10 Tips for Online Teaching

1. **Design with the End in Mind** (i.e. backward design)
   Before developing your course start with 4-6 achievable, observable and measurable learning outcomes. Then create course content and enabling activities that build up to the achievement of those outcomes.

2. **Encourage Active Learning** (Cognitive Presence)
   To ensure engaged learning, create activities that elicit active exploration and critical thinking. Assessments should measure performance, not skill in test-taking and rote memorization.

3. **Create Authentic Assessments**
   Assign activities that emphasize application, analysis, evaluation and creation skills. Learning tasks should build expertise rather than demonstrate the ability to memorize facts, concepts and procedures.

4. **Emphasize Time on Task**
   Assignments help students build proficiency and skill. Consider frequent self-assessments to encourage students to relate what and how they’re learning to life outside of class. As another strategy encourage students to contribute to a class knowledgebase or glossary by writing annotations in a social bookmarking or collaboration tool (e.g. Diigo, Evernote, Wiki, Google Doc, etc.).

5. **Encourage Collaboration and Cooperation** (Social Presence)
   To counter feelings of online isolation, assign activities that build a sense of community. Consider, for example, icebreaker activities or forums in which students introduce themselves and identify prior experience or comfort with course outcomes. Students can also comment on outcomes. Likewise, encourage students to answer peer questions in a separate Questions and Answers forum.

6. **Provide Prompt, Formative Feedback** (Teacher Presence)
   Constructive feedback that guides and models performance is critical for developing essential skills, knowledge and attitudes. Frequent feedback also demonstrates strong teacher presence and reminds students that even online you are a caring, positive influence in their lives.

7. **Provide Rubrics, Checklists and Crystal Clear Instructions**
   Since online students can’t ask for immediate clarification in class, it’s critical to communicate clear expectations with detailed rubrics, checklists and instructions.

8. **Encourage Reflection**
   Ongoing reflection upon course content can help students connect prior knowledge to new skills and concepts. As an effective learning strategy, students could periodically reflect, in a journal or blog, on progress, achievements, challenges, etc. Alternatively, ask students to answer essential questions at the beginning and end of the term to track growth (e.g. “Aha” moments, critical incidents, etc.).

9. **Chunk Instructional Content**
   To improve readability and comprehension, keep textual passages uncluttered by breaking up long paragraphs or sections into easily-digested elements, set off from other elements with a liberal use of whitespace, margins, headers, and colored textboxes or sidebars (to emphasize key concepts).

10. **Provide Summaries and Previews of each Module**
    To help students connect core concepts to experience, summarize each module at the end of the unit. Likewise, offer a preview of the next module, laying the groundwork for new concepts, skills and values.