How to Use Your iPhone as a Document Camera in Zoom

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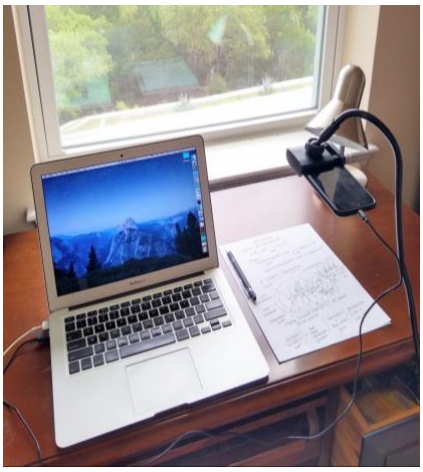
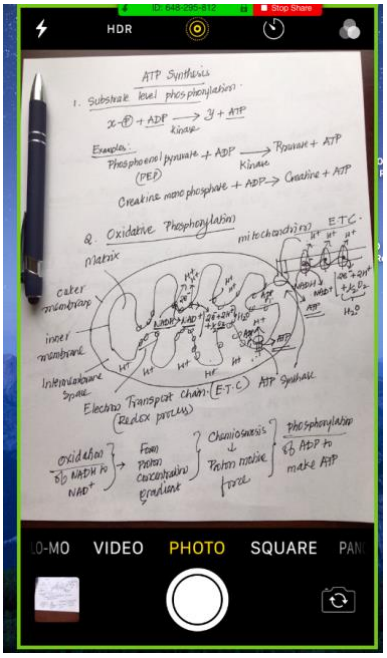
Many professors are used to writing things and drawing on a chalkboard or whiteboard in the classroom to explain difficult concepts to their students. Transitioning to teaching online makes this more difficult as the whiteboard built-in Zoom is not easy to use with the mouse pad or a tablet unless you have a nice tablet that you are comfortable with. There is an option in Zoom to allow iPhones to be connected as a document camera either wireless or wired to the computer. The iPhone has a high-quality camera that projects well on the computer and visible to students on their screen.



This Figure shows how the iPhone Document Camera set up looks like. Connect the iPhone (using the power cable with USB) and avoid using Air Serve or Air Play option as it will deplete the battery. Select settings about the display and brightness, and keep the iPhone settings display to "never" turn off. The camera should be set up with a stand ($9.99 on Amazon) and positioned where it is easy for you to write. Turn on the camera but do not reverse the camera as it will show a mirror image. Also, having the screen facing up will allow access to the iPhone display while it is set up.

Then select the 'Share iPhone/ iPad via Cable". Once again, do not use a wireless connection to the computer as it will drain the phone battery fast. It will ask you to trust the computer and say yes. Once you start the iPhone connected to your laptop, the iTunes and Photos may show up on your desktop but the students will not see those. Quit them and then you are ready to start using the iPhone as a doc cam. Also, you may want to turn off any notifications you may get or use an old iPhone that is not connected anywhere.



The screen showed on right is how it appears to the students. This image shows a sample notes of my teaching on the first online synchronous class. The students appreciate the direct way of explaining this on a document camera than simply talking about it. In addition to the explanation, you can also share an object such as a fossil that you want to show to the students.