



## ***Teaching Matters Monthly***

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



### **Director's Note**

---

Like most everyone, I have reacted with shock and sadness over the culmination (but hardly the conclusion) of a period in which controversy over the 2020 election resulted in mayhem and death at the United States Capitol. In coming weeks, I (with colleagues in the department of English and Communication) will be focused on how to respond to this moment in the ways we teach composition and literacy in general. How do we prepare students to read and write and reason when we cannot agree on how we recognize what is true? But I think it is our collective charge, up and down and across the curriculum, to address the pressing challenge: to equip our students with the habits of mind and heart required for ethical deliberation with others and evidence-based reasoning. This semester, I will use this newsletter to share resources with you on how we can productively meet this moment.

### **News**

---

#### **Teaching after the Capitol Riot**

Although our semester started several weeks after the Capitol Riot, there is no doubt that this event will impact [our teaching](#) this semester and semesters to come. There are some classes, such as political science or history classes, where [conversations](#) about the Capitol Riot are directly related to the curriculum. Other classes seemingly have less to do with this event, but we encourage you to consider how any political events, especially an event as divisive and terrifying as the Capitol Riot, impact your students and your [respective fields](#).

In the same way we cannot ignore the effects of COVID-19 on our and our students' mental health, we cannot ignore the effects of the Capitol Riot as it stands as an example of white privilege, blatant racism, and the dangers of misinformation in the United States. White privilege and misinformation affect all of us. Is there room in your course schedule to talk to your students about the Capitol Riot? What about white privilege and

misinformation in your field? We all stand to benefit from engaging in civic discourse and from fostering politically intelligent and respectful communities.

## **HBCUs and Employers**

Big-name institutions like [Apple](#) and [the CIA](#) are announcing plans to diversify their new hires and increase community engagement by working with HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities). Two companies that represent the echelon of innovation and intelligence are seemingly acknowledging the lack of diversity in their workforces and creating new recruitment efforts focused on diversity. Plans to increase diversity among these top employers are led by Apple's vice president of Environment, Policy, and Social Initiatives' Lisa Jackson and the CIA's Gina Haspel. These employers are sometimes referred to as "boys' clubs" but this shift towards racial inclusivity also acknowledges that these "boys' clubs" are really "(white) boys' clubs."

Apple's and the CIA's initiatives come in contrast to recent [controversies at Google](#), where the company has reduced their diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. April Curley, a former diversity recruiter at Google, hired more than 300 HBCU alumni into tech jobs where previously there were none in the almost six years that she worked there. She also claims that she was discriminated against during her time at Google and fired unfairly. With many employers considering their relationships with Black and brown employees and HBCUs, we wonder how Rutgers-Camden prepares its students for the workforce. For more information about job placement after Rutgers, checkout the [Career Center](#).

## **Advising Students' on Writing Emails**

The beginning of the semester is the perfect time to talk with your students about how to email you. Email is arguably more important than ever, as it is the primary means of communicating with students during remote teaching. We invite you to take advantage of these first weeks of the semester by discussing with them email best-practices. What information would you like to see in a subject line? Do you have a preferred title? Are students emailing you questions that can be answered in the syllabus? These are but a few topics you can discuss with students regarding email etiquette to improve online communication this semester. For more information, we recommend checking out [this essay](#) by Paul T. Corrigan and Cameron Hunt McNabb. We also found [this checklist](#) from Wellesley helpful. Share these resources with your students!

## **Social Studying with CircleIn**

Rutgers-Camden has launched CircleIn, [a new learning tool](#) that helps students to track their studying online and study collaboratively with their peers. Students can create their own study aids or share study aids with one another. They can make use of a group chat designed specifically for facilitating social studying with one another. In addition to these

study aid features, what makes CircleIn perhaps more attractive to students is the financial incentives. Depending on how much students engage with CircleIn, they qualify for various gift cards to places like Starbucks, Target, Amazon, and more. This makes asking questions and engaging with the course material all the more worthwhile to students.

[CircleIn](#) is embedded into Canvas. You can enable this feature by making it visible to students. Don't forget to encourage students to make use of this new tool! A bonus—this is a student-led resource. Once you set it up, there's nothing more you have to do!

## **Spring 2021 Workshops**

---

Beginning in February, we're offering a new lineup of workshops related to remote teaching, writing across the curriculum, assessment, and more! Check out the list below. For more information and to sign-up, please click [here](#).

1. **Facilitating Discussion over Zoom, Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup>**  
Join us for a workshop on getting students to start talking. We'll explore multi-modal methods of facilitating discussion over Zoom as well as remote classroom etiquette.
2. **Low-Stakes Writing, Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>**  
We'll talk about incorporating low-stakes writing assignments into your courses, including types of writing genres relevant to your field. We'll also explore how to measure low-stakes writing and implement low-stakes writing activities into your course schedule.
3. **Giving Writing Feedback (when you're not a writing teacher), Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup>**  
Join us for a discussion of how to give meaningful writing feedback without a writing background. We'll discuss the foundations of good writing (aka higher-order concerns) such as clarity and organization, rather than the nit-picky and often difficult to explain rules of grammar (aka lower-order concerns).
4. **Conferencing with Students (online or otherwise), Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>**  
We review strategies to make a 10-minute conference with students a high-impact practice at various stages in paper writing or projects. Time spent "grading" might be better spent in these formative interactions.
5. **Group Work over Zoom, Thursday, March 4<sup>th</sup>**  
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.
6. **Reading my SIRS data (or other feedback), Wednesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>**

In this workshop, we'll discuss how to interpret and incorporate student feedback to improve your course.

7. **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.
8. **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)

