Teaching Matters Monthly (September-ish 2020)
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Director's Note

Welcome back to a semester like no other (if a bit like the end of last semester)! Like many of you, I struggle to find my bearings in carrying over in-person teaching to digital environments, whether synchronous or asynchronous. This year, Teaching Matters cannot but address these challenges in a spirit of collegiality and a culture of sharing—what's working, what's not, what we're learning, what we're feeling. There's no shortage of advice (and we'll do our part to bring it), but we are also interested in providing spaces for our stories and for support.

This semester, Teaching Matters hosts an 8-week series on Pedagogy in a Pandemic--a mix of open-ended Meetups (drop in to share how things are going, highs and lows) and themed events on assignment design, writing across the curriculum (low-stakes and formal papers), and effective discussion on Zoom. You can register or simply appear, and we'll have resources to share. We begin on October 8 and then every Thursday (free period, 12:30-1:30) through December 3.

Finally, we invite your interest in an **antiracist pedagogy working group** to meet bi-weekly (time tba) to read, discuss, implement, and recommend teaching practices that address the often subtle racism that informs our teaching from course designs to grading practices. To take part in this conversation, see the link below.

## News

Canvas and Zoom Learning Curves

As we navigate teaching remotely again this fall, we understand you may feel like you're at the bottom of the mountain that is online learning. With the university-wide switch to Canvas and our reliance on video applications such as Zoom or WebEx to meet with students, it's easy to feel overwhelmed when employing these tools. Here are some tips

to help you scale this mountain successfully, if not with ease, then with increased confidence. Check out these links for tips on making the most of new teaching tools:

- [How to check if your Canvas course is accessible](#)
- [How to create modules in Canvas](#)
- [How to use the whiteboard feature on Zoom](#)
- [How to use breakout rooms in Zoom](#)
- [How to share multiple screens in Zoom](#)
- [How to share files in Zoom](#)

Zoom Fatigue and Venting

If teaching remotely has exhausted you more so than prior years of teaching, know that you're not alone. Many instructors are struggling to adapt to a video conference method of instruction. The Harvard Business Review unpacks why that is, [here](#). If you're feeling the fatigue and you have specific concerns about teaching remotely, we invite you to check out our [resource guide](#) and send in your concerns to [TMAC](#) to see if we can help. In the meantime, take solace in the zoom-generated foibles of fellow instructors compiled on [BoredTeachers.com](#).
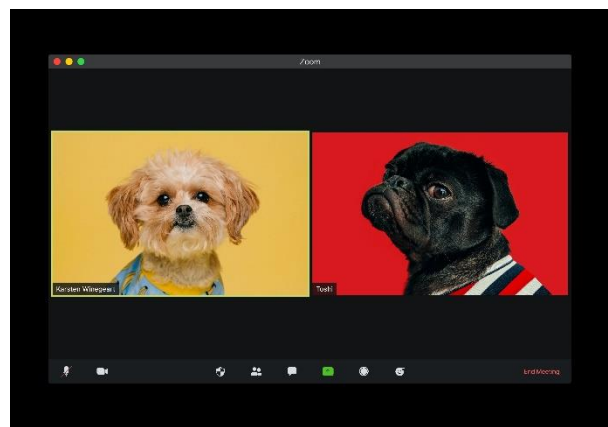
Princeton University and Department of Education at Odds over Racism

The US Department of Education is [investigating Princeton University](#) after [its president acknowledged](#) that racism is embedded in its institution. The [DOE claims](#) that admitting to racism, whether intentional, unintentional, or systemic, violates a premise upon which they disperse funding. On the surface, this seems great – the DOE won't give money to schools that are racist. But, you say, all schools are racist. They exist within racist systems and are operated by people who are racist, whether intentionally or not. With many institutions publicly acknowledging their institutional racism and historically racist practices, they could all be investigated by the DOE on these grounds.

This begets the question, what role does institutional administration play in addressing systemic racism within the institution, and how should the administration [fulfill this role](#)? Not only must institutions address their racist practices, but they now must do so

under threat of losing federal funding. This makes us think about the larger implications between racist practices and funding. Is it not true that predominately white institutions (PWIs) receive more funding than institutions with greater BIPOC populations? Is the DOE indirectly (or directly) stating that institutions should continue their practices, or else? How might the DOE respond in a way that promotes anti-racist futures in institutions of education?

Codeswitching in the Classroom

Codeswitching is a linguistic phenomenon practiced by speakers of more than one language or dialect (here referred to as Englishes) who switch between Englishes depending on the context in which they are communicating. Codeswitching is often deemed necessary in a classroom, where Standard Written English (SWE) traditionally reigns. Proponents for codeswitching argue that it is necessary to switch into SWE in order to succeed in higher education. However, we, in solidarity with instructors and scholars who support the right to use one's own English, push back at this notion as is invalidates the Englishes students bring with them to the classroom and asserts that SWE – a dialect most widely used by white, middle, and upper class Americans – should be the norm.

How might we integrate students' unique voices into their learning, and thus validate their place in higher education and their chosen fields? What considerations need to be made to ensure communication is not hindered in the classroom? One might argue that speaking many different Englishes in a classroom will mitigate learning, but we would counter that by pointing out that many students already struggle to communicate in class because they cannot properly use SWE. Letting students use their own language provides a greater chance for authentic learning and promotes heterogeneity within the classroom.

Pedagogy in a Pandemic: Meetups and Workshops

Meetup/Workshop (more info available here)	Date Thursdays, free period, 12:30-1:30 (Please register here)
Meetup – what's on your mind?	October 8, 2020

Assignment Design (adapted for remote learning)	October 15, 2020
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

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 mid-October.

Additional Resources from Instructional Design and Technology

Workshop	Date
Groups in Canvas – This webinar reviews the Groups function in Canvas. It will describe what the Groups functionality is used for and review how to set up student groups.	Tuesday, October 6, 2020, 1:00 - 1:30

Additional resources from IDT can be found here. Check out their webinars on recording lectures, building community online, and everything in-between!