

The Impact of Weekly Videos on Student Engagement and Connectedness in Online Asynchronous Courses

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Abstract

In prior online courses, students conveyed a low sense of connectedness with instructors, peers, and courses. This descriptive, exploratory Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) study examines how weekly instructor-created informational videos influence student engagement and connectedness in asynchronous business administration courses at a Midwestern public university. Instructors created two-to-five-minute videos on course assignments, due dates, informational updates, campus activities, and other course-related information. Fifty-two students completed a Likert-scale survey measuring engagement and connectedness, as a classroom-based inquiry that is bounded by the characteristics of the courses. Student disengagement and feelings of isolation are major barriers to success in asynchronous courses. Understanding what improves connection directly supports student retention and learning outcomes. Prior studies show that instructor-created videos can enhance engagement, motivation, and retention while reducing isolation, especially when they include visible instructor presence and convey relational warmth and approachability, ultimately increasing social presence and fostering classroom connectedness. Participants voluntarily completed an anonymous end-of-semester online survey consisting of elements of connectedness and engagement that the authors defined based on their instructor knowledge and literature review, with IRB approving the study as exempt, and descriptive statistics used to analyze mean responses and standard deviations. Results indicate that weekly videos enhanced students' sense of connectedness and course engagement, especially regarding course logistics and instructor connection. Findings support the value of instructor presence in asynchronous learning and suggest strategies to further develop community and motivation in online education. Future research should examine how various video types, formats, and accessibility features influence different dimensions of engagement and learning

across disciplines, while this study reinforces that even brief personalized weekly videos strengthen instructor presence, reduce ambiguity, and enhance student connectedness in asynchronous courses.

Keywords

Connected, Engaged, Online, Asynchronous Learning

1. Problem and Opportunity

In our previous online courses, students mentioned not feeling connected to the instructor and the course itself. Research questions included 1) how do students perceive weekly instructor created informational videos and 2) how do these videos impact student engagement and connectedness in online asynchronous business administration courses?

2. Literature Review and Historical Context

“Online education consists of a set of teaching and learning modalities that are carried out remotely, based on forms of communication mediated by synchronous and asynchronous technologies” (Carega-Butter et al., 2020). This study focuses on asynchronous formats where students learn independently within structured timeframes. Key challenges in such settings include sustaining engagement, reducing isolation, and improving student performance (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

In this study, connectedness refers to students’ affective sense of belonging, relational trust, and perceived social presence within the course, particularly their felt relationship with the instructor and the learning environment. Connectedness is widely recognized as a key contributor to motivation, persistence, and learning satisfaction in online education (Dost & Mazzoli Smith, 2023; Snijders et al., 2020). Engagement, by contrast, reflects students’ behavioral, cognitive, and functional involvement in course activities, including interaction with course materials, clarity of task completion, and sustained academic effort. Engagement is foundational to student success in online asynchronous environments, where self-regulation and active course participation are essential (Martin & Bolliger, 2018; Galikyan & Admiraal, 2019). These constructs collectively inform how students navigate both the emotional and operational dimensions of online coursework.

This study draws on the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison & Akyol, 2013), which emphasizes the interplay of teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence in creating meaningful online learning experiences. Instructor-created videos directly contribute to teaching and social presence by humanizing communication and reinforcing structure. Within SoTL, connectedness describes the extent to which students feel a sense of belonging, relational trust, and meaningful engagement with their instructor, peers, and course structure; an affective dimension that influences motivation, persistence, and overall learning

experience (Dost & Mazzoli Smith, 2023). As such, instructors created brief two-to-five-minute videos that provided guidance on upcoming assignments, clarified due dates, shared informational updates, highlighted relevant campus activities, and offered additional context or reminders to support students in navigating course expectations.

Prior studies affirm that instructor-created videos can increase student engagement, motivation, and retention, while mitigating feelings of isolation (Malhotra et al., 2019; Owston et al., 2019; McAlister, 2014). Videos that include visible instructor presence foster stronger student engagement (Wang & Antonenko, 2017). Additionally, when students perceive relational warmth and approachability in instructors, learning satisfaction improves. Lastly, instructor-created videos have shown to increase instructor social presence and create classroom connectedness (Boettcher, n.d.; Love & Marshall, 2022).

One of the 10 themes of exemplary teaching identified (Bledsoe et al., 2021) was a socioemotional connection between the students and the instructor. When students feel like they have a connection with faculty/staff, their educational experiences have positive outcomes for the students, the educators, and the institution (Snijders et al., 2020).

Student engagement has always been a challenge in higher education, especially in online asynchronous courses (Galikyan & Admiraal, 2019). In addition to engagement, students may struggle with connectedness to a course/instructor in online asynchronous courses. Goals of this study are to determine students' perceptions whether a brief weekly video created by the instructor briefly explaining assignments and other class information increased students' overall engagement, connectedness, experience, learning, performance, satisfaction, and motivation in an online asynchronous course.

As students enter higher education after their high school COVID learning experiences, their expectations and norms have changed. It is our assumption, based on experience, that online students perceive deadlines as guidelines, rather than hard due dates. Research indicates that one expectation of students that has changed is that deadlines will be extended. Some faculty felt students wanted more engagement and short visual information (Cengage, 2023). We believe that video engagement will clarify this misperception.

Even post-COVID, learning continues to be a social experience and students want to be engaged and want to understand why course content/degree is relevant.

With online education, "new technologies enable faculty to 'see' student learning and thinking in ways that we could not before" (Bernstein & Bass, 2005).

3. Methodology

Participants were undergraduate students enrolled in three upper-level business administration courses (N = 52) at a small public university in the Midwest offering both campus and online programs. Courses ran for 16 weeks and were delivered asynchronously. Students voluntarily completed an anonymous online sur-

vey near the end of the semester. Across the three courses, a total of 113 students were enrolled. With 52 students completing the voluntary end-of-semester survey, the study achieved a 46% response rate, which is consistent with, or above typical rates reported in online higher education research. The weekly videos were typically 2 - 5 minutes in length, delivered in a talking-head format recorded via webcam, and distributed to students through the Learning Management System's weekly announcement feature.

The survey items were intentionally selected to align with the study's SoTL-driven focus on understanding how weekly instructor-created videos influence student engagement and connectedness in asynchronous courses. The ten Likert-scale items were adapted from (Martin & Bolliger, 2018) to maintain conceptual consistency with established measures of online engagement and were reviewed by two faculty colleagues to ensure clarity, relevance, and content validity. Five items were designed to assess engagement, such as understanding assignments, staying on task, and interacting with course materials, because engagement is a central determinant of student success in asynchronous learning environments. The remaining five items measured connectedness, an affective dimension related to students' sense of belonging, instructor presence, and relational trust, which SoTL literature highlights as essential to motivation, satisfaction, and persistence in online learning. These matter because they provide insight into both functional and emotional dimensions of learning: how students perceive logistical clarity and structural support (function), and how they experience relational and social aspects of the course (connectedness). Collectively, the item structure allowed the study to capture nuanced student perceptions regarding whether weekly videos helped reduce ambiguity, humanize the online environment, and foster a meaningful learning experience, which are key outcomes aligned with the overarching research questions.

The following five questions focus on students' sense of belonging, relational rapport, and feelings of being connected to the instructor or course community: Q1: The weekly videos made me feel connected to this course. Q2: The weekly videos helped me feel connected to the instructor. Q4: The weekly videos contributed to course discussions. Q5: The weekly videos helped me engage with the instructor. Q10: The weekly videos helped me feel part of a community. The authors related Connectedness with relational, emotional, and social presence.

The following five questions focus on student involvement, clarity, task completion, interaction with materials, and functional engagement with the course: Q3: The weekly videos increased my engagement with the course. Q6: The weekly videos helped me engage with the course materials. Q7: The weekly videos clearly communicated assignment deadlines. Q8: The weekly videos helped me understand assignments. Q9: The weekly videos helped me stay on task. The authors related Engagement with the behavioral, cognitive, and functional aspects of course participation.

The study was approved as exempt by the University's Institutional Review

Board. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze mean responses and standard deviations for each survey item.

4. Results

The inquiry aimed to understand student perceptions of weekly instructor-created videos and their impact on student engagement and connectedness in online asynchronous business administration courses. The online survey consisted of ten rating questions exploring the impacts of weekly instructor created information videos. Students responded to rating survey questions using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neutral; 4 = disagree; 5 = strongly disagree); Using this rating scale students responded to the impact each of the following: course engagement and course connectedness (Table 1).

Table 1. Mean scores.

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
Q1	The weekly videos made me feel connected to this course.	1.711	0.60
Q2	The weekly videos helped me feel connected to the instructor.	1.711	0.63
Q3	The weekly videos increased my engagement with the course.	1.921	0.72
Q4	The weekly videos contributed to course discussions.	2.026	0.81
Q5	The weekly videos helped me engage with the instructor.	2.000	0.75
Q6	The weekly videos helped me engage with the course materials.	1.868	0.67
Q7	The weekly videos clearly communicated assignment deadlines.	1.395	0.51
Q8	The weekly videos helped me understand assignments.	1.921	0.70
Q9	The weekly videos helped me stay on task.	1.737	0.65
Q10	The weekly videos helped me feel part of a community.	2.263	0.83

Based on 52 student responses, the following key findings emerged:

4.1. Functional Aspects of the Course

The lowest-rated item (with 1 being strongly agree) was Q7: “*The weekly videos clearly communicated important due dates/time frames of assignments*”, with a mean score of **1.395**, suggests that students valued the videos as effective for logistical clarity. Additionally, there was a strong indication that the videos helped students stay on task (Q9, Mean = **1.737**).

4.2. High Perceived Connection to the Course

The strongest agreement among students was with the statement: “*The weekly videos made me feel connected to this course*” (Q1 and Q2), with a mean score of **1.711** for each. This suggests that students saw the videos as an important mechanism for enhancing their sense of connectedness to the course content and structure.

4.3. Moderate Perceived Connection to the Course and Materials

Students moderately agreed that “*The weekly videos helped me understand assignments*” (Q8), with a mean of **1.921**, that “*The weekly videos increased my engagement with the course*” (Q3, Mean = **1.921**), and “*The weekly videos helped me engage with the course materials*” (Q6, Mean = **1.868**).

4.4. Community and Engagement-Related Items Received Lower Ratings

Perceptions of the videos helping students feel a *sense of community in the course* (Q10, Mean = **2.263**), *engaging with the instructor* (Q5, Mean = **2.000**), and *contributing to course discussions* (Q4, Mean = **2.026**) were among the lower-rated items. This highlights potential areas where video content could be adapted to foster more interpersonal or course structure.

4.5. Consistent Patterns in Responses

Across all questions, the standard deviations remained under 1.0, indicating relatively consistent responses among students.

4.6. Discussion

The results of this study suggest that weekly instructor-created videos in asynchronous business administration courses meaningfully increase student engagement and connectedness, particularly in areas related to course logistics, motivation, and a sense of connectedness. These findings align closely with the literature reviewed, which highlighted that instructor presence—especially through videos—can reduce isolation and increase satisfaction and learning (Malhotra et al., 2019; Boettcher, n.d.; Wang & Antonenko, 2017).

While the videos were successful in communicating deadlines and reinforcing course structure (Q7, Q9), they were less effective in promoting interpersonal connectedness among students or fostering a sense of community (Q10). This may point to the one-directional nature of informational videos, which emphasize clarity but may fall short in encouraging student interaction.

The results imply that while students value video content for individual engagement and instructor-student connectedness, additional strategies may be necessary to foster peer-to-peer connections and enhance social presence in online settings. These could include peer video introductions, collaborative assignments, or discussion board prompts tied directly to video content.

This study informs future teaching by emphasizing the value of intentional, humanizing instructor presence in asynchronous modalities. It also suggests that well-designed videos that balance information with warmth and personality can positively impact student experience.

An interesting pattern in the data is the contrast between students’ strong agreement that the videos helped them feel “connected to the instructor” (Q2) and their more moderate agreement that the videos helped them “engage with the instruc-

tor” (Q5). This distinction suggests that while the videos were effective in conveying instructor presence, warmth, and approachability, they did not function as interactive tools for two-way communication. Students may feel emotionally connected to the instructor without perceiving opportunities for real-time or reciprocal engagement, reinforcing that informational videos primarily strengthen instructor-to-student connection rather than interactive exchange.

Practical implications emerge from these findings. Instructors teaching asynchronous courses may benefit from incorporating short weekly videos to improve logistical clarity, reduce student uncertainty, and enhance instructor presence. However, because informational videos alone did not significantly enhance perceptions of community or peer interaction, they should be paired with additional community-building strategies. For instance including, structured discussion activities, opportunities for student video responses, or collaborative assignments, to strengthen social presence and overall engagement.

4.7. Limitations

Limitations include a single-institution sample, reliance on self-reported data, and focus on business administration courses. Broader, mixed-method research could deepen understanding of how video-based engagement strategies impact learning outcomes across disciplines.

5. Future Research

Future research could explore how different types of video content (e.g., informational, motivational, feedback-based, or discussion-driven) influence distinct aspects of engagement such as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. A second study might incorporate video elements that encourage peer interaction, such as student responses to video prompts or collaborative video projects.

Additionally, applying this research to other disciplines outside of business could assess whether video engagement translates across content types. Research could also examine the effect of video length, format (talking head vs. screen recording), or accessibility features (closed captions, transcripts) on engagement and learning outcomes.

6. Reflection of Study

This study reaffirmed the importance of instructor presence in online learning and highlighted how even small changes, like weekly videos, can substantially shift student perceptions. One concrete action for the next academic year will be to embed brief, personalized weekly videos in all asynchronous courses, focusing not only on logistical updates but also on encouragement, check-ins, and relevance to real-world applications.

Key takeaways include the following: Instructor visibility matters. Students feel more connected when they see and hear from their instructor regularly. Videos help reduce ambiguity and increase structure, which supports self-regulated

learning. Community-building, beyond instructor to student relationship building, remains a challenge in asynchronous formats and deserves targeted strategies beyond instructor-created content.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Abbreviations

SoTL Scholarship of Teaching and Learning