JANUARY 2021

LEARNING LOOP

A Teaching and Learning Lab Newsletter

January 21, 2021

Teaching Today: Beginnings

This issue of *Learning Loop* focuses on beginnings – beginnings of courses, of learning communities, of individual class sessions. It also comes at the beginning of a new calendar year, and a new chapter in U.S. political history.

For concrete ideas about course and class beginnings, see below; for navigating this intense and difficult period more broadly, our guide on Teaching in Times of Strife and Trauma (with updates in the wake of the Capitol riots) may be helpful. As always, the TLL is here to support you; reach out to Bill Wisser or other staff members to request a consultation or other resources.

I. Before the Semester Begins

Building connection and community can start before the first "live" class meeting. Lecturer on Education Aaliyah El-Amin shares one approach from the Fall.

"At the beginning of the remote Fall 2020 semester, I wanted to find a way to replicate the initial connections and sense of familiarity students might have developed *before classes even started* if we had been on campus for the Orientation period. I created an online class booklet [read: a very pretty slide deck] called 'This Is Us.' As part of the prep work for the first class, I asked each student to create a slide telling us something about who they are. I encouraged them to use pictures, gifs, video, or other media. My teaching fellow and I each made a slide first to model the non-academic/random and quirky information we were inviting people to share. Before class met for the first time, we asked students to read through our 'This is Us' booklet and comment on 3-4 students' pages. This started a conversation between students about shared interests in things like Dungeons & Dragons, poetry, and even climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro! One student wrote in the Zoom chat in our first class, 'I feel like I know many of you all already.' I was also able to draw on information from the slide deck in many other ways, for example, to elevate fun-facts about folks in the first few classes or to review before 1:1 meetings in office hours."

Aaliyah El-Amin, Emancipatory Inquiry: Listening, Learning, and Acting for Social Change (EDU S515)

II. First Day of Class

Below are some resources offering advice that may be particularly useful in the early days of the term.

First Day of Class (Cornell University Center for Teaching Innovation)
Offers guidance on key questions:

- How are you going to generate interest for your subject area?
- How are you going to build rapport with students?
- How will you establish ground rules for the course in a helpful and approachable manner?
- How are you going to communicate expectations for the course?
- How will you learn about what students in your class already know, or think they know, about the course subject?

Leveraging Norms for Challenging Conversations (HGSE TLL)
This 11-page toolkit unpacks how to leverage norms for challenging conversations; it includes a discussion of why norms are valuable, categories of norms you might want to consider, processes for setting norms, how to respond to norm violations, and further resources.

Norm-Setting at the Beginning of the Semester (Instructional Moves)
In this Instructional Moves video, Gretchen Brion-Meisels describes how her class norms are framed as aspirations and goals that need to be affirmed and reaffirmed as the course unfolds. She does this because her aim is not to construct norms that "make people happy" but rather to create a classroom culture where students challenge each other so they can authentically grapple with the course content.

Establishing Rapport: Personal Interaction and Learning (IDEA Center, Fleming, 2003)
Describes the importance of building rapport with students. Lists four factors that help an instructor develop rapport with students, as well as strategies for improving teacher performance in these areas.

Community Building Online Activities (OneHE & Equity Unbound)
These open educational resources for online community-building include videos describing the activities as well as descriptions, slides, and additional resources.
Introductory activities include The Story of Your Name, Tour of Where You Are, and Thick Greetings.

III. During the Semester

Lecturer on Education Kaia Stern offers insights to begin each class with intentional practices.

> "We begin every class with music (the genres vary) and then silence. (When classes are in person, screens are not permitted.) In my experience, classrooms are sacred, transformative spaces and rituals can help us to be still and listen (to ourselves and each other). They help us to cultivate radical presence, which is so urgently needed in a culture of disconnect. Intentional practices, like remembering people who have inspired us, naming injustice, quietly writing (not for evaluation but for our own healing), reading aloud together, and being in a circle invite us to call forth and embody justice."
>
> *Kaia Stern, Say Her Name: Gender, Race & Punishment from Tituba to Breonna Taylor (EDU A110H)*

teaching & learning lab | Events and Offerings

FOR FACULTY:

Partnering with Teaching Fellows: A Pedagogical Guide for HGSE Faculty
This new resource features questions to discuss with TFs before the course begins, ideas for mentoring and collaboration, and strategies for success from five HGSE faculty members.

Want a Thought Partner for Reflecting on Your Fall Course Evaluations?
TLL consultants are available for confidential conversations to discuss student feedback, identify useful patterns, and plan for the future. Email Josh Bookin or Allison Pingree to set up a time.

Faculty Brown Bags:

Learning from the VPAL Teaching Innovations Gallery | Thu., Feb. 11th, 12-1pm ET
This session will highlight HGSE-relevant innovations featured in a video repository hosted by the Office of the Vice Provost for Advances in Learning (VPAL) and will engage in live conversation with a few of the featured instructors.
RSVP here
Zoom link | Meeting ID: 918 3438 2702

Learning from Our Students: Takeaways from Multiple Sources of Mid-Way Feedback | Wed., March 10th, 12-1pm ET
We can gain valuable insights into our students' online learning experiences through a range of data sources, both institutional (e.g., mid-year survey, course evaluations) and individual (e.g., mid-course pulse checks, session plus/deltas). In this session we'll explore more fully what pedagogical lessons we are gleaning from student voices at HGSE.
RSVP here

Zoom link | Meeting ID: 992 1072 7222

Learning from This Year: What to Keep Post-Pandemic | Thu., April 29th, 12-1pm ET
This online-only year has demanded pedagogical creativity, flexibility, and resilience. In this session we'll discuss teaching practices and tools that we'd like to continue, even after the pandemic is over.
RSVP here
Zoom link | Meeting ID: 934 1644 0164

<u>Anti-Racist Teaching & Advising (ARTA) Initiative:</u>

Conversations about Race and Racism (CR&R) Faculty Group | The purpose of the CR&R group is to have reflective, honest conversations about racism and its implications for our personal and professional selves. The group operates like a Critical Friends Group, using various forms of the consultancy protocol to explore and learn from dilemmas of practice that occur in our HGSE teaching. All faculty are welcome to join but we ask that you try to commit to coming to our monthly meetings over the course of the semester whenever your schedule allows. If you are interested in being part of this group and are not already on the mailing list, please email Josh Bookin. The first session of CR&R is 1:30 to 3:00 pm ET on Wednesday, 2/17.

Faculty of Color Affinity Spaces | These affinity group gatherings are for faculty of color to build connections and provide space for restoration and fellowship. They are also intended to provide a space for faculty to learn from each other and reflect upon their experiences, instruction and other topics specific to being a person of color at HGSE. The dates and times of the spring semester gatherings have not been scheduled yet, but Candice Bocala or Aaliyah El-Amin will send an announcement about the dates by the end of January.

Developing as Anti-Racist White Educators (DARWE) Learning Community | This learning community is for white-identified faculty who want to learn more about how our whiteness impacts our understanding of race and racism and how we can grow as anti-racist white educators working to dismantle white supremacy culture in ourselves, our teaching practices, and our communities. DARWE begins with a six-session arc of learning that has been designed so that it is accessible to people at different points on the developmental spectrum and readiness to engage in these conversations. This arc of learning will be offered this Spring from 10:30 to Noon ET on Fridays from 1/29 through 3/5. If you are interested in being part of this group and have not yet signed up, please email Josh Bookin.

FOR TEACHING FELLOWS:

New TF Orientation: Thu., Jan. 21, 9-10:30am ET _or_ 4-5:30pm ET
Required for first-time TFs—choose one of the two time options

- Facilitated by Eric Torres, TF Instructional Coach (TLL)
- Topics: TF roles, Case Discussions on Common Challenges, Q&A with Experienced TFs
- **First-time TFs, please RSVP here** (includes an option to note that you cannot attend either of the scheduled times—we'll follow up with you to find a make-up time)
- Zoom link for 9-10:30am ET session
- Zoom link for 4-5:30pm ET session

Strategizing about Grading and Feedback with Nancy Sommers: Fri., Jan. 22, 1-2pm ET
Strongly encouraged for all TFs

- Facilitated by Nancy Sommers (Lecturer on Education) and Eric Torres, (TF Instructional Coach, TLL)
- Topics: Time management, focusing feedback, promoting student learning
- Zoom link for session

Training on Technology Tools for Teaching: Fri., Jan. 22, 9-10am ET _or_ 4-5pm ET
Strongly encouraged for all TFs—choose one of the two time options

- Facilitated by Greg Fuccillo (Information Technology); Felipe Estrada, Allison Pingree (TLL)
- Topics: Canvas, Zoom, Office 365 - strategies and best practices for TFs
- Zoom link for 9-10am ET session
- Zoom link for 4-5pm ET session

Technology Toolkit Updates

This Spring, the TLL and IT are partnering to pilot three new tools to enrich active learning in courses. These are the discussion platforms Harmonize and Slack and the annotation platform Perusall.

- **Harmonize** is a new media-rich discussion platform you can directly access in Canvas as an alternative to the Canvas Discussion tool.
- **Slack**, a popular workplace communication app, provides an informal, instant space for your course community members to interact with each other.
- **Perusall** is a collaborative platform that allows instructors to upload reading material for students (and instructors, if desired) to annotate collaboratively.

For more information about these tools and to learn how to participate in a pilot, please visit our Online Teaching page about Spring Pilots.

On the TLL Blog

Among its many projects and services, the TLL supports students in a practicum (T-127) in which they have opportunities to contribute to TLL project teams. In this blog post, TIE student Nina Tompkin and TF Ragini Lall share takeaways from their own and others' T-127 experiences in Fall 2020.