all educators that prioritise equity, diversity, and inclusion to foster critical relationships as the pedagogical foundation in helping students achieve their maximum academic potential (Rendon 1994, Hammond 2014, Wood 2019).

This seminar will provide faculty with some key tips on what humanising their online learning experience looks like and how positive faculty-student relationships can be fostered "as the connective tissue between students, engagement and rigor" (Pacansky-Brock et al., 2020). By focusing on the principles of empathy, awareness, presence all interwoven with trust, we dive into the pedagogical approaches involved and examine eight specific elements designed to foster higher levels of humanised connectivity in online teaching experiences.

Erik Schomann has been teaching communications studies at Seneca college since 2013. He also works in instructional design creating and delivering unique online learning experiences that employ existing technologies to maximise student engagement. While Erik's work in instructional design is usually focused on the financial sector, he has recently taken on a contract to help fellow faculty in the School of English and Liberal studies develop their online presence and enhance their digital teaching through humanising the experience as much as possible. Erik lives in Tiny, Ontario where he enjoys hiking, kayaking, swimming, skiing, and cooking.