Using Media Comments to Improve Student/Teaching Interactions

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Audience

Using the Media Comments tool to improve student and teacher interactions can be useful for both large and small classes. I've implemented the following approach in three different courses ranging in size from 24 to 40 students. For the purpose of this paper, I used a junior-level elective with 24 students enrolled as an example.

Instructional approach

I teach this class in a flipped format where students listen to a pre-recorded lecture and complete a corresponding quiz before class. In class, we apply the new material to different situations. We often meet outside of the classroom, in locations such as museums, galleries, greenhouses, local stores, and department stores. There is often a deliverable at the end of each class which is graded and returned within a week.

Tool Involved

The single most useful tool for facilitating my course was the Media Comment tool within SpeedGrader. This tool was useful for a number of reasons including making my course management more efficient and providing more personalized and timely feedback to students.

My course is organized in a unique way that does not allow much time for "housekeeping" activities and one-on-one interactions with students. From my experience in more traditional classrooms, these are the two moments when a relationship is fostered between the professor and the student. During housekeeping activities such as review of material previously covered, making announcements about upcoming events, and answering questions, I am able to get to know the students better and showcase my personality. Similarly, when I work one-on-one with students in the classroom providing feedback on their work, they can see my face, hear my tone of voice, and begin to understand me as an individual. Since this particular class requires me to do both of these activities

through Canvas, I found that the Media Comment tool allows me to foster a better relationship with students than what a written comment is able to do. In the media comment, students can see my face, hear my tone of voice, and begin to understand me as an individual. When my interactions with students are limited to written comments, sometimes miscommunication can occur due to the lack of facial expressions and tone of voice. The feature has improved student experience, as they are now fully assured of my feedback and confident in my interest in their success.

Additionally, it helped me become more efficient with my course management. Not only did I have fewer complaints and misunderstandings, I was able to go back to those recordings when students had questions. Unlike writing comments directly on their homework and handing it back, my feedback is there where both the student and I can easily access it along with the digital submission of their homework.

Implementation steps/timeline

The time it takes to record the media comments is admittedly greater than the time it takes me to type my comments. However, I think students better understand my feedback and the intention of my feedback when they are able to see my face and hear my voice. As a response, they ask fewer questions and complain less.

Future directions/modifications

During our campus transition to Canvas, the media comment feature is one Canvas feature that students don't comment on very frequently. The non-response of students has been the best response on my end. I plan to continue using the media comment feature with no modifications.