Teaching Matters Monthly
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Director's Note

Now that we're in it for the long haul—the "it" being teaching in digital spaces, "live" and "async"—how do we reckon with our past and future selves as educators? Must we rethink who we are and what our classes are "for"? Or how we help students do more than run a gauntlet of course requirements and assessments?

I have been thinking about who I will be on the other side of the pandemic and what lessons this year and next offer in imagining another decade of teaching. At 59 years old, the pandemic has invited me to be a bit unset in my ways. It's also prompted me to think more intently about the need to stay true to a mission and an ethos rooted in a tradition of liberal arts—free inquiry, skill in reasoning and expression, and civic responsibility. As new modes of instruction and new ways of monetizing education become the norm, it's vital to return to first principles: why are we here?

This month's offerings in the Teaching Matters newsletter and in announced gatherings (below) welcome you to converse with yourself and dialogue with your colleagues on these matters. Stay safe! But stay unsettled.

News

The Reaches of Zoom and a Pedagogy of Protest

A recently published article in *The New York Times* likens the reaches of Zoom etiquette practices to Foucault's discourse on discipline: the platform of Zoom can be manipulated to enforce the same management practices employed in schools that meet in person. This results in the appropriation of the home to a classroom, where all the same rules apply. In addition to invading the privacy of students, such practices instill the idea that everything is business as usual.

Instead of worrying about enforcing classroom management on remote learners, Christopher Emdin argues that we should be focusing more on the background of our students rather than their backgrounds on Zoom. To acknowledge our own and our students' experiences and integrate them into our teaching serves to benefit the instructor and the student, while ignoring them forces the student to *only* be a student when, especially now, so much is being asked of them. This, Emdin says, is a pedagogy of protest, a refusal to accept business as usual.

How can we integrate our ongoing COVID-19 experience in our classes? How can we reassess classroom management to suit remote environments? To discuss this and more, join our workshop series.

The Socioeconomic Divide Among Students

COVID-19 affects all aspects of higher education, but one thing that hasn't changed, is the deepening divide between financially secure and financially insecure students. The *New York Times* recently published an article about the increasing strain COVID-19 is putting on students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Not only do these students have to worry about having access to their remote classes, they also have to deal with food and housing insecurity.

The common narrative for undergraduate students engaged in remote learning is that they've moved back in with their parents and attend their Zoom classes from their childhood bedrooms. This is not the case for 3 in 5 students surveyed at two- and four-year institutions across the United States, who indicated they were experiencing basic needs insecurity. How can we expect students to have the necessary technology to complete their classes when they are unable to secure housing and food? How can we assist students in meeting their basic needs so that they have the opportunity to learn in our classes? Share information about the food pantry, the wellness center, and local shelters. Additionally, direct students in need of technology assistance to this webpage and to contact the Division of Student Affairs.

Sustaining Antiracism

There is still much to change in the months after the unjust murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, among others, which rallied the country around the dire need for antiracism. We have tons of resources available to inspire antiracism, but unfortunately, we might not have the best follow through when it comes to actually using them. This article from The Vulture points out that, despite our best efforts to organize and share resources about antiracism through book lists and recommendations, these resources need to be accompanied with an action plan. We cannot let these reading lists be static,

we must engage with them, and we must use their contents to inform how we engage with others and within unjust systems. By reading, analyzing, and enacting the values instilled in antiracist resources, we generate kinesis, a momentum that effects all of our actions. Pirette McKamey writes about her experience learning and practicing black pedagogy, which she points out is a pedagogy that works *for all students*.

To put this momentum into action, we invite you to participate in our antiracist pedagogy working group (ARPWG). In this working group, we will read and discuss antiracist pedagogical practices and how we can incorporate them into our teaching. Join us by filling out this contact form, here.

Assessment and Grading: Getting Back to Our Learning Goal Roots

Now that it's mid-semester, our assessment and grading responsibilities are in full swing. As we discovered in the Spring semester, though, our tried-and-true methods of assessment and grading may not have been as "tried" as we imagined. This time around, it's important to reconsider your assessment and grading practices in light of the ongoing context of COVID-19. This means going back to the roots of our courses: learning goals. How might another evaluation of our learning goals in light of COVID-19 reorient our assessment and grading practices? Doug Lederman's article for Inside Higher Ed speaks to the top-down grading policies being implemented at some universities as well as the "terrain on the ground"— what students are experiencing and how adjusted grading practices will impact their education. To inspire a "re-vision" of your assessment and grading practices, we recommend Rosalie Metro's piece on humane assessment, which outlines her rigorous and compassionate method of assessment and its correlative grading policy. Her methods, she argues, easily transitioned to remote teaching because they were not points-oriented but rather learning goals-oriented.

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. Complete this interest form and we'll schedule a first meeting in October.

Pedagogy in a Pandemic: Meetups and Workshops

Meetup/Workshop (more info available here)	Date Thursdays, free period, 12:30-1:30 (Please register here)

Improving Discussion over Zoom	October 22, 2020
Meetup – what's on your mind?	October 29, 2020
Writing across the Curriculum: Effective Strategies for Low-Stakes and Informal Writing	November 5, 2020
Meetup – what's on your mind?	November 12, 2020
Writing across the Curriculum: Effective Strategies for Formal Writing (Critical/Analytical Papers)	November 19, 2020
Meetup – preparing for Spring	December 3, 2020

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