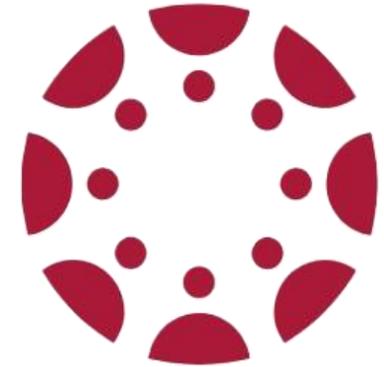# *Beyond Discussion Boards:* Improving Regular + Substantive Interaction in Online Courses

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Workshop Description

Teaching online? Join us for a refresher on Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) requirements. We'll review what's needed to be in compliance while exploring strategies that make interaction more meaningful. You'll leave with practical ideas to build stronger connections between you and your students – and to foster a greater sense of community among students themselves.
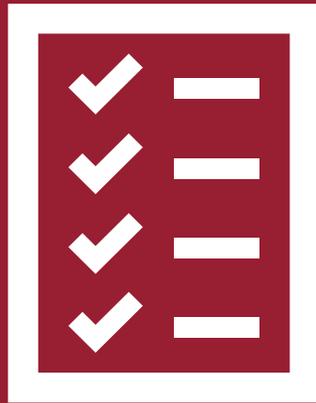
Agenda

- Part 1: RSI from a "Compliance" Perspective
  - What is RSI?
  - Who wrote the rules?
  - What are the rules?
  - How is it evaluated?

- Part 2: RSI from a "Human" Perspective
  - Why RSI matters?
  - Examples of regular interaction
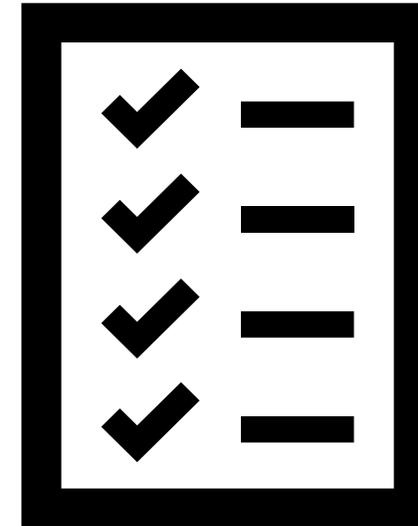 - Examples of substantive interaction
  - Q+A

RSI: What is it?

- A requirement that DE courses include "**Regular and Substantive Interaction**"

- Idea is that students have an **equitable experience** – whether they take classes on campus or online, students should expect **the same level of regular, meaningful interactions with their instructors (and peers)**

- RSI distinguishes "DE" courses from "Correspondence" courses – and that "DE" designation is critical for funding
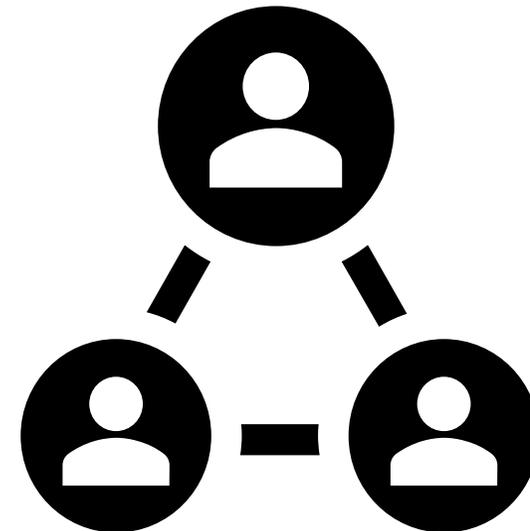
RSI: Who wrote the rules? *(hint: everyone)*

- Federal Regulations: **Title 34 CFR §600.2**

- State Regulations: **Title 5 CCR § 55204**

- ACCJC (accreditation): **Policy on Distance and Correspondance Education**

- CLPCCD Policy + Procedures: **BP 4105** and **AP 4105**

- Faculty Contract: **Minimum Standards for DE Instruction 19E**

- DE Addendum: **Identifies how your course outcomes will be achieved online**

RSI: What are the rules?

Substantive interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and includes **at least 2** of the following:

    a. Providing direct instruction;

    b. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;

    c. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;

    d. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or

    e. Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

Regular interaction is demonstrated **by both**:

    a. Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and regular basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and

    b. Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

RSI: How is it evaluated?

Individually > Evaluations

During the faculty evaluation cycle, outlined in **Article 19F**:

- Course tour with your evaluator to show examples/evidence of RSI
- Online evaluation form (evaluator completes while in your online course)
- Students have an opportunity to provide feedback through surveys

Institutionally > Accreditation

ACCJC Peer Review teams review a previous term's online sections and:

- Use the **DE Assessment Tool for Peer Reviewers** to determine if we meet the **85% threshold** for RSI
- Complete an **Addendum to the Protocol for DE Review** to summarize findings
- Use the **Quality Continuum Rubric for DE** to provide feedback about areas the college could improve

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Agenda Check-in

- Part 1: RSI from a "Compliance" Perspective
  - What is RSI?
  - Who wrote the rules?
  - What are the rules?
  - How is it evaluated?

- Part 2: RSI from a "Human" Perspective
  - Why RSI matters?
  - Examples of regular interaction
  - Examples of substantive interaction
  - Q+A

Watch out for 10 Tips to Better RSI!

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RSI: What does it matter?

- Stronger instructor presence = more student success

- Stronger interactions = happier humans (instructor + students)

- The "human" is needed now more than ever in the "age of AI"
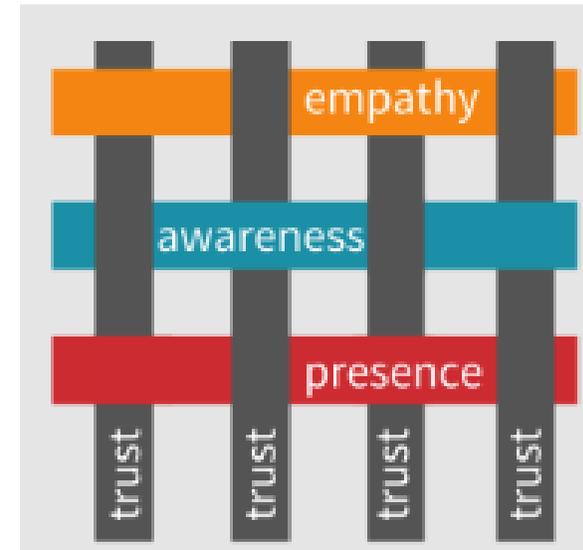
Michelle Pacansky-Brock:
Humanize Your Online Class

Reminder: What does "regular" mean?

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Regular Interaction between a student and an instructor is demonstrated **by both**:

a. Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and

b. Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.
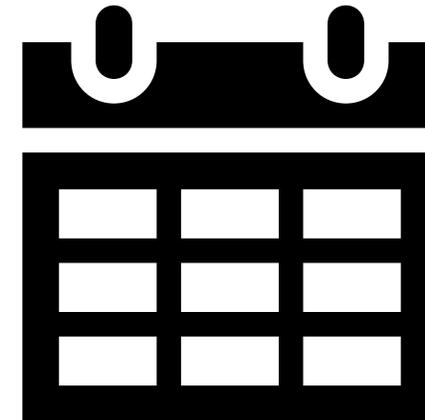
Unpacking "Regular" - Part A

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"Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis **commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency."**

Doing some math can help here! Ex: Typical **3 unit** course has **54 "lecture/inside class hours"** + **108 "outside of class hours"**
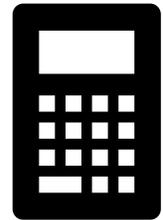
Instructor "lecture" expectation:

- 18-week term: 3 hrs/week

- 16-week term: 3.375 hrs/week

- 8-week term: 6.75 hrs/week

Additional student "outside" expectation:

- 18-week term: 6 hrs/week

- 16-week term: 6.75 hrs/week

- 8-week term: 13.5 hrs/week

Note: "Lecture" has room for interpretation...

Make Your Presence Clear

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A Home Page is a great place for easy-to-find contact info and expected response times; optional office hours

Instructor Contact (on Home Page in Canvas)

- **Professor:** Kat King (she/her)
- **E-mail:** Canvas Inbox preferred, alternate - kmking@laspositascollege.edu
- **Phone:** (925) 424-1654
- **Response Time:** I typically respond to all emails within 24 hours, and all voicemail within 72 hours.
- **Optional Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 6:30 - 7:30 pm via TechConnect Zoom (Learn how to use TechConnect Zoom.)

Tip #1: Make sure your students know you are a human and that they can reach out to you!

Make Interaction Expectations Clear

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Students don't always know what to expect in an online course – so take a moment to explain it in your syllabus or underline orientation module. How will they spend their time with you and on their own?

📬 Course Communication

This is an **asynchronous online class** with no required Zoom meetings. Everything you need is on Canvas. Although there are no regularly scheduled class meetings like you would expect in an on-campus or synchronous online class, you will still regularly interact with your instructor and peers each week.

Here is a little more about how our online course will work:

📁 Weekly Modules

Each week, a new **Module** will be available on Canvas. Typical modules include:

- Instructional videos to watch
- Readings to co-annotate together using Hypothesis
- Discussion boards to expand on conversations
- Sometimes quizzes, essays, or other project-based assessments to check understanding of course content

📅 Deadlines & Time Commitment

Typical weekly due dates are on **Thursdays** and **Sundays**.

Estimated weekly time for this 8-week course:
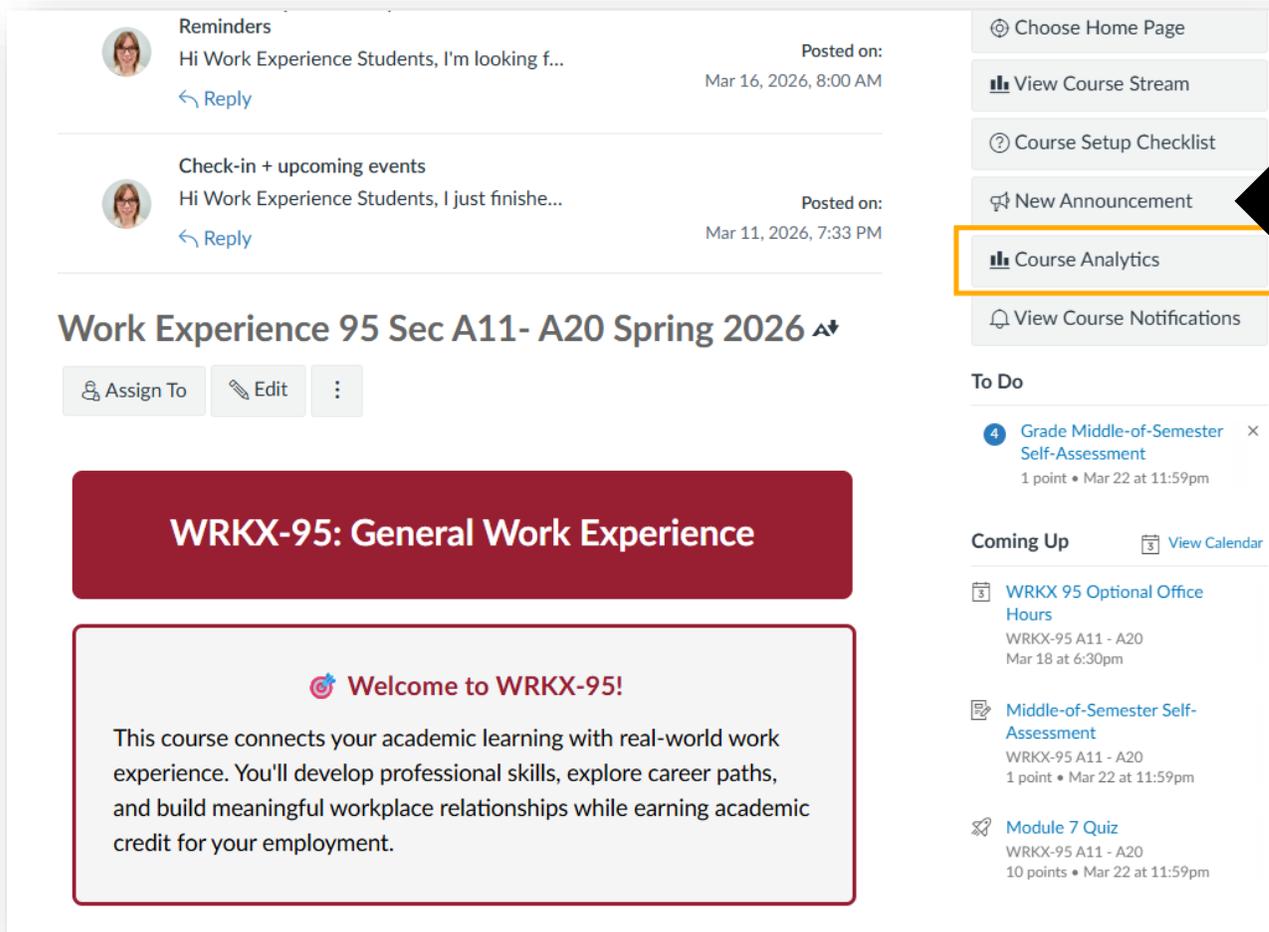
- **~7 hours** in Modules (watching videos, interacting on discussion boards)
- **~13 hours** on "prep work" like completing readings, studying, and researching for projects like the digital writing portfolio

💡 Tip for Success

Set a consistent weekly schedule for yourself. Blocking out dedicated time for module activities and independent work will help you stay on pace in this fast-track 8-week course.

Tip #2: Explain what interaction looks like in your online course.

Unpacking "Regular" - Part B

Click "**Course Analytics**" to check on student engagement and success.

Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and **promptly and proactively engaging** in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

Course Analytics = Aha Moments

Myth: students struggling just aren't putting in the effort

Data: students with learning disabilities may be working even harder than students with high grades and may need help connecting to support resources

Tip #3: Check your "Course Analytics" this week for your own "aha moments."

Monitoring the Gradebook
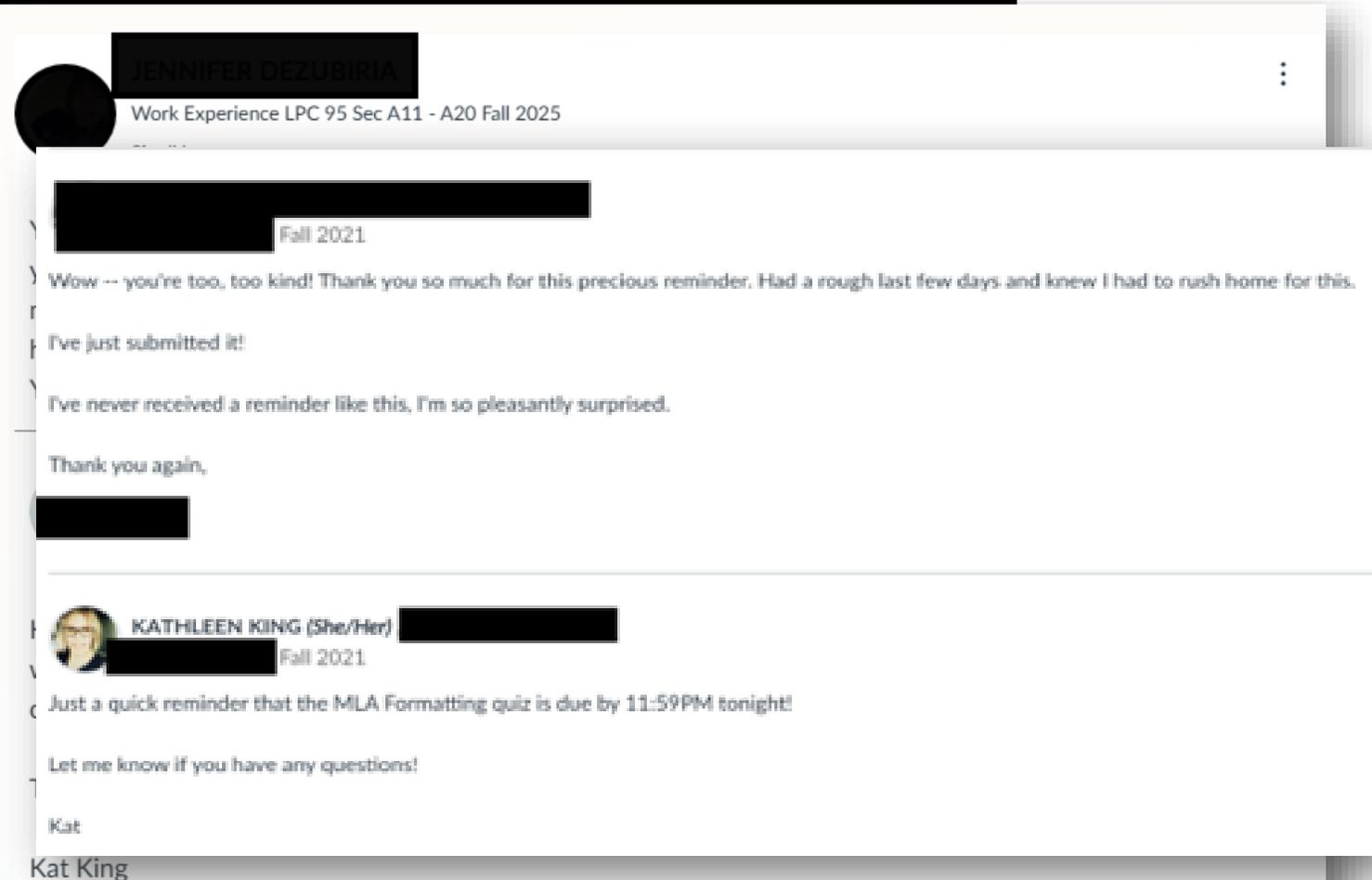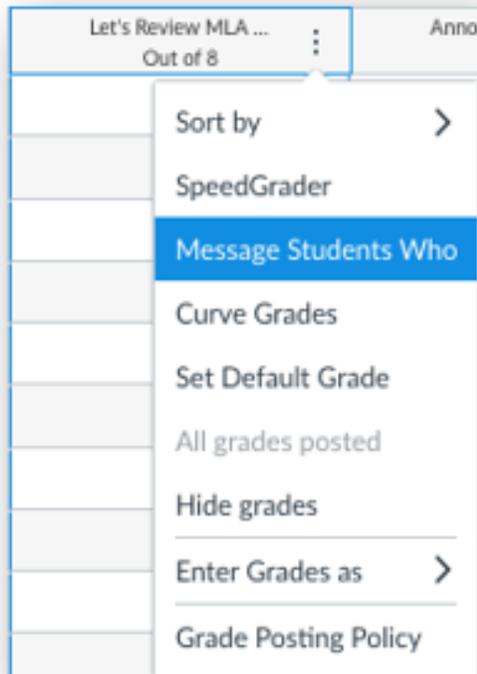
Tip #4: Use "Message Students Who" from the Gradebook this week.

# Reminder: What does "substantive" mean?

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Engaging students in **teaching, learning + assessment of the content in your course**, including 2+ of these strategies:

a. Providing direct instruction

b. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework

c. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency

d. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency

e. Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency. (N/A)

From ACCJC Policy on Distance Education

Unpacking "Substantive" - Part A

"Providing direct instruction"

- Only applies to online courses with synchronous instruction (classes on Zoom)

    o Lecture (screenshare of PPT slides)

    o Demos/Practice ([digital whiteboard](#))

    o Engaging class in discussion (audio and/or chat)

    o Engaging students with [Zoom polls/surveys](#)
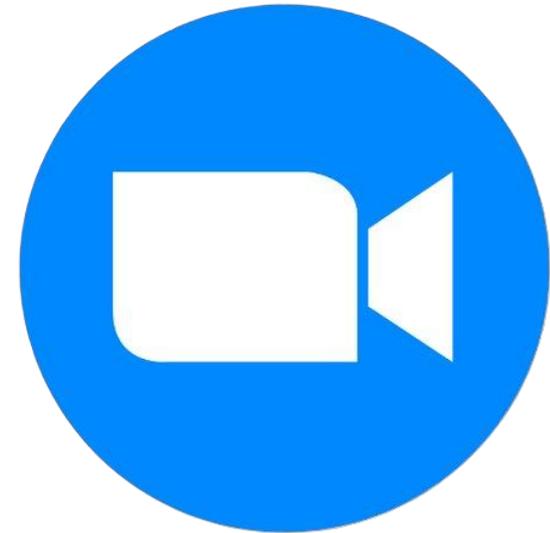
Tip #5: Try a new strategy to engage students in Zoom, like a poll or emoji reactions.

Unpacking "Substantive" - Option B

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"Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework"

- Need more than automated feedback (like auto-graded publisher quizzes)

- In Speedgrader, consider adding:

  - Assignment comments (**written** or **audio/video**) with personalized feedback (ex: one thing that's great; one thing to work on)

  - **Annotations** that show a student one thing that is working well/one thing to work on

Sample Rubric

Rubrics that help students understand how to improve are another great way to provide feedback.

Sutori Section: Conservative Source

| Criteria	Ratings				Pts
Source 1 right-leaning source (news article, tweet, meme, or video clip)	**3 pts** **Excellent** source is embedded and includes strong analysis of the argument and any bias (+/-150 words)	**2 pts** **almost there!** source is embedded and includes analysis of the argument - may need revisions and additional details to get to "excellent" (+/-100 words)	**1 pts** **developing** getting there, but substantial revisions and more analysis needed before submitting final draft of essay (may be +/- 50 words)	**0 pts** **Missing**	3 pts
Source 2 right-leaning source (news article, tweet, meme, or video clip)	**3 pts** **Excellent** source is embedded and includes strong analysis of the argument and any bias (+/-150 words)	**2 pts** **almost there!** source is embedded and includes analysis of the argument - may need revisions and additional details to get to "excellent" (+/-100 words)	**1 pts** **developing** getting there, but substantial revisions and more analysis needed before submitting final draft of essay (may be +/- 50 words)	**0 pts** **Missing**	3 pts

Total Points: 6

Tip #7: Adding a rubric can save you from writing the same comment over and over!

Unpacking "Substantive" - Option C

"Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency**"**

- People often try to meet this with links to PowerPoints or publisher materials, but remember the idea of parity with on campus: **would you show up to class and tell students to read a chapter and review slides on their own during class?**
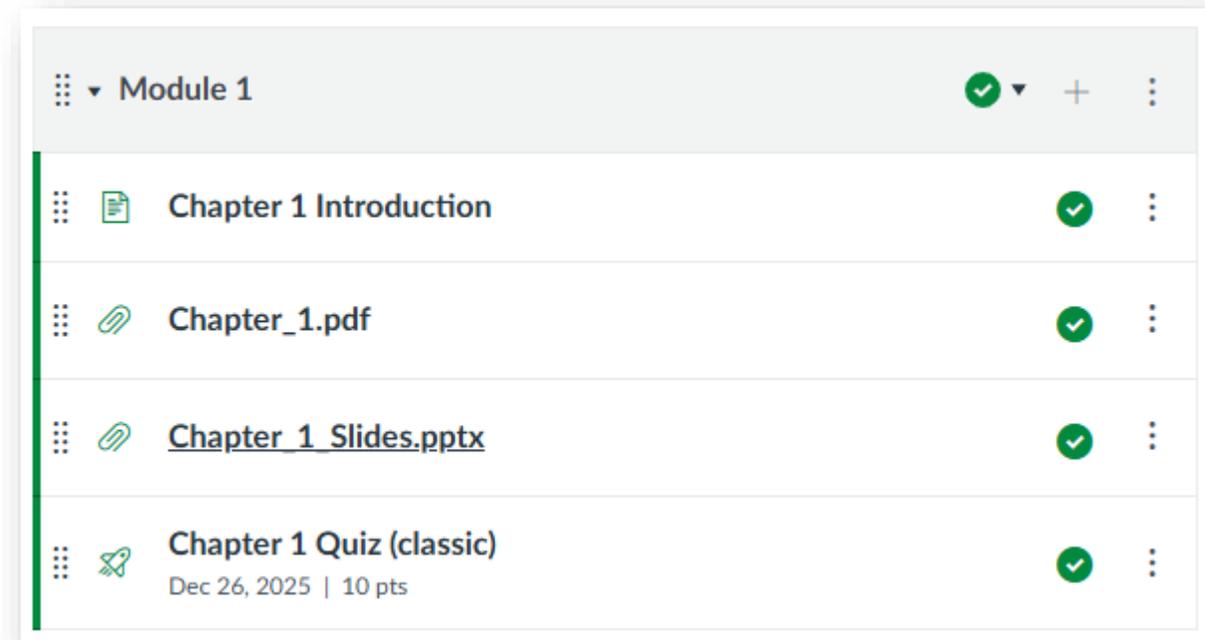
Sample Video Using "Studio"

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Instead of just dropping in your slides, make a recording using Studio. You can even allow for discussion or add quiz questions!

Tip #8: Use **Canvas Studio** to create "evergreen" videos that you can reuse again!

Unpacking "Substantive" - Option D

"Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency"

Canvas Discussion Boards are often used to meet this requirement...but they can start to feel repetitive and downright meaningless without careful planning.

College online discussion board:

Emily : the sky is blue

Me: Emily I totally agree with what you said. I like how you used the color blue as a form of imagery to describe the sky that was such a powerful statement you said Emily.

Designing **Better** Discussion Boards

Avoid:

- Creating discussions where there is only 1 right answer, or only a couple of possible answers.

- Especially avoid this if you are doing a full class discussion (or even worse – a discussion in a merged course with mutliple sections all participating in one giant conversation)
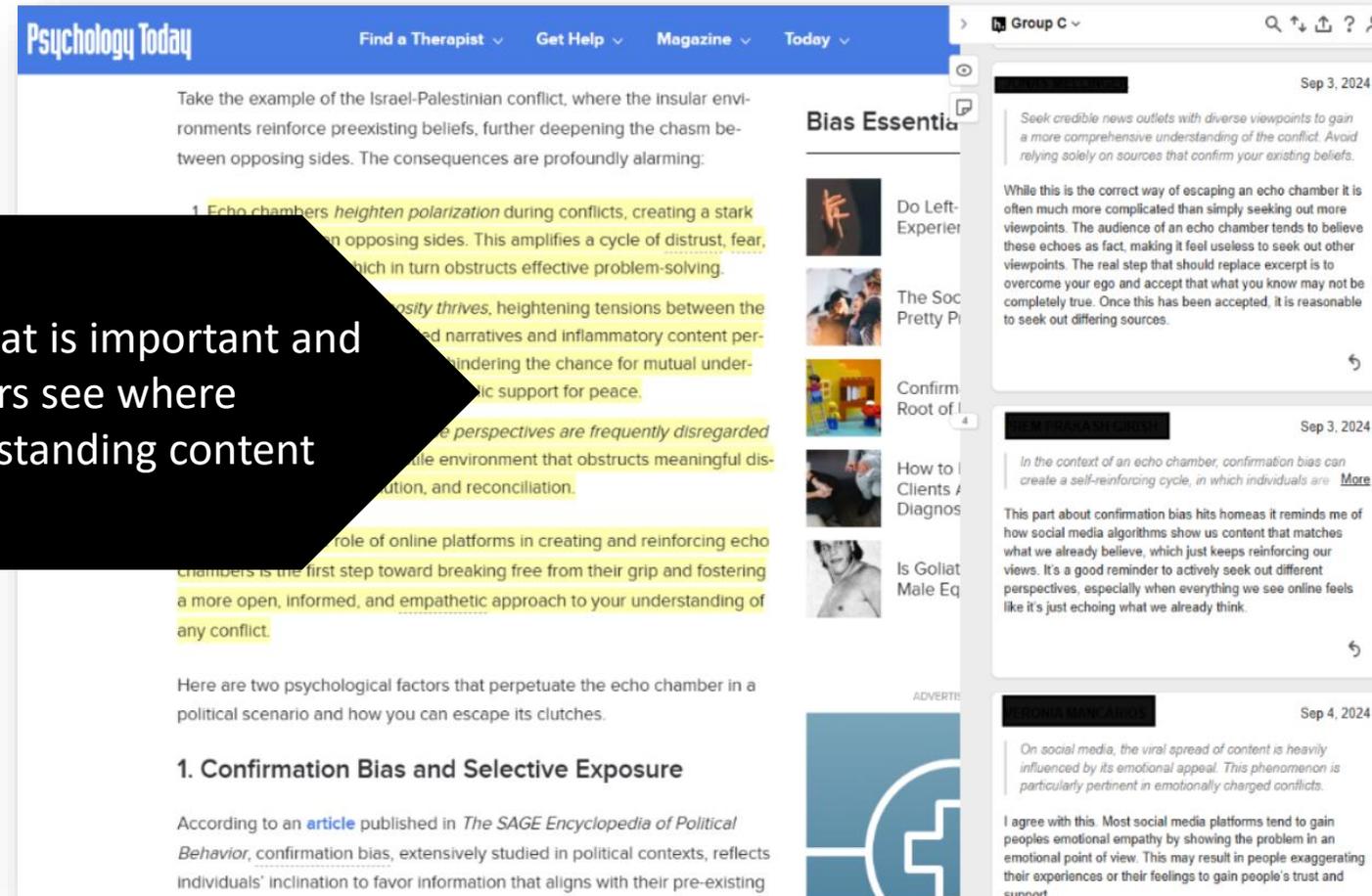
Try this instead:

- Designing discussions that ask students to contribute something unique (share their research, a personal connection, a draft of a project).

- Use "group settings" to create smaller, more meaningful conversations (more like "turn and talk" in on campus classes).

Tip #9: Make these small tweaks to make your discussion boards more meaningful.

Mix it Up with Social, Digital Annotation

Social annotation helps students see what is important and explain to each other...and helps teachers see where students may need more support understanding content

Q + A

RSI Tools Quick Guides

Canvas Tools:

- **Announcements**
- **Assignment Comments**
- **Course Analytics**
- **Discussions**
- **Peer Review**
- **Rubric Feedback**

Canvas Integrations:

- **Hypothesis** (social, digital annotation)
- **Pronto** (instant messaging/polls)
- **Studio** (video recording + engagement)
- **TechConnect Zoom** (video-conferencing)

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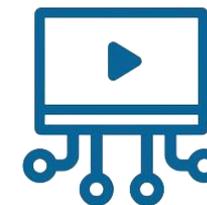
Thank you for attending today!

Scan for slides or go to
bit.ly/4dtFbcw

Workshop Evaluation