



# APT 2021

19<sup>th</sup> Academic Practice and Technology Conference (APT2021)  
Co-hosted online by the London School of Economics & Political Science,  
Imperial College London and University College London.  
Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021

<b>Session Start Time</b>	13:10
<b>Breakout Room</b>	5
<b>Title of Abstract:</b>	Breaking the Silence in Online Spaces: How Socialization Strategies Using Digital Technology Inspired a Community Outreach Project on Anti-Racism
<b>Presenters (lead &amp; co-presenters)</b>	Simone Adams Barbora Orlicka Antonia Pohlmann
<b>Institution</b>	University of Graz, Austria
<b>Format</b>	Field report
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Online engagement of students has always been a challenge for teachers, exacerbated during the past year of “pandemic teaching”, with factors such as the digital divide, “Zoom fatigue”, and overall lack of (mental) well-being influencing whether students want to or are even able to participate in virtual classroom spaces. Building a strong online learning community for diverse learners with different needs is therefore all the more important. This field report describes and analyzes the pedagogical course design and practical strategies to foster online socialization in an undergraduate American Studies seminar that led to a voluntary student community outreach project on anti-racism. The “Breaking Silence” project was designed by the students, with the instructor acting as a consultant and mentor, and resulted in a virtual kick-off event via ZOOM, a 2-week social media challenge, and engagement far beyond the (online) classroom. Through autoethnographic reflections and analysis of scaffolded synchronous and asynchronous online classroom activities, the authors of this paper will demonstrate how the focus on “access and motivation” and “online socialization” in online activities (Salmon 2011) as well as a Universal Design for Learning approach, and allowing a sense of classroom vulnerability leads to stronger social presence and more student engagement.</p>

## Session Description

Any good teaching practice involves continuous reflection. Educators reflect on their methodology, their approaches, and their strategies in the classroom. They evaluate how a particular lesson achieved what it set out to accomplish or why it did not. In addition to their own, they also analyze other teachers' practices to see if and how these would work in their own classes. This habit of (self-)reflection is a powerful tool and is employed strategically to ensure high-quality learning experiences for students. Such (self-)reflection often brings about processes of transformative learning (Mezirow 2003) and the realization that changes are needed in order to improve one's practice. As Jürgen Handke (2020) stresses, there is a need to develop a new mindset in order to effectively and successfully employ digitalization and technology in education. We aim to investigate the pedagogical as well as the personal and emotional aspects of the online teaching experience during the pandemic by looking at the classroom experience in an undergraduate seminar of American Studies, taught fully online in the winter semester of 2020/21 at the University of Graz in Austria. In doing so, we will demonstrate how a diverse group of students (racially and otherwise) can be engaged online to the extent that they are motivated to continue and showcase their learning in a (voluntary) community outreach project. This could serve as a blueprint for other educators who are struggling with student engagement in online spaces.

A central question of this talk will be focusing on the roles of educators: How have these roles changed in the face of the pandemic, particularly regarding social and affective strategies employed in classrooms, not only to broaden participation of an increasingly diverse student body, but also to create socially just and equitable learning environments despite the presence of a digital divide?

We will look at new strategies to foster "access and motivation" and "online socialization", the first two stages listed by Gilly Salmon in her "5-stage model" for successful online learning. This includes regular check-in and check-out activities, ice-breakers, as well as screencast tutorials to explain how to navigate the learning management system and audio commentary to contextualize course readings and provide guiding questions. Additionally, we will explore how a sense of classroom vulnerability, brought about by the unique situation of teaching and learning from home during a global pandemic, helped to increase social presence online. With Austria having remained in a state-wide lockdown for much of the winter semester, this proved particularly important because students expressed concerns about feeling isolated and overwhelmed, something that has also been observed in online classes before the pandemic. Similarly to what Francesca Gino posited in her webinar "How the Pandemic Made me a Better Educator" (2020), we will argue that a shared sense of vulnerability affects classroom engagement, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as race and identity.

Additionally, we will analyze how an online class framed by a Universal Design for Learning approach creates an inclusive and accessible classroom and course materials, as well as provides students with flexible choices regarding course assignments. By focusing on online collaboration through asynchronous activities on the learning management system Moodle in addition to bi-weekly synchronous sessions through Webex, this blended learning approach uses elements of a flipped classroom setting, and allows students the necessary autonomy to engage with course materials and contents on their own time in a way they could feel comfortable with.

Lastly, the student community project “Breaking Silence” will be analyzed and reflected on, with a specific focus on online mentoring processes that were designed to assist students in their self-directed learning and growth.

Reflecting on this project allows us to identify the afore-mentioned new mindset that higher education will need as we are moving forward into a future of increasingly diverse student communities. These students do not only need access to higher education, but also flexibility regarding their unique life situations, and – just as importantly – spaces to feel represented in to be comfortable enough to break the silence and engage, online and offline.



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<b>Session Start Time</b>	13:10
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<b>Title of Abstract:</b>	How UCL Economics Walk went virtual
<b>Presenters (lead &amp; co-presenters)</b>	Ramin Nassehi
<b>Institution</b>	University College London
<b>Format</b>	Research paper or work in progress
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>UCL Economics Walk is a walking tour of Bloomsbury, where the tour leader (i.e. lecturer) takes the audience through different locations in this area that have an economic story to tell. The project's aim is to explain complex economic ideas in an accessible way to students and/or members of the public and encourage critical discussion on those ideas. I have offered this tour in person for thirteen times and twice virtually. In terms of pedagogy, this tour follows a dialogical approach in a sense that the tour leader starts a conversation about each location with, and among, the audience. In this presentation, I will talk about the challenges I faced to create a virtual version of this tour on Zoom, particularly the different mediums (Google Map, interactive online polls, music, short snippets from movies, Green Screen presentation) I used to encourage peer dialogue and create a sense of collective intellectual journey. You can watch the teaser of the virtual tour here: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46yS6UUuRN8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46yS6UUuRN8</a></p> <p>This tour takes a place-based approach to teaching economics that can be easily adapted to different campuses, towns or cities in face-to-face or virtual settings. For instance, this method can be used to discuss a shop, a building or an advertisement in campus/town that has an economic story to tell. Generally, the tour aims to teach economics by encouraging a (digital) collective dialogue around certain locations (i.e. case studies).</p>

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Session Description

This presentation relates to the subtheme of “Building new communities and developing new identities”. As a public engagement project, the virtual UCL Economics Walk uses various technologies including Zoom, Google Map, Green Screen presentation and interactive online polls to create a virtual walking tour of London (Pezzino, 2017; Draper & Brown, 2004). During this tour we use a customised Google Map to virtually “visit” locations that are associated with thinkers who had shaped economics like David Ricardo, Charles Darwin and John Maynard Keynes. The tour is targeted at students and/or members of the public. The main approach of this tour is dialogic in a sense that the tour leader starts a conversation about each historical character with, and among, the audience rather than monotonically transfer historical facts to the participants (Wolfe & Alexander, 2008). To further stimulate the discussion, I play historical videos, music and short snippets from movies related to the topic or character of discussion.

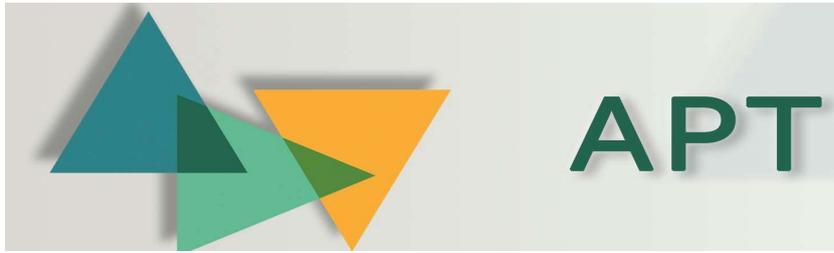
I will cover the following in my presentation:

The tour’s aims and content: (a) Demystifying and democratising economics for the public (Carlin, 2012), (b) Creating a sense of community and identity among students, (c) Highlighting the connection between economics and other disciplines (Goldsmith & Casey, 2011), (d) Decolonising the classroom (Le Grange, 2020).

The tour’s teaching approach: (a) Dialogic method, (b) role play by the audience, (c) Location-based discussion (i.e. case studies).

The tour’s technology mix (the virtual version): (a) Customised Google Map, (b) Green Screen on Zoom and (c) interactive online polls.

I will finish by highlighting the possibility of using the trio of dialogic method, Ed Tech and placed-based discussion for other contexts and learning practices.



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<b>Session Start Time</b>	13:10
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<b>Title of Abstract:</b>	Mobius – an innovative online maths resource for widening participation through individualised learning pathways
<b>Presenters (lead &amp; co-presenters)</b>	Shaheen Charlwood Judith Brown
<b>Institution</b>	University of Warwick
<b>Format</b>	Research paper or work in progress
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Mobius (Maths Online Bridge for Individualised Undergraduate Support) is an innovative online maths tool created within the moodle VLE platform to provide students with a customised study pathway. Different pathways are structured depending on learners' responses to hinge questions, that are carefully designed around a key subset of core concepts, to assess learners' capabilities and direct them to a choice of suitable next steps thus enabling learners to bridge gaps in their knowledge and gain confidence in independent study skills.</p> <p>We will show how we've used moodle to transform the threshold concept as proposed by Meyer &amp; Land (2003) from being universal to being more specific, temporal and at an individual level. Mobius provides a personalised learning experience where students are directed to support, depth, examples, enrichment and extension activities tailored to their individual requirements and when they need it. In addition we will provide a preliminary evaluation based on feedback from current learners.</p> <p>The technology used in Mobius incorporates the moodle lesson tool and allows for easy transferability so that other disciplines are able to use a template to create their own supportive pathways through relevant content.</p>
<b>Session Description</b>	We will describe the pedagogic and technological factors in the design of Mobius, a maths learning tool within the moodle VLE.

Mobius adapts to individuals' current learning to provide the scaffolding required for them to navigate successfully through key concepts whilst physically away from the classroom.

At the University of Warwick, we recognised the need for a maths resource that bridges prior learning to assumed knowledge for prospective students without traditional qualifications or those with gaps in their education.

Interest in the Mobius tool has grown throughout STEM departments since it has become clear that new students joining the first year of their courses will have had a significant amount of time away from the maths classroom and may need to refresh basics, plug gaps and/or build confidence before starting their university courses.

It is clear that students require more guidance and structure than exists in the standard flipped classroom set up. Watching an hour-long lecture may lead to an excess in cognitive load for students who are missing the fundamentals assumed in the lecture or equally, for students who are waiting for something to be taught that is not already known (Mayer and Moreno, 2003).

The objective of the Mobius project is to leverage moodle functionality to determine what students already know to be able to provide them with the right level of challenge by automated individualisation through their learning whilst catching any misconceptions and providing the relevant support when it is needed.

The quality of the Mobius resource is contingent on providing nuanced individualisation via learners' responses to carefully designed hinge questions (William, 2018) that diagnose what is needed next by the learner.

The hinge questions are based on threshold concepts (Meyer and Land, 2003), those troublesome core concepts that, once understood, can positively and irreversibly transform the learner's perception and are considered essential to mastery of the subject.

However, the threshold concept idea proposed by Meyer and Land does not take into account the fact that each individual learner experiences understanding of concepts differently, as borne out by strong personal experience of transformative episodes in our own learning and that of our students. Mobius, in essence, transforms the threshold concept from being universal (as proposed by Meyer and Land) to being more specific, temporal and at an individual level.

Mobius thus provides a high quality virtual learning experience with just the right amount of challenge to maintain momentum and progress on an individualised route through key threshold concepts.

This individualisation allows users to make progress at the rate that is right for them, offering flexibility of pace and place whilst providing the appropriate scaffolding needed to fill gaps in knowledge or extend to next steps or deeper understanding.

As well as outlining the pedagogical theory underpinning the Mobius learning tool, we will describe how we have used the technology

available to us through the Moodle virtual learning environment to provide the responsiveness required to make this online resource a reality and how our templated resource facilitates easy transferability to other disciplines.

We will showcase the resource by taking participants on a learner journey illustrating how Mobius uses learners' responses to hinge questions to determine the best direction for next steps in learning from a choice of support, enrichment, depth, practice, examples or common misconceptions. In addition, we will provide a preliminary evaluation of the resource based on feedback from current learners.