PC 103 University Skills
Gathering Agenda for Week 5
Online Communities

Gathering Purposes

- Discuss the importance of interdependence in online learning
- Talk about tools to help with group collaboration
- Review how perception affects our group interactions

Preparation

- For *face-to-face Gatherings*, arrive early to setup the room, prepare any visual aids, and greet students as they arrive.
- For *virtual Gatherings*, start the meeting early, share your screen with a message welcoming them to the gathering and letting them know you will start soon.
    - When the Gathering Agenda asks that students meet in small groups, use Breakout Rooms.
    - When the Gathering Agenda asks you to display things on "the board," you can use the whiteboard.

Document Preparation:

- If unable to show the video, print the story (Equally Yoked Together) at the bottom of this document

Min.	Activities		Teaching Tips
Welcome and Devotional			
10	Welcome	Welcome, announcements, and housekeeping	
	Hymn or Thought, Prayer	Please sing one or two verses of a hymn. If you meet with a virtual gathering, the lead student or another student should be invited to share a brief spiritual thought. A volunteer will then give an opening prayer.	
	BYU-Pathway Worldwide Devotional	Students were asked to watch the BYU-Pathway Worldwide devotional this week, as contained in the course. They should have done this prior to the gathering. As a class discuss the devotional using the discussion questions provided in the course.	Look up the questions in advance so you are ready.
Student Success Discussion			
15	Next Steps Reminder	Remind students to be working on the Next Steps portion of the course. See this week's module called "Next Steps" in the course.	
	Read and Discuss	Read about April Leslie Deal to see what she did to overcome the challenges she faced as she worked to complete a degree. Then discuss the questions that follow. Click here to share/read the article. If that doesn't work, you can share the text below called "Never Out of Reach." **Discussion Questions:**	

		• April said she started to find little miracles in her life that made completing her education possible. How can you seek and find these miracles? Are you entitled to them as much as April? • April said, "You do what you can do. Don't compare yourself to what other people are doing. Just keep moving forward. Don't give up." Why can comparing yourself lead to the kind of discouragement that makes completing an education difficult? • April encouraged you to not turn away from the support you can give each other. Why is that support so important as an online student?	
Student Skills Review and Discussion			
20	Share	For one to two minutes, tell the class about one big thing you learned in this week's Student Skills Lesson.	Come prepared to share your 1-2 minute introduction.
	Share and Discuss	There are many benefits to online learning. The flexibility in time and place is at the top of the list. Along with the benefits of online learning, one common downfall is the feeling of being alone. It is important to find ways to connect to your classmates, instructor and even the university. Ask: ● What helps you to feel connected to others in the online learning environment? ● How can you influence the experience of your classmates in your online courses? ● Why is working with others so important in the online setting? We were introduced to the tool Zoom this week. Have you all had a chance to use it? Is anyone struggling getting started? ● What are some of the challenges of meeting virtually rather than in person, face to face?	Read or share this in your own words. Take time to help any students that need help getting started with Zoom or have questions about navigation.
	Write and Discuss	Invite the class to watch this short video: https://www.lds.org/media-library/video/2013-10-1111-equally-yoked-together?lang=eng	**If you cannot play the video, read the story found below**

		Invite the class to write their answers to the writing prompt below. Write for 60-90 seconds. Then discuss the questions that follow. **Writing Prompt:** ● What stood out to you in this video (or story, if you did not watch the video)? **Discussion Prompt:** ● What did you write about? Why? ● What did Elder Packer mean by "They hit the yoke together?" ● How can we apply the message in this video to our online setting?	**this outline.**
Student Skills Application			
15	Object Lesson	1. Invite all the members of the class to stand in a circle. 2. Hand each person a piece of paper. 3. Invite them all to turn around so they are facing outward and are not looking at one another. 4. Give them the following instructions: a. Make one tear in your paper. b. Tear the paper again. c. Tear the paper one more time. 5. Invite the class to turn around and face inside the circle. 6. Ask them to hold up their torn paper. 7. Notice the similarities and differences in the way the paper was torn. 8. Ask the class to sit down.	If you are in a room with desks you can work around them. No need to move them. For virtual gatherings you can still complete this activity in your individual locations. When tearing the paper do it so the paper cannot be seen on the camera.
	Discuss	Ask two members of the class why they did not tear the paper the same way even though you gave them the same instructions. Allow them to share their answers. Discuss ● What lessons can we learn from this experiment about working with others in a group setting? ● How did perception play a role in this activity? God designed us to all be different. It is part of His plan. It would be boring if we were all exactly alike and did things exactly the same way. We need our differences to be able to accomplish tasks, help one another and share our talents. ● What ideas or strategies do you have for working with people that have a different perception than you? ● How will this activity help you in your group project next week?	

	Testimony and Prayer	Bear a 30-90 second testimony of the importance of working with others and understanding our differences. Invite the class to begin thinking of their skills and strengths that will be beneficial to their team. End with a prayer by invitation.	

Never Out of Reach
Earning a bachelor's degree was never easy for April Leslie Deal.

After high school, April completed a dual associate degree in arts and science. She planned to continue her education, but life seemed to keep getting in the way.

First, April was offered a good job at a company that claimed they would help her finish her degree. She took the job, but they weren't as supportive as they initially promised. She began looking at other options to continue her education, but she got married shortly afterward and her focus shifted.

The more April's life changed, the more out of reach her education felt. Between working, raising children, moving several times, and struggling with a husband who wasn't very supportive of April going back to school, years went by with no progress toward her degree. Then, her life changed again — but not in a way she wanted or expected.

Dealing with divorce
April's marriage abruptly ended with divorce. "My divorce was one of the hardest things I have ever gone through," she said. "I had a five-year-old and a newborn. I questioned everything in my life, including God. I didn't know what was going to happen."

Despite the questions weighing heavily on her heart, April took a leap of faith and enrolled in a local community college. As a single mother, she felt a new sense of urgency to finish her degree and provide for her two sons, Skyler and Xander.

April enjoyed her classes, but they quickly became a financial burden. "I was so worried about money," she said. "It was super expensive!"

She had heard about BYU-Pathway Worldwide and its affordable tuition rates, but the PathwayConnect program wasn't available in her area at the time (before virtual gatherings became available). When a new gathering location opened in Springfield, Florida, just an hour from April's home, she knew it was the perfect opportunity. It would still be difficult to take online

courses and attend the gathering each week on top of her other responsibilities, but she knew the sacrifice would be worth it.

Turning trial into triumph
“It just seemed like things started to fall into place for me,” April said. “I started to see little miracles and to feel God’s love for me.”

She found a member of her gathering group to carpool with each week, and she enjoyed the lessons in her courses. More than anything, though, April found an unexpected support system in her PathwayConnect gathering group.

During an especially challenging time, April emailed her group members to explain the situation and that she wasn’t sure if she could continue. She said, “Pretty much everyone replied back and said, ‘We got you. We’ll pray for you. We support you. You can do this. We’re with you.’ It was a huge support system.” Thanks to her hard work and the support she received along the way, April not only finished PathwayConnect but went on to earn a bachelor’s degree online in business management from BYU-Idaho, supported by BYU-Pathway. After many difficult years, she achieved her goal!

“It’s so hard to put into words how much of a blessing [BYU-Pathway] was,” April said. “It was just there when I needed it.”

Receiving and giving help
April’s advice to other BYU-Pathway students is, “You do what you can do. Don’t compare yourself to what other people are doing. Just keep moving forward. Don’t give up.”

April also encourages BYU-Pathway students to reach out to the people around them. For her, study groups with peers and the BYU-Idaho Online Student Community were valuable resources. “There were people there that were extremely helpful and encouraging,” she said. “Allow people to be encouraging to you — don’t turn away from it.”

Although April isn’t sure what the future holds, her education has given her greater confidence and preparation to face whatever comes. “The blessings have continued for me and my family,” she said. “I know that my Heavenly Father will continue to help and support me. I know that I can do it.”

See below for Elder Packer’s story, “Equally Yoked Together” to replace the video

Equally Yoked Together

Elder Boyd K. Packer

https://www.lds.org/manual/teaching-seminary-preservice-readings-religion-370-471-and-475/equally-yoked-together?lang=eng

Several years ago with Bill and Allie Marriott, Donna and I went to a country fair in New Hampshire. It was a beautiful fall day and a delightful old-time country fair.

The center of attraction was the oxen pulling contest. Several teams of oxen with heavy wooden yokes were lined up to compete. A wooden sledge was weighted with cement blocks: ten thousand pounds—five tons—to begin with. The object was for the oxen to move the sledge three feet.

I noticed a well-matched pair of very large, brindled, blue-gray animals. They were the big-boned, Holstein, Durham-cross, familiar big blue oxen of seasons past. Because of their size, of course they were the favorites.

Each team was given three attempts to move the sledge. If they were able to do so easily, more weight was added until the teams were eliminated one by one. In turn, each team was hitched to the sledge. The teamster would position his animals carefully, pat them, chortle to them, whisper to them, and then at a goad and a loud command they would slam forward against the yoke. Either the weight would move or the oxen were jerked to a halt.

The big blue oxen didn’t even place! A small, nondescript pair of animals, not very well matched for size, moved the sledge all three times.

I was amazed and fascinated and turned to an old New Englander in the crowd and asked if he could explain how that could happen. He said, “E-yeh.” (That means yes in New England.) And then he explained. The big blues were larger and stronger and better matched for size than the other team. But the little oxen had better teamwork and coordination. They hit the yoke together. Both animals jerked forward at exactly the same time and the force moved the load.

One of the big blue oxen had lagged a second or pushed a second too soon—something like a football player being off side—and the force was spent in a glancing blow. The yoke then was twisted and the team jerked to one side and the sledge hardly moved.

If I were to moralize, I would begin in typical Book of Mormon language, “And thus we see” that size and strength are not enough. It takes teamwork as well.