Community, Agency and Process

[We are assuming minimal connectivity (signal strength) and access to basic **Google** suite of apps (Gmail, Classroom, Doc, Sheet, Forms, and Hangout). For live video class sessions, we are assuming **Webex**. Other real-time communication tool: **Whatsapp**.]

1. Building a Sense of Community

It is extremely important that students – who are learning in isolation in their own homes – appreciate that they are not alone, and that they are part of a class community. There could be a number of ways of doing so, and these activities should start early and be periodically reinforced during the course duration.

Suggested Activity 1.1:   Who is here?

Students and Faculty create their profiles on a shared Google Doc

Activity 1.1	What Faculty will do	What Students will do
Before the Live Session	• Create a Topic on Google Classroom : Community • Create a shared Google Doc with Instructions for Students • Save the completed Google doc into a PDF file and upload onto Google Classroom Topic - Community	Upload their photo and bio information
During the Live Session	Emphasize – as much as possible – shared connections / backgrounds among class participants	Share anything else they might like to add to their posted profiles
After the Live Session	Send a 'thank you for sharing' email / announcement to students and ask them to complete Activity 1.2 before the next Live Session	Read the profiles of their peers, and start thinking of your potential "e-buddy" for this course

Instructions for Students:

1. Please copy-paste in the Google doc your picture, with your name and how you want to be addressed in this course
2. Please tell a little bit about yourself –
   a. what you are studying,
   b. why you decided to take this course, and

    c. what you are expecting to learn here

Tips for the Faculty: add your own bit to this Google Doc.

Suggested Activity 1.2:   Three ways we can enhance communication among ourselves and grow a sense of community in this course

Activity 1.2	What Faculty will do	What Students will do
Before the Live Session	Use the Question feature of Google Classroom to post Instructions for Students	Respond to the posted questions
During the Live Session	Draw on some of the suggestions of students and foster a conversation	Voice their preferences, including on a buddy / pairing system
After the Live Session	Send a thank you message with a recap, and asking students to select their buddy pairs.	Communicate among themselves (in WhatsApp / chat apps) and identify their buddy pairs, email their choice to Faculty

Instructions for Students:

Even though you are all dispersed in different places and often sitting alone in-front of your computer screen, please trust that you are not alone – we are and will be learning together as a community. There may be many ways we can strengthen a sense of community among us in this remote-learning world, in these extra-ordinary times. Please could you share some of your thoughts about how we as a class can truly become a community – even though we are distances apart? Please share your ideas about activities, communication tools and anything else that you feel could give us all a sense of stronger connectedness and mutual support and care in this virtual course? Please share your thoughts and ideas within 200 words.

Tips for the Faculty: add your own bit to this Google Doc. Make sure to emphasize Group and Individual Office Hours.

- For Group Office hours, set up a recurring Webex meeting for a fixed duration (one hour) – twice a week – where any student in the class can "drop in". Record these meetings, and make the recording links available via Google Classroom.
- For Individual Consultations – set up chat time on WhatsApp or on Webex.

Suggested Activity 1.3: Three things I deeply care about

Instructions for Students: Please write in 150 – 200 words three things that you deeply care about. Feel free to share what you are comfortable with the class.

2. Acknowledge Students' Agency in Remote Learning

- Students need to be seen as key partners and indeed invaluable resources in supporting the Faculty develop, sustain and enhance e-classroom processes.
- Course Learning Outcomes need to acknowledge students' contribution to the many facets of remote learning experience.
- Criteria for students' Course Participation should clearly indicate how much weight is assigned to timely on-line contributions, as well as to students' efforts in helping peers who may have a steeper learning curve in the e-learning mode

Suggested Activity 2.1: What I know and how I can help

- Use Google Form to create a simple survey that asks students what apps they are comfortable using and are able to help their peers learn
- Also use the same form to understand what they do not know in terms of the digital learning tools and would need help with

3. Ensure Process is clearly articulated and continually enhanced

Suggested Activity 3.1: Syllabus Quiz

1. Process is important, particularly so in the Blended / Virtual Learning world, where one small misreading or misinterpretation of instructions could derail a student from even starting the assignment. Yet, it is no secret that often students do not read the syllabus (and the instructions there) carefully enough.
2. To ensure that both synchronous and asynchronous tasks are happening and everyone is on-track, consider doing a syllabus quiz – using a simple Google Form based questionnaire