A guide to creating online content in the Harvard Department of Government
(For Lectures & Discussion Sections)

- The default platform for content delivery created via Zoom and other applications is the [Harvard Canvas portal](#).[1] Faculty may use other platforms (Google sites, their own web-pages, etc.), but support for these cannot be guaranteed.

Lectures
- Lectures can be delivered live or pre-recorded using the Zoom tool within Canvas ([link for guide to Getting Started with Zoom in Canvas](#)). Canvas has additional tools for pre-recording as well (see link below).
- **Pre-recording Lectures** avoids technical problems during the limited time of lecture, and provides the opportunity to prepare a mix of media (lecture notes, embedded video, slides, etc.). It also allows students in distant time zones or with bandwidth issues to watch lectures when convenient. It often takes extensive time to prepare a good pre-recorded lecture, however. [See this short Guide for Pre-recording Lectures in Canvas](#).
- **Delivering Live Lectures** can allow for more genuine interaction as in the classroom and can avoid the extensive time doing multiple "takes" of lectures to get them right. It may be difficult to adjust to online modalities (using such tools as the "virtual whiteboard," etc.), however, and if there are techical problems during the lecture much of the scarce time can be eaten up dealing with these problems (which can often be on the students' end, as well as the faculty member's). [See these Tips for Delivering Live Lectures via Zoom in Canvas](#).
- **A note on recording live lectures/discussion sections:**
  - It is a good practice to record and make available all live lectures and discussion sections, especially given the dislocation of students from their normal learning environments, for students to consult later.
  - Students may have trouble accessing the live lectures & sections if they are residing many time-zones away, if their current locations have less than optimal internet connections, or if general internet bandwidth becomes strained.
  - **Massachusetts laws require the written consent of students for their images & words to be recorded (i.e. "two-party consent").** You can seek oral consent or use an electronic survey the Gov Dept can provide to solicit written consent from students, which results in a written record (preferable). [Here is a link to a GoogleForm electronic survey that you can copy, edit, and use to solicit this consent](#). Gov Dept staff can also help with this process, if you contact us.

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[1] Faculty and TFs who have not used Canvas extensively or have concerns about getting started with Canvas can contact the [Harvard Canvas Support Staff](#), or the Government Department's ADUS, George Soroka, at soroka@fas.harvard.edu.

Discussion Sections

Discussion sections obviously cannot be pre-recorded by TFs. The [Zoom tool within Canvas](#) should be the default modality for TFs to hold Discussion Sections.

1. The most straightforward option will be for TFs to hold sections at their regular time, via Zoom within Canvas. It may be difficult for students to attend sections regularly, however, (see above under "A note on recording live"). This can present several issues:
   a. An inequity in learning between students who are regularly able to attend sections and students who have difficulty attending the live virtual sections.
   b. Grade problems (and complaints) for students who have such difficulties if section attendance and participation is part of the semester grade. Faculty & TFs may wish to re-weight course graded components to reduce or eliminate section participation to anticipate and avoid complaints about grade inequities.
2. Alternative/additional options (Faculty & TFs will have to choose):
   a. TFs could hold double online sections, offering a second time slot that is 6-8 hours before or after the default section, to address time-zone issues.
   b. TFs could record live discussion sections, so students who are not able to join them live could watch the discussion. For participation grades, students who only watch the recorded session should also be required to write a response paper or take a short quiz based on the section discussion for their grade.
   c. TFs could pre-record an audiovisual introduction to section discussion, and then hold a live Chat session using the [Course Chat tool in Canvas](#), in place of video/audio live (video in particular uses a great deal of bandwidth), to address connection bandwidth issues.
   d. TFs could hold additional/extended office hours (preferably in a time slot 6-8 hours before or after regular section time), either with Zoom or Course Chat, to enable students more opportunities to engage and ask questions.

Whatever options Faculty and TFs decide to utilize, Harvard's Canvas and IT techs will be able to help, along with Gov Department staff. We now have the services of Dan Epstein, a graduate of our PhD program, who has extensive experience with online pedagogy and who has been hired as a consultant during this transition (note: if his schedule allows, Dan is willing to do a "ride-along" in real time for your course to make sure everything goes smoothly). Please contact George Soroka with any requests or questions related to the online transition (soroka@fas.harvard.edu). **Faculty and TFs should <u>start early</u>, especially those planning to pre-record components, and be aware of the time and preparation it often takes to get pre-recorded sessions right.**