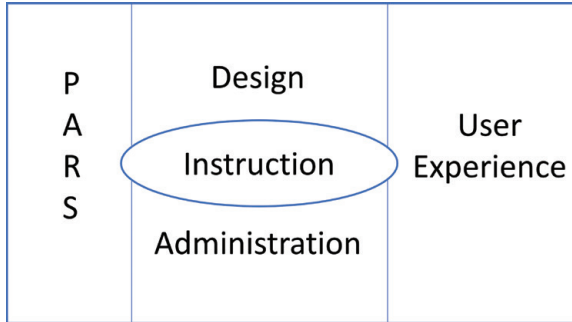# Section 2: Instruction

Welcome to the Instruction section of this collection! We selected the above golf course picture to illustrate how things may look intimidating at the start (look at that water!) but with the right instructor, anything is possible. In the picture above, a golfer must have the skills and experience to hit their ball over the water. We think the same can be true at the start of an online course. Each new online course can be intimidating, even if you're a seasoned online instructor, and new courses are especially intimidating if you're new to online instruction.

We hope the chapters in this section, which focus on pedagogy, can give you some new clubs to put in your golf bag, that is, give you some of those skills you might need to get through your online writing course. The audience for the chapters in this section is instructors who teach online writing courses, but that is not to say that others, like administrators or scholars of OWI can't glean new insights from the ideas that these authors share. The major takeaway from this selection of chapters is that if you focus on small things (Darby & Lang, 2020) in your pedagogy you can make big changes for the user experience in your course. The chapters in this section give you an opportunity to explore something new in your online courses, such as videos, grading contracts, the use of humor, focusing on accessibility, ableism, and equity in your teaching as well as what to do when you get a course at the very last minute. One of the things we stress as we talk about being a good online instructor is being personal, accessible, responsive and strategic with your students. And as we outlined in the introduction, you don't have to do these things all at one time if that feels like it's too much. Instead, you can focus on one small thing, for example, being personal, and doing that one small thing will result in big rewards for you and your students.

You can make your instruction **Personal** by doing little things that remind your students that you are a human being and not a computer. A few examples of ways to be a more personal instructor include:

- Being caring and compassionate in your communication with students and sharing personal information (hobbies/interests) with students in your instructor bio.
- Completing and participating in an ice breaker activity each time you meet with your class to get students talking.
- Sending weekly "check-in" emails to students.
- Contacting students by phone or via Zoom or making videos so they can hear your voice and see your face.

Accessible instruction moves beyond just ADA (ada.gov) compliance and there are many things you can do to be a more accessible instructor and create more accessible course materials:

- Make a video and walk students through where to find things in the on-line classroom (not every instructor organizes in the same way!).
- Ensure your course materials are ADA compliant and pay attention to students with accommodations to ensure they are getting their accommodations met.
- Post help resources for students both for your class and university wide resources (tutoring, writing center, library, advising, counseling, mental health support, etc.).
- Don't assume students know how to use the technologies in your course, show them and make them practice using them!

For **Responsive** instruction, it is important to think about *how* you will respond and *when* you will respond. When thinking about how and when you will respond, it is important to keep in mind the following considerations:

- Will you hold weekly drop-in office hours? Or email hours? Or homework hours? How will you hold these (what technology will you use)? When will you hold office, email or homework hours?

- Will you participate in the discussion boards? When will you participate in the discussions? What kind of responses will you make in the discussions? General ones to the whole class? Individual ones to each student?
- How will you respond to their writing? End comments? In-text comments? Use of LMS commenting feature? Microsoft Suite commenting? Google Docs commenting?
- How long will it take you to respond to their writing (this should be posted somewhere so the students know)? Will you return feedback in 48 hours, 72 hours, 3–5 days? How long will it take you to respond to email (again, this should be posted), 24 hours, 48 hours?

Strategic instruction brings it all together. Being a strategic instructor includes:

- Planning how your course design and you (as the instructor or administrator) will be personal, accessible, responsive and strategic.
- Planning the logistics for your synchronous course time and your asynchronous time.
- Planning out your teaching. Where in the course can you best insert yourself as a teacher and make the most impact?.
- Planning out the course content and course calendar to ensure that both meet the outcomes of the department or course.

The chapters in this section help you put these PARS based instruction practices into use. Many of the chapters in this section focus on how you can enhance your instruction by incorporating one small thing. For example, Mahaffey and McClure's chapter provides both a "how to" and a "when to" discussion of using videos. Laflen and Sims chapter illustrates how to use labor-based grading contracts to even the playing field for students. They illustrate that a student-centered approach to grading allows instructors to be more responsive. Pandy's chapter illustrates how the use of humor can enhance the personal aspects of the connection between the instructor and their students. Being an accessible instructor is the focus on Pengilly's chapter. Pengilly's chapter provides a unique perspective on both integrating and teaching usability and accessibility principles in the online technical writing classroom. Lastly, Evans' chapter illustrates through personal experience how the PARS approach works well for "just in time" or "last minute" teaching and can aid instructors in meeting the needs of their students.

References

Darby, F., & Lang, J. (2019). *Small teaching online: Applying learning science in online classes*. Jossey-Bass.