



ONLINE STUDIES – WHAT IS IT ABOUT AND WHAT SHOULD I PAY ATTENTION TO?

Studying online is
Just like classroom teaching
But also
Completely different from classroom teaching.

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In this document, lecturers from the University of Bath and the University of Kassel have gathered tips that will help you to organize your online studies in a successful and inspiring way. Translated in English by Ajla Rizvan, master degree course in Global Political Economy and Development (GPED)

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1. Compile a weekly schedule

- a. You will need to achieve a certain balance not only between your courses but between your studies, free time and social contacts as well (even more so during social distancing).
- b. Your plan does not need to be rigid, but it does need a basic structure that specifies how you to distribute your study time each week.
- c. You may need more time to prepare digitally shared content (lecture videos, core reading, additional material) than in classroom teaching – reserve time for these tasks! It is often less possible to let your mind wander in an online seminar.
- d. As before there may still be fixed dates, e.g. for Webinars, question rounds or online office hours. Be sure to schedule these real-time appointments and also remember to plan in 10-15 minutes in advance of the scheduled appointment, if necessary, to check your equipment, to log in, familiarize yourself with the online seminar room (like adobe connect), fix possible problems etc. The academic quarter of an hour prior to the event makes sense online as well...

2. Do start with your online studies, really, now...

- a. Just because your course takes place online (and especially since the out-of-sync elements on Moodle are always available later) doesn't mean you should postpone your studies. This will take its toll on your study and exam performance at the latest. You should make sure that you 'show up' digitally in the seminar/lecture through your weekly schedule structure, even if this simply means sitting at your desk at home.
- b. Maybe a morning routine will help you, similar to the daily bike ride to the campus. Prepare your desk, prepare all the materials you need, tell your roommates that you are starting to work, make yourself a cup of coffee or tea... whatever helps you.

3. Deactivate *all* the notifications during your study time.

- a. Turn all the notifications off
- b. If this was not clear enough: **turn all the notifications off**
- c. Have I already mentioned: ***turn all the notifications off***

Communicate your temporary online-absence from social media channels in advance to your (most important) contacts. If someone needs to speak to you urgently, they can still reach you by phone!

Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Tik Tok, Whatsapp... none of us can resist the temptations of social media for long, especially since they are constantly (and unobservable for others) available during online studies.

Each time we are being interrupted and distracted by a new notification it takes us three times as long to get back to our study task (reading a text, working on an online exercise, discussions in the Moodle forum, etc.).

Your study time belongs to YOU only. YOU alone should decide how to use that time. (who would even like to have their time decided upon by Zuckerberg's algorithms?)

Therefore: Turn all the notifications OFF (while you study online)

Do you know how high the energy consumption is due to unnecessary mails and notifications? If you want to do something about climate change and unnecessary energy consumption, reduce yourself to what is necessary.

That is why you should: **Turn all the notifications OFF** (while you study online)

4. And continue to study...

- a. Listen to online lectures (that might possibly happen) slowly. Pause the record to take down notes (a big advantage compared to synchronous lectures!)
- b. **Don't Google.** The materials on Moodle are not additional study material anymore, they are essential to your learning progress outside of classroom teaching.
- c. **Don't Google.** The materials on Moodle have been carefully pre-selected by your lecturers on the basis of their expertise and didactic considerations, checked for quality, prepared and, if necessary, provided with specific reading instructions or tasks. They prioritize important, interesting, illustrative and useful but also challenging content to support your learning.
- d. If there are exercises on Moodle, work on them. If there are podcasts or videos, listen to them/view them. The materials are on Moodle because your teacher will find them useful for your learning progress.
- e. **Don't Google.** Read the recommended articles and texts for the seminars and lectures. Most of them are either available online or will be uploaded to Moodle.
- f. **Don't Google.** You should rather use the time online to browse the excellent and quality-checked electronic resources of the University Library for additional literature.

Your university's online resources - both those provided by the library and those provided in the Moodle learning rooms - are the tip of an iceberg of professional knowledge about relevant, well-organized, high-quality and serious content for your subject.

The professional selection of knowledge by your lecturers and library staff is unaffected by:

- what generates income and turnover (google advertising)
- what is popular (google)
- which probably produces data that are for sale (google)
- what other users think about this content (google)

- what you yourself consume mostly online (user profiles), even if it has little to do with what you should learn in your studies (google)

5. Study together

- a. If the lecturers schedule an online tutorial, webinar, scheduled tasks or similar, participate.
- b. Real-time virtual seminars and scheduled activities help you stay in touch with others, and provide a productive pace and progress for your studies.
- c. If there are discussion forums, polls or the like on Moodle, please contribute. Exchanging information via such digital formats is similar to face-to-face meetings, but asynchronous. It helps you to locate your own ideas and your learning progress in comparison to other students and to exchange information when uncertainties arise.

6. Stay in contact

- a. Your best resource is your lecturers. They have the necessary expertise to give you guidance, help you distinguish the important from the unimportant, share additional material with you, and help you with problems. Use this resource.
- b. Fellow students are your other best resource: create virtual study groups with some friends and/or use existing discussion and group forums on Moodle; all this makes online studying more fun and social, especially in times of disconnected physical worlds.
- c. If you are stuck, ask! This applies all the more so to online studying than to face-to-face teaching, because in cases of uncertainty the lecturers don't know how you are progressing, what they might need to clarify or what doesn't work (even technically!) due to missing non-verbal signs in the seminar room.
- d. Communicate what you need in a friendly, clear and precise way. This increases the chances for effective feedback and assistance.
- e. Your lecturers are currently learning a lot themselves: how best to support your learning progress online and provide feedback. They will make mistakes; the technology will get stuck and some of us design our teaching in the midst of home childcare or care/support of relatives.

Be understanding and respectful when dealing with the lecturers. This also applies, of course, to your contact with fellow classmates.

7. Information on the “Webinar Netiquette”

A webinar is a real-time digital seminar event: everyone should be present and do nothing else but attend the webinar.

- a. **Welcome each other and tell each other goodbye** – either in a chat, with icons or emoticons, or personally via audio/video, if the group size allows that. Even if our meeting takes place digitally, it remains a social and collective experience in real time. We should acknowledge and respect that.
- b. **Switch on your video in small seminar groups or during group work phases.** This way everyone knows who is present and takes part in the seminar, and we can also digitally make use of our body language etc. Being on camera also ensures that we don't get too distracted at our desks at home and that we get dressed and 'ready to go out' at least once a day, even if it is only digitally 😊. For larger groups, videos should be turned off, but should always be turned on when the person is talking. This makes your communication more personal and effective.
- c. **Turn your microphone off everytime you are not speaking.** This way we can avoid annoying feedback but also the noise of typing, coffee-slurping or people breathing loudly into the microphone at 15, 30 or 200 different workplaces...
- d. **Use headphones** – this improves the sound quality of the output (and input) and you will be able to follow the meeting better because you can concentrate on the content instead of tinny robot voices etc.
- e. **Take handwritten notes or use a second mobile device for notes.** That allows you to concentrate on the people, chats and presentations on your screen instead of having to constantly switch between word processor windows, Adobe Connect, Moodle, etc. (Did I mention that you should turn off all notifications? I think I did...)
- f. **Don't hesitate to call attention to yourself if you hear/ understand someone badly.** Online seminars stand or fall on the standard of its communication; interrupt if you do not hear or understand the person speaking. Use the chat function or signal buttons, if the software you are using provides them (e.g. arnova offers 'faster', 'just right' or 'slower' buttons to give the lecturer feedback on the speed of the presentation).

In addition to the chat, use the buttons and icons in the webinar software consciously and effectively for your communication with the respective moderator (this can be the lecturer or, in group work rooms, a fellow student: thumbs up/down quickly shows approval/rejection to a short question, signaling the need to contribute to a discussion, etc.)

- g. **Use the chat function – but please use it with a sense of proportion.** In small groups, chats are useful for making small comments, sharing information and links, or letting others know if you have comprehension problems (see above). But do not use the chat too extensively: this will overwhelm the moderator/lecturer and distract the plenary. In large groups, use the chat mainly to ask questions and comment on lectures. Do not always expect an immediate answer to chat questions - depending on the format, the lecturer will collect questions and answer them at a later date (possibly also after the webinar via the Moodle forum etc.).
- h. **Follow the lecturers' suggestions** - they have chosen a certain format and form of interaction to enable digital exchange. Lecturers should clearly explain this structure at the beginning of the webinar (and, if necessary, pin it as an overview in group work rooms). Because the interaction online is different from offline (for example, it

is less noticeable if someone does not participate in group work or even leaves the virtual seminar room), it is especially important to follow the lecturers' work plan. Otherwise, especially in group work phases, there is a risk that the session will be fragmented and the quality of the results and thus the learning progress of EVERYONE will be greatly reduced.

Therefore please log out explicitly (and give notice of your absence, if the group size allows that) if you have to leave the webinar room (temporarily).

- i. **Use your speaking time effectively** - if you've already experienced Skype meetings with more than two people, you know that online communication is hard work. Try to ask clear, concise and precise questions (e.g.: I don't understand XY; can you give an example of XY?; theory A assumes that X, what does it mean for Y?) A focused exchange is also advisable in classroom teaching, but online it is all the more important: to keep everyone in front of your screens 'in line' and to use time effectively; but also to avoid unnecessarily lengthening digital meetings, which are very common in corona times, and to share data volumes with others in solidarity.