



Teaching Matters Monthly

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



Director's Note

Are we there yet? Alas, any return to business as usual is a long way off as we look toward Spring and a continuation of remote instruction. What have we learned in the process?

Speaking for myself, I have learned how hard it is to translate long-standing practices of in-person teaching to new environments; how much is lost in translation; how challenging it can be to bridge divides in our virtual connections. Indeed, I have renewed awe for our students in their determination to succeed despite these difficult conditions. I've learned that I must continually strive for habits of empathy and understanding even as we hold ourselves and our students to high standards. And I have learned that I must be open to new ways of teaching, including new approaches to the design and delivery of instruction as well as to grading.

This month, we offer information on tools to improve remote teaching, on near-term challenges facing international students, on the question of camera on/off, on the benefits of group work in remote learning. Finally, consider attending our last Zoom meet-up this semester to share what we've learned this semester and plans for Spring. Abundant blessings to you and yours!

News

Google Tech and Add-ons

We've rounded up a few more tech resources to use in your remote teaching! This month, we're highlighting Google tech and its add-ons. Google offers a range of free teacher-friendly resources that are easy to access and navigate. Perhaps the most helpful to Rutgers-Camden instructors is [Google Slides](#), a customizable presentation platform with lots of helpful add-ons available. To make your lectures more interactive, check out [Nearpod](#), [HyperDoc](#), and [Pear Deck](#). These



add-ons allow you to embed essay, multiple choice, and true/false questions into your presentation to check student engagement. They also allow you to choose whether the presentation is self-directed by the student (ideal for asynchronous classes) or instructor-led (suitable for synchronous classes). If you're already using presentations in your remote instruction, why not try out these upgrades?



Another useful Google tool that is especially helpful during remote teaching is [Google Jamboard](#), a free interactive online whiteboard where classes can collaborate. This platform is suited for classes that require visual collaboration synchronously; for classes that don't need to collaborate synchronously, you might try out a shared [Google Doc](#). Check out this [tutorial](#) on new features added to Google Docs this past year.



The Future of International Students in the United States

From the short-lived [July 6th ICE directive](#), which attempted to force international students to attend face-to-face classes or depart the country, to the [reinstating of the March 9th ICE directive](#), which allows currently enrolled international students to continue their studies as they did when the rest of US higher education moved online in the Spring, the category of the international student is being publicly contested by the federal government and [our universities](#). Most recently, ICE put forth a notice-and-comments period for a [revision to student visa policy](#). The new rule would replace the “duration of stay” time period with conditional 2- or 4-year limits and require students seek an extension of stay if they need additional time to complete their degree or want to engage in optional practical training, among other proposed restrictions. This has concerning implications for the future of international students studying in the US. We will be watching the development of this proposed rule [over the next few months](#).

Cameras On or Off in Zoom Classes?

Most face-to-face instructors are used to gauging the effectiveness of their instruction by reading students' faces. The affordance of f2f classes is that instructors can read body language and adjust their teaching based on this nonverbal feedback in real time. This exchange is mitigated by the use of platforms like Zoom and WebEx, where students are increasingly leaving their cameras off during synchronous classes. Try as we might to [encourage students to turn their cameras on](#), many of them are not obliged—and for [good reason](#). Asking students to model good student behavior over Zoom—a platform that requires



more attention, makes participants vulnerable to observation by their peers, and depends on reliable internet service and a quiet place to attend class—demands a lot of students on top of the energy they put into learning. Yet there are still some instructors who ask, [“Should Showing Faces Be Mandatory?”](#) Where do you stand on the cameras on/cameras off issue? Do you have recommendations to encourage student involvement and decrease video pressure? Let us know!

Group Work Goes Remote

As isolating as remote learning can be, group work can help establish community, increase comprehension, and teach students the importance of collaboration. Group work may be especially helpful for incoming freshman who haven't experienced the traditional college classroom environment. When thinking about implementing group work in remote classes, here are some key considerations:

- **Make sure students have enough time to do group work together.** Now more than ever students have to balance work, home responsibilities, and school, so giving them enough time to do the additional collaboration that group work requires is a must.
- **Consider the benefits of assigning groups or letting them form organically.** Additionally, if you plan on assigning group work multiple times in a semester, consider the benefits of keeping students in the same groups or regrouping.
- **Tell students which platforms they can collaborate on.** Some platforms, like Google Docs, keep a history of who has worked on the document and what changes they've made. Being intentional about which platforms students can use makes it easier to assess collaboration.

For more information about these suggestions and remote group work in general, check out Mark Lieberman's article [“Online Students Don't Have to Work Solo”](#) and Alicia Russell's [remote group work guide](#) for Teaching@Tufts.

Pedagogy in a Pandemic: Meetups and Workshops

The last workshop in our “Pedagogy in a Pandemic” series looks to the spring semester. Now that we have a full semester of remote teaching under our belts, and it is clear that we won't be returning to face-to-face classes for a while, we invite you to join us for this proactive workshop. We will reflect on the practices we developed over this semester and plan for our spring classes with this experience in mind. What's worked well? What went poorly? Let's talk about it.

To sign-up for this workshop and to view presentations from previous workshops in this series, please click [here](#).

Meetup/Workshop (more info available here)	Date Thursdays, free period, 12:30-1:30 (Please register here)
Meetup – preparing for Spring	December 3, 2020

Antiracist Pedagogy Working Group

In addition to our workshop series, we invite interested instructors to join our antiracist pedagogy working group. This group will explore the praxis of antiracism—where theory meets practice, and how we can implement antiracist pedagogy in our teaching. If you're interested, please complete this [form](#).

For additional resources, visit tmac.camden.rutgers.edu, or write us at teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu

