



Teaching Matters and Assessment Center (TMAC)

Dr. William FitzGerald, Director | Brynn Kairis, Graduate Assistant

Director's Note



I use my space in this newsletter to promote various events sponsored by TMAC in the next month. These events include tomorrow's (February 16) forum on "Handling Challenging Classroom Situations" designed for TAs and early-career faculty. This is always a productive and supportive discussion. (For details of this and other events, see calendar below.)

Next week, on both February 22 and 23, TMAC offers a "refresher" course on for chairs, program directors, and others involved in annual assessment of degree-granting programs. For more on assessment, please see our [website](#).

In the week of March 6-10, TMAC hosts two events, beginning on March 6 with "Alternative Facts?: A Forum on Speech and Politics in a Post-Truth Era" (3:00-4:30, 401 Penn). Speakers Jim Brown (Digital Studies, English), Jean-Louis Hippolyte (World Languages and Cultures), Tim Knievel (Political Science), Katie Anderson (Robeson Library), and others will lead a conversation for students and faculty on teaching, learning, and living at a time when standards of evidence and reasoning are under assault. Please encourage your students to attend.

Later that week, on March 8, TMAC hosts a second workshop for TAs and early-career faculty on "Teacher-Student Relations: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly."

Let's Talk Teaching

Much has been written about how and why students choose their college majors. In "[Finding Myself through My College Major](#)," Joshua Kam draws attention to aspects of identity and purpose inherent in choosing a field of study.

Colleges and universities increasingly use predictive analytics to identify foundational courses critical to students' success (including the likelihood of graduation). This *NYT* [report](#) profiles recent studies undertaken by Georgia State University, the University of Arizona, and others.



In addition to considering how recent immigration controversies impact international students, colleges and universities are now predicting how [new policies might lead to increased costs](#) for students-at-large.

On Feb. 1st, [protests erupted at UC Berkeley](#) in response to a planned event featuring controversial right-wing commentator Milo Yiannopoulos. Both the actions of protesters and the response from President Trump sparked discussions regarding [free speech in the university](#).

What do *you* think? Let us know at teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu



Classroom Management

'Tis the season for unpredictable winter weather! The Innovative Instructor Blog presents helpful [advice for keeping your class on track](#) when Mother Nature has other plans.

Do you have questions or concerns about maintaining control in the classroom? You're not alone! *Inside Higher Ed* invites experts to [discuss strategies for establishing \(or regaining\) authority](#).

Approaches to classroom management can vary widely across instructors. This [report](#) from *College Quarterly* presents effective strategies for teachers with different classroom personas.

This article explores methods for [enhancing student attendance](#) using classroom management techniques.

Would you like to learn more? Join us at our upcoming TMAC workshops (details below)!

Promoting Engaged Learning

Researchers Paulson and Faust at Cal State LA define and discuss “[active learning](#)”, and present strategies for getting students involved in the classroom!

In this [blog post](#), Alan Harlam explores how a focus on engaged learning can extend skills beyond the classroom to lead to success in students' future careers.

The AAC&U presents [multiple perspectives on engaged learning](#), as well as various strategies for implementation.

Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning presents [tips and tools](#) for active student engagement.





Digital Teaching Fellow Spotlight

Ruth Anne Robbins, a Distinguished Clinical Professor of Law at Rutgers Law School, uses VoiceThread to assess student learning in new ways. As part of her Digital Teaching Fellowship, Ruth Anne incorporated VoiceThread in her first year Legal Analysis, Writing & Research Class. Students were prompted to analyze a particular case and post audio comments in the document explaining their thought processes and understanding of the court’s reasoning and conclusions. Ruth Anne reports that by listening to students talk through their analyses, she was able to better-assess their progress toward achieving comprehension of threshold concepts. She then tailored her follow-up teaching to address gaps in understanding.

Want to get involved? Click [here](#) for more information on the Digital Teaching Fellows Program.

Teaching in a Post-Truth Era

Leon Botstein discusses the [university’s role](#) in an era of “alternative facts”, arguing that teachers and administrators should deny attempts to invalidate scientific reasoning and sound evidence.

WriteLab offers a [“A Teacher’s \(Brief\) Survival Guide to ‘Alternative Facts’”](#), including tips and strategies for discussing related topics with students.

Andrew Selepak presents a [“Teaching Aid for Educators on ‘Fake News’ and Alternative Facts”](#).

Interested in this topic and want to learn more? Consider joining us for a forum on teaching, learning, and living in a post-truth era See the calendar below for details!



Professional Development Opportunity

Evergreen State College is accepting applications for a three day Summer Institute titled “Creating Equitable Learning Opportunities: Exploring the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) with an Equity Mindset”.

For additional information and submission guidelines, please view the application [here](#). Application review will begin March 1st.

Upcoming Events

“Handling Challenging Classroom Situations”

Thursday, February 16th – free period – Faculty Lounge, Armitage

Picture this: A student is 20 minutes late to class. He sits down next to two people who haven't stopped talking since you've begun your lecture. The student next to them is on her phone. No one is answering your questions because they've all decided that today, they're too tired to care. They all expect As. They will all email you about this later. What is the right way to respond? How can you make sure that your classroom stays on track, even when there are people disturbing the flow of your lesson? Please join us for this workshop for tools and tips to help you with these issues, especially if you've ever found yourself guessing whether or not you are, in fact, the leader of your classroom (and don't worry—you are). *Pizza will be served.*

“Refresher Course on Assessment”

Tuesday, February 22nd and Wednesday, February 23rd – free period – Armitage 109

Chairs, program directors, and others involved in annual assessment of degree-granting programs are invited to join us for this refresher course. We'll review strategies for developing and implementing assessment plans, as well as drafting and submitting reports.

“Alternative Facts?: A Forum on Speech and Politics in a Post-Truth Era”

Monday, March 6th – 3:00 – 4:30pm – 401 Penn

Speakers Jim Brown (Digital Studies, English), Jean-Louis Hippolyte (World Languages and Cultures), Tim Knieval (Political Science), Katie Anderson (Robeson Library), and others will lead a conversation for students and faculty on teaching, learning, and living at a time when standards of evidence and reasoning are under assault.

“Student/Teacher Relations: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly”

Wednesday, March 8th – free period – Faculty Lounge, Armitage

Where does the line fall between student and teacher relationships? You can sense when it's been crossed—an inappropriate comment, a barrage of casual emails, a too-friendly rapport, but how do you deal with it without making yourself or the student uncomfortable? Perhaps you're still a student yourself. Do you think that affects how your own students interact with you? Please join us for this workshop on the right ways to deal with the distressing, sometimes awkward situations that can occur when boundaries get crossed. Horror stories are welcome. *Pizza will be served.*

Visit us at tmac.camden.rutgers.edu. Send us your questions, links, and comments at teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu



