What We Talk About When We Talk About Writing Online
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A review of the literature leads straight to the conclusion that it is advisable to abandon the attempt to conduct discussions with groups the size of the standard ENWR class; that this is the time to invest in smaller class sizes; that, since that is unlikely to happen by the fall semester, individual instructors can make hay by capitalizing on the time-saving tricks that the new dimension of "asynchronicity" turns to create pockets of synchronicity of a size (six students apiece) unfeasible in person. It would look like this: Three curtal classes a week with a third of the roster each time. The rest of the magic could happen over email and in Collab discussion threads. Not only would this new regime represent something better than nothing, it could be better than what went down before. We may well sell ourselves, and our students, on hybridity's unexpected merits by the time this crisis blows over. Doubtless we will discover its demerits, and the range of our tolerance for them. Who knows? Discussion itself could drop from our list of desired deliverables. If talking about writing proves a relic of the analogue age, what replaces it?

The scholarship on this question inspires, *ex negativo*, a host of serious, if not solemn, ideas for teasing the medium of Zoom (or its equivalent) in order to offset a little its overpowering inertia. Positively, the literature does not begin to take the true measure of the medium and so fails almost entirely to reckon with its potential—for good or ill. Talk of—quibbling over the distinction between—"transformation" and "migration" (Warnock) just distracts from the fact that the tech is not yet robust enough to conduct discussions of the degree of richness available *in propria persona*. Some day. Meanwhile we can come in the back or side door. Here are a few points of entry:

Retool your syllabus so that it approaches the zero-point of content. Since this is a correspondence course now, consider, for instance, teaching it on the theme of "correspondence," using letters as your readings and writing assignments.

Do what you can to freak and fret the medium, and urge your students to try it out themselves from home. Move your face quite near your laptop camera—so close that you can't be seen. Mute yourself when you talk so that your audience is forced to look at what they cannot hear. Or let your voice compete with an ambient Tom Waits album. When Zooming one-on-one with a student set his or her SIS mugshot as your virtual background so that it gurns back over your shoulder.

Intermittently invite another teacher or two—or even a few of your students—to converse with you in three-quarter profile live on Zoom, documentary- or podcast-style. This would dilute, by diffracting your gaze, the chilling effect of unsubtle eye contact. Don't, against the usual advice, look directly into your laptop's camera. See Thompson, and Warnock, chapter 7.

Take advantage of Zoom's screen-share feature to maximize "joint shared attention" (see Thomas and Turner, *passim*). Neither you nor your students, but the writing on the wall, ought to chew the scenery. That said, come on stronger as a character than you would dare in person, to compensate for the longer distance to the back of the room, not to mention two layers of masking. As the movies transformed stage-acting, Zoom will inflect charisma-creation strategies time-tested by teachers in the flesh. Learn from Norma Desmond.

Break up each 75-minute ENWR period into three 25-minute sections, rotating in and out six students at a time. Instructors on a three-day schedule should host six different students each day. Meanwhile, avoid Zoom's "breakout rooms" ("outbreak rooms"?). Students despise being sent there. (Toor disagrees.)

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