



## ***Teaching Matters Monthly***

Dr. William FitzGerald, Director | Erin Miller, Graduate Assistant



### **Director's Note**

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I don't know about you, but I am a strong second to the claim that teaching online (remotely, asynchronously, by Zoom, etc.) is more difficult and less satisfying. I recognize how some may find their groove in these digital environments. Indeed, I discover a need to be more organized and intentional in preparing materials and in communicating expectations. In that respect, I think the switch to remote learning is positively abrasive—a good scrub down. But I also appreciate how in the short term it can be disruptive and dispiriting. Many of us spend much of our academic lives working alone or otherwise in our own head space. Meeting our students in person brings balance to our clerical existence.

If you would like to connect with fellow teachers as an additional way to stay human during this pandemic, consider signing up for one of the remaining workshops offered by Teaching Matters (details below). And, of course, read this month's entries on pedagogy and policy. A votre santé!

### **News**

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#### **Black History Month Action**

February is [Black History Month](#) in the United States, a time devoted to honoring the history of African Americans as part of national reparations to a demographic that has historically been abused and enslaved in this country. Black History Month offers the nation a chance to reflect on Black culture, which most often manifests in profiling and praising Black figures in various communities. This February follows a year of racial turmoil in the United States, where we grappled with the proof of how deadly racism is by mourning George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Daniel Prude, Rayshard Brooks, Tony McDade, and Maurice Gordon, among [many other Black folk who lost their lives this past year](#) because of internalized and institutional racism.

Black History Month is a time to reflect, to confront our own internalized racism and to consciously amplify and make room for Black voices. As instructors, we invite you to assess your curriculum with an eye for race. How diverse are your course materials? What Black perspectives can you bring into your courses? What about other scholars of color? Now is the time to demonstrate your commitment to antiracist pedagogy by [engaging Black scholars and scholars of color](#) and [decolonizing your curriculum](#).

### **Even More Remote Teaching Tips**

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, we're offering more advice on teaching online. This new [article](#) from Ksenya Samarskaya for *Wired* provides a quick yet thorough rundown of quality online teaching advice—including things so simple we're wondering "why didn't we think of that?" There are several upsides to teaching online, including bringing in guest speakers who wouldn't normally be accessible in a face-to-face class. Depending on your field, you might invite professionals who have experiences your students could benefit from to sit in on a Zoom class. Another stellar point Samarskaya makes in this article is that online teaching does not have to be fully video based. She points out that course content can be delivered aurally, meaning students can take in the information as they would a podcast, which gives them a chance to move around instead of being stuck in front of a computer screen.

### **The "Biden Bump" and International Students**

According to data from the Common App, the number of applications submitted by international students has increased by almost 10 percent for the upcoming 2021-2022 academic year as compared to the 2019-2020 year. The increase in international applicants has to do with President Biden repealing several acts put in place by Trump that barred or discouraged demographics of international students from enrolling in U.S. universities. The "[Biden bump](#)" of international student applications has the potential to offset the declining numbers of domestic student applications as a result of economic strain caused by the pandemic. Such a shift may upset the ratios of in-state, out-of-state, and international students in universities, but it does make up for lack of funding, with universities being able to charge international students the full price of tuition. The "Biden bump" is [generally considered positive change](#) because it reflects the global prestige of U.S. universities and their efforts to improve global connections; however, we wonder how fair the system is when it relies so heavily on international students for financial gain.

### **Innovative Course Design**

As Steven Mintz describes in his article "[7 Innovative Approaches to Course Design](#)," the shift to remote learning brought course design into stark relief. A course that worked in a face-to-face class doesn't necessarily pack the same punch when delivered remotely,

necessitating a critical reflection on course design. With the tentative hope that courses will have the option to return to face-to-face in the fall, this shift back into the classroom provides another opportunity to evaluate your course design. Take a look at Mintz' seven approaches, which include [backward design](#), a [case study-based approach](#), and a [gamified approach](#). We're particularly interested in exploring how gamified course design can foster collaboration and a sense of community both in remote and face-to-face classes. Which of these alternative course designs appeals to you?

## Spring 2021 Workshops

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Check out the remaining workshops in our Spring 2021 workshop series! For more information and to sign-up, please click [here](#).

Additionally, we're offering the same content in blog form for those instructors who are interested in our topics but unable to attend workshops. You can find these blog posts—and more pedagogy insight—on the Teaching Matters [website](#).

1. **Group Work over Zoom**, *Thursday, March 4th*  
We discuss how to make the most of building communities over Zoom with group work. We'll also brainstorm group activities conducive to a remote learning environment.
2. **Reading my SIRS data (or other feedback)**, *Wednesday, March 10th*  
In this workshop, we'll discuss how to interpret and incorporate student feedback to improve your course.
3. **Here's What I Want: Designing Effective Rubrics**, *Thursday, March 25th*  
Bring your assignment sheets and we'll build task-specific rubrics based on them! These rubrics will reflect the demonstrated learning goals of the course and of the specific assignment.
4. **Assessment and Grading in Remote Teaching**, *Wednesday, March 31st*  
We'll talk about grading practices, assessment practices, and when to use one over the other.

For additional resources, visit [tmac.camden.rutgers.edu](http://tmac.camden.rutgers.edu), or write us at [teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu](mailto:teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu)

