

Five Reasons to Move to Zoom for Your Online Classes

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Like many of you, I started off using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra for my synchronous online class sessions because it was integrated nicely into Learn@Seneca and had the features I needed. Over time, I became quite comfortable and familiar with using the tool. With the recent notice that Seneca will not be renewing Blackboard Collaborate Ultra this fall, there is a reason to investigate other web-conferencing tools. Zoom is one of these.

Why move to Zoom? Let's look at five reasons to move to Zoom for your online classes.

The reasons:

1. **Automatic Closed Captioning:** Super cool! If you tell Zoom to save your recordings to the cloud, and enable the "Closed Captioning" options in your advanced Zoom settings (Figure 1), your recordings (when played back) will have the "CC" button available for users to click on to view (note: it may take a day or so to process). And, during live meetings, participants will be able to turn on (or off) live transcription via the "Live Transcript" button in the panel (Figure 2). Currently in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, to get automatic closed captioning, you need to download your recordings and then upload them to a streaming service like Microsoft Stream, and to get live transcription, you must assign someone to be a live transcriber.

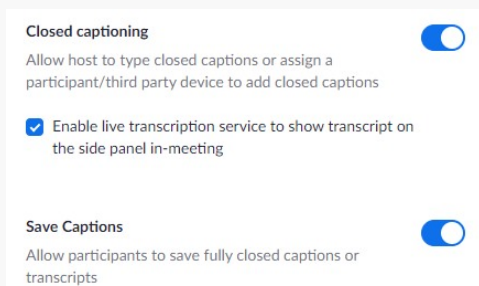


Figure 1. Zoom Advanced Closed Captioning Settings

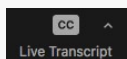


Figure 2. Zoom Live Transcript Button

2. **Set up Breakout Rooms and Polls in Advance:** Awesome! In your Zoom Web interface/portal, you can **pre-assign participants to breakout rooms** when you schedule a meeting (Figure 3), and once a meeting is scheduled, you can **pre-load poll questions** (Figure 4). Currently in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, you can only set up your breakout rooms and polls during the meeting.

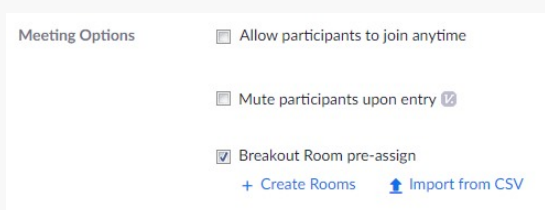


Figure 3. Zoom Meeting Option to Enable Pre-Assigning of Breakout Rooms

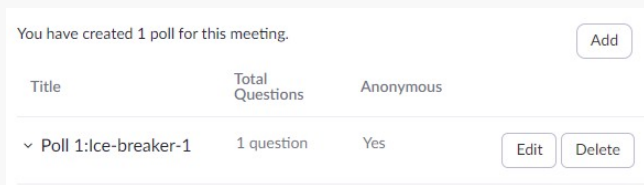


Figure 4. Zoom Poll Pre-Loading Option

3. **Show Videos Live in Session:** Yes! Many of us like to have students follow-along as we show (and control) video content in real time. This is easy to do in Zoom. All you need to do is share your screen, select the video to show, select the “share sound” option (Figure 5), and then share away.



Figure 5: Zoom Options for Sharing Video with Sound

4. **Gallery View:** So Nice! There are many times when we want to have everyone able to see each other in our sessions. In Zoom, you can display up to 49 participants in a grid format when selecting “Gallery View.” Of course, only participants with their cameras turned on will be displayed.

5. **Detach the Chat:** Handy! Has this happened to you – your chat panel disappears when sharing your screen, then someone asks a question in the chat, so you have to go back to check (or you miss it altogether)? In Zoom, you can detach (pop out) your chat panel to make it available while sharing your screen (Figure 6).

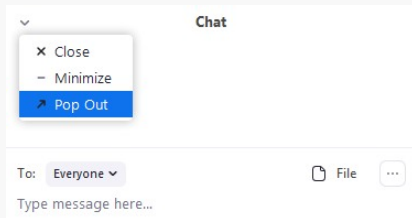


Figure 6. Zoom Chat Panel Pop Out Option

There are, of course, other reasons to switch to Zoom, like the fact that it, too, is integrated into Learn@Seneca. Ultimately, the decision to move to Zoom comes down to your needs and preferences, and those of your students. Before you decide, though, why not give Zoom a try.

For more on Zoom:

- Check out the Information page from ITS.
- Check out the [Exploring Zoom for Synchronous Classes](#) article in the December 2020 issue of the Academic Newsletter.
- Watch the Teaching & Learning Centre's [Using Zoom for Online Classes webinar \(March 2021\)](#) recording.
- Sign up for a Zoom webinar in [MyPD](#).

View the [March 2021 issue of the Academic Newsletter](#).

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