

Adapting to COVID-19: Learning Design Studio

August 21, 2020

Brenna Clarke Gray – Facilitator

Ian Linkletter – Facilitator

Colin Cheng – Guest Expert

Junsong Zhang – Guest Expert

Parm Gill – Guest Expert

This transcript was exported on Oct 29, 2020 - view latest version [here](#).

Contents

Opening.....	3
Territorial Acknowledgement.....	4
Introduction.....	4
Care-Centred Course Design	4
The Critical First Week.....	6
Why Does Care Matter?.....	8
Q&A.....	9
Conclusion	23

Opening

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Thanks everybody. So Ian and I today, this is our last of our series of workshops, Adapting to COVID-19, and today is our final Learning Design Studio. We've got just a couple of slides, just some framing concepts, answering a few of the questions that came in ahead of time. And then the majority of today will be turned over to questions. Yeah, so I think we'll just jump in and get started.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So today is Adapting to COVID-19: Learning Design Studio. My name is Brenna Clarke Gray, I'm the Coordinator of Educational Technologies at Thompson Rivers University.

Ian Linkletter:

And I'm Ian Linkletter. I'm a Learning Technology Specialist in the Faculty of Education at UBC.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And we have a series of special guests with us today to help answer questions. If our guests could introduce themselves, I'd really appreciate it. Jun, do you want to start?

Junsong:

Sure. Hi, everyone. My name is Junsong. I'm currently an Instructional Designer at the Justice Institute of British Columbia. And I'm very happy to share some of my tips and experiences with you today.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Thank you.

Parm Gill:

I'll go next. My name is Parm Gill, and I'm a Learning Designer at the Faculty of Education at UBC. And I'm very excited about this session and I look forward to everybody's questions.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And Colin?

Colin Cheng:

Hi everyone. My name is Colin Cheng. I work as an Accessibility Specialist at Douglas College and I'm hoping that there will be some interest today on how to provide support for students with disabilities in the spirit of making the environment inclusive for everyone.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Fantastic. Thank you all for being here. And as we move through our conversation today, we may invite our experts to answer particular questions in the area's expertise, but also all three of you should feel free to jump in any time you have anything you want to contribute out.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So our territorial acknowledgement, we gratefully acknowledge and honor the territory and lands on which we're gathered.

Ian Linkletter:

I'm here in Vancouver on the traditional unceded lands of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Musqueam nations.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And I'm here from Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc in Secwépemc'ulucw and by all means, feel free to share the territory you're joining us from in the chat.

Introduction

Ian Linkletter:

And I did want to draw attention to our title slide because we had some resources that we've been building on over the past four sessions. And those are available just right here at bit.ly/bccampuscommunity. And if you do want to tweet about this or use other social media to talk specifically about this series #bccampuscommunity is our hashtag, so feel free.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

For sure.

Ian Linkletter:

Thank you.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Thanks Ian. I completely forget to mention it. I appreciate that. Okay. So as promised, just a few slides just to frame some of our conversation today. And if you've been involved in any of these care-centered workshops up to now, this is all stuff that Ian and I and our guest experts have been talking about all the way along. But I thought today we might take a particular focus on thinking about that first week of classes, since it's coming up fast and furious on everyone. And sort of talk a little bit about why Ian and I are so interested in care-centered design as a position to come to particularly in this moment.

Care-Centred Course Design

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Care-centered course design should really consider the specific needs of learners and of instructors in this specific moment. We've talked a lot about serving students to find out how they're connecting to class, what limitations they may be inspecting to experience, what concerns they might want to draw your attention to. But I also really want you to spend some time in the next couple of weeks as we gear

up for the semester start, thinking about your own workload if you're a classroom instructor or if you're working in student support, thinking about what is headed your way and ways in which you can plan ahead for that.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

We've talked a lot about stripping back your course, pulling out some of the kinds of assignments that maybe they duplicate a check on a learning objective and you could pull one of those out. We've talked about that a lot in terms of just student load and minimizing the load on students. But it also plays into demonstrating care for yourself, your own workload, and managing what is going to be a difficult semester. When many people move to a fully online context, they're really surprised at how much more work it feels like to be sort of constantly in communication, particularly in text-based format. So I just want you to think about that too as you're thinking about caring for your students. Can't care for them if you aren't caring for yourself.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Care-centered course design also centers accessibility. I'm so grateful Colin's here and that we can make this conversation about accessibility part of our larger planning for instructional design. There have been some sessions through BC Campus on things like Universal Design for Learning, which if you missed, I encourage you to check out as well. Some ideas that can help when you're thinking about accessibility, posting your content in multiple formats. So if you post a video, maybe also post the slides as a separate file that students can access more easily if they don't have super-fast internet. Also, that slide deck might be more easily read by a screen reader if you check in with your accessibility center and you post it in a format that works with the tools on your campus. So thinking about multiple ways that students might access your content.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Making sure that you caption your videos. Many of us now in the province have access to Kaltura and the REACH extension for Kaltura that allows for machine captioning. I don't know what the word is, but it lets you capture your videos and it's quite quick and easy compared to what it would be without machine captioning. It's not perfect. It requires you to go back and edit for sure. But I've been having some great conversations with our science faculty who were really quite surprised by the amount of technical jargon that it gets right. So explore that if you haven't yet on your own campus.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And also, consider how students are connected. On that document that Ian shared off the top, we've included a sample for a survey that you might like to give students on the first day that just checks in about what access issues they may be running into, what home life issues they may be running into, and gives you a chance to sort of think about providing your content in ways that all students will be able to access and maximize their use of.

Ian Linkletter:

And if I can just add here too.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Of course.

Ian Linkletter:

One of the things that we have talked about in the previous webinar that, well, every week actually is the importance of providing tools where students can participate asynchronously. I think it's important to go ahead and plan for at least one student who just will not be able to join synchronous sessions. So how do you make them not such a fly on the wall, but really engaged? High immediacy, low bandwidth technologies are important there. We talked about those.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, I mean, I just heard a news story yesterday that Xplornet, which is the only high-speed internet provider to Haida Gwaii is pulling out of the region. So any students who are based in Haida Gwaii and trying to connect to their classes are going to be at a significant disadvantage for a lot of the kinds of rich content that we tend to build for courses. So thinking about ways students who don't, who simply don't have reliable high-speed internet access can still connect to the material and not get left behind is really important. Thanks Ian.

The Critical First Week

Brenna Clarke Gray:

The critical first week, especially in a fully online class. We've been talking all about community and establishing belongingness for students. Really right now the thing I care most about is the very first week of classes and how you're going to get your semester off to a good start. One thing you'll notice as we talk about the critical first week is none of the points we're going to mention deal with content particularly for lots of reasons that we've discussed over the course of this series and some that we'll talk about again in a second. Establishing that community off the top is really a way to ensure that students are in the best position to learn for the rest of the semester. And sometimes it feels like we can't take the time.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

We have coverage, we have content, we have to get to all the material. But if we want students to be able to work with that material and do their best work all semester, they need to feel like they're in a place where their contributions matter. And that's what the first week is about. It's about establishing that sense of care and that community. A lot of the things we're going to talk about are things that you do all the time face to face, but that you just have to be a little bit more intentional about in the online space.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

For example, introduce yourself, introduce yourself with as much of your personality as you're willing to put forward as possible. I'd never ask you to do anything you're not comfortable with, and I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all for this, but whether it's a little video where you tell a couple of bad jokes as well as introduce yourself and your discipline, or an introductory post on the discussion forum where you share a picture of your pet or the view from your desk where you sit when you mark papers, these are elements that humanize instructors for students. You won't have the usual sorts of casual kinds of interactions that do that in the classroom. You need to be more intentional about it in the online space.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Likewise, you want to give space for students to introduce each other and start to build social connections. So whether that's a discussion forum or introductory video, or just some combination of both, allowing students a space within your classroom space where they likewise share pictures of their pets, talk about hockey. I feel like everybody's talking about hockey right now, even though it's August. Feels very strange to me. Those social connections matter to how our students interact with each other, and how things like discussion forums and group work will go all semester long. So offer some space in the first week to do some of that. Anything you devote time to within the classroom signals its importance to your students.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Establish your classroom norms and expectations particularly ... I was going to say particularly for first-year students. But this environment is new for all your students or most of them. So talk about how you expect them to interact with the course material, with each other and with you. And I strongly encourage you to invite collaboration on that. Again, the document that Ian shared off the top has some resources for setting group charters, for setting classroom norms, and for doing it in a way that is collaborative, that will encourage students to have some buy-in to that classroom experience and community.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I strongly encourage you, even if you're using the sort of standard learning environment of your institution to take some time in the first week to orient your students to the way you are using it. A screencast video, even just a document where you talk about what students will find posted where within the space can really help. Everybody uses even a standard learning management system. Everybody uses it differently. With our installation at TRU, there's about five different formats you can choose from, which doesn't sound like a lot. But if you're taking five classes and each one has chosen a different format, you might want some more information about how your instructor is anticipating you moving through the space.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

This is doubly important if you're not using a standard learning management platform at your institution, but you've opted to go with another tool. You'll need to spend some time orienting students to the learning environment and also to the syllabus. That standard first-day where you stand in front of them and just read the syllabus out loud, don't do that. But, by the same token, give students a chance to learn what it is that your expectations are and to ask questions about it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Again, we really encourage you to survey your students about access issues and learning needs on the first day and to normalize talking about available support. So I encourage you to give some classroom real estate, whether in the learning management system, in a discussion forum, in its own topic area, or if you're working in [inaudible 00:12:49] most or in WordPress, devoting some visible space to the kinds of resource your campus has available. So the Wellness Center, the Writing Center, accessibility services. If you wait until you think a student has an issue to bring up the supports that are available, it's sort of already marginalizing that available support, instead of just having it available, open, and part of a larger conversation about success in your course as a whole.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Ian that was a lot of me talking. Do you want to add anything?

Ian Linkletter:

I just want to point out that I've been in the chat, dropping in the relevant links.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, yeah, that's good.

Ian Linkletter:

Team charters, group charter activities, surveying students. So I can't emphasize enough the importance of listening to students, and the survey is just a fantastic way to open that connection where they know that you care about their ... whatever it is that has them a little bit nervous about this, and that you care about adapting to their needs.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. I think it's easy for students to feel like the institution's faceless at the best of times. And now for many students, it literally is going to be faceless. And instructors should not underestimate the extent too which you and a handful of the people and a handful of people and students supports will be the entire university experience for students this fall semester. So think about centering their experiences.

Ian Linkletter:

And just on the topic of orientation. So you mentioned Kaltura, which is a shared service in BC. I hope that most of our post-secondary institutions give access to Kaltura. That's K-A-L-T-U-R-A. So if you do have access to Kaltura, look up a tool called Kaltura Capture, which is a very easy to use screen capturing tool. What I've been suggesting that people do is just a screen capture of their course homepage and clicking through the different menu items. Students do worry that they're missing something in an online environment, especially if it's new to them. So that gives them a sense of relief that this is it, these links that I'm showing you are the ones that you should be checking.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's a fantastic idea because it gives you an opportunity to underscore what is primarily important for you. Every instructor has different things that matter to them, and it gives you a chance to really highlight that for your context, for your students. And I like the idea of doing it in a video like that where students can come back to it over and over again. "I remember that she told us where we go to find the readings, but you know what? It's week three and I actually haven't done any readings yet. I'm going to watch that video again and check to see if I can find it."

Why Does Care Matter?

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Okay. And this is our last slide before we open up to questions and discussion. But, we've done this whole suite. This is now our fifth workshop talking about care and community. So obviously we think it matters. And we have shared some research in previous sessions, but there was a request for some

more context for this still. Research does suggest that instructors who establish what we call an ethic of care and demonstrating care in the classroom help students to achieve learning objectives more effectively.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And this article, which I will grab the link for when I'm not screen-sharing the slides anymore, unless somebody else wants to throw it in the chat, The nebulous essential dimension in effective university teaching: The ethic of care and relational acumen which has like a really big, a lot of words that five years ago I would've been very alienated by, but is a great article because what it does is it walks through two nearly identical curriculum settings, or the curriculum itself is identical but with different teachers, and looks at how learning objectives are achieved in those two settings based on students' perceived experience of being cared for and having community built in the classroom. And there's a very clear correlation between a sense of established community in the classroom and students ability to move through course material effectively.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

This isn't news. Thank you Colin. This isn't news. We know from the Community of Inquiry Model, which is something we shared with you way back in the very first session and it's everywhere, that your presence and your classroom community is two-thirds of the learning experience. Content is only one third. So students' ability to trust in their relationship with you and to trust in their relationship with other people in the classroom is integral to the experience of learning. Not sort of a nice extra, but essential to have. And we're talking about it so much right now. And you may see it everywhere if you follow educational Twitter, for example. Because we know that in the online space we just have to be more intentional about setting up the space to demonstrate that care for students.

Q&A

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And so I think that's probably a good segue to open up to some questions. We keep coming back to this idea that everyone who's attending these sessions, who's seeking out these sessions, who cares about care already has these skills. You know how to do this in the classroom. You know how to show students you care. Only the mode is changing, and that's what we're here to support you with. So if you have any questions, you can feel free to ask them. You can ask them in the chat. You can address them to any of our experts, or to Ian or myself or to the whole crew. And I think I will stop screen sharing so we can talk to each other.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And if any of the experts, as we sort of wait for questions to come in, want to respond to any of what we've talked about today so far, more than welcome.

Parm Gill:

I did just want to make a comment. There is a lot of evidence to show that even using language which is warmer makes a difference as far as student outcomes. For example, when you're teaching face-to-face, you're not going to go into the course and say, "By the end of this course, students are expected to do such and such." You will always refer to them in first person. So things like that really make a difference.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I appreciate you sharing that Parm. I think something that everybody can do right now is a bit of a syllabus tone check. Go through your syllabus and see how you position your language, as Parm says the students shall or do you use personal pronouns. But also, do you set up a really adversarial relationship, particularly reading through your academic integrity section? Or do you invite students into a conversation about their learning? And if you can sort of take a second now to start thinking about how you approach students in terms of tone, I think it's really valuable.

Ian Linkletter:

There's some contributions in the chat. Colin, did you want to speak to the student need for human connectivity during our COVID self-isolation experience?

Colin Cheng:

Well, I know that I've really felt the absence of being able to connect with my peers, to connect with the students that I serve. And it's left this weird feeling. And as we start a new semester, that isolation is going to continue. And I've been communicating with students whose circumstances really vary. There are some students who live on their own and they're really at the bottom end of human connectivity. And I think that really can weigh heavily and it compounds.

Colin Cheng:

As we start classes in September, that first week can be an opportunity to present yourself not just as the instructor, but as a human being that's also undergoing challenges just like anyone else in the class. And although you are the person presenting, you're also a fellow human being, and that collectively, we're all going through the same sort of things. And I was just typing that.

Colin Cheng:

It's also easy to forget that at anytime anyone circumstances can change at the drop of a hat. So while I'm feeling okay today, tomorrow I might not be, or someone that's close to me may not be feeling so great either. And all of a sudden, my attendance is going to be drawn to something else.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think that's all really well said Colin and I think modeling and normalizing the need to seek out supports, look for help, or just normalizing that this is really hard and it's hard for all of us, is very, very important. Thank you for sharing that so clearly.

Ian Linkletter:

And Sherry in the chat has something to contribute.

Sherry:

Yeah, I just wanted to follow up on the comment about warm language. I'm not sure if everyone's aware of the principles of plain language, but speaking in the first-person, I think I put two links together. That's why it's probably not working. Sorry.

Ian Linkletter:

[inaudible 00:22:13] on the second one. Okay. Continue.

Sherry:

It's a very good practice. Short sentences, simple vocabulary, conversational tone, speaking directly to someone and addressing them rather than calling them the students or the administrator or whatever. But there's lots of information online about that. And I've seen some very effective changes made in course outlines and rules and course content that really helps students because they can connect better with the language, as well as understand it better, because if you're actually using those principles, you're focusing on your reader. And they should be able to read and understand what you have tried to communicate the first time that they read it. They shouldn't have to go back over it again and again, trying to figure out what your point is. Very simple principles, but they make a really big difference. So, thanks.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I appreciate you sharing that. And I think Ian, we can add those to our continuing resource, right?

Ian Linkletter:

Definitely. We're kind of going chronologically with these, so don't take offense if that's at the bottom.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I noticed Emily had a comment that I didn't want to skip over, which is working in faculty support and finding the need to provide care to faculty who are stressed out. I think that is worth talking about. For me, especially in May ... well, March and April and May and June, back in those early days I found that that was often a tremendous part of my own workload, was absorbing the worry and anxiety that people had and trying to help to ameliorate it. But also kind of realizing at the end of the day that I had absorbed quite a lot of anxiety and worry and having to sort of put that somewhere.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think the same will be true for folks working in student supports right now, and also faculty dealing with their own students, that you will find yourself absorbing a lot of anxiety and worry. And part of the reason why it's important to think about care and demonstrating and enacting care now is because we are all going to need grace from each other as this semester and experience progresses, and thinking about how we can extend it to each other and also to ourselves is really important.

Ian Linkletter:

Brenna, you wrote one of my favorite blog posts of all time earlier this year talking about the technology support that you and I are doing as care work. And the part of that work where it is that you're listening to people and empathizing with their worries and frustration and absorbing it. And I just love that line of where does it go? I absorb it. I don't know. Share in the chat if you're not feeling too shy about that. I loved the blog post.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, no, please do feel free to ... I think I lost my ability to be shy about that blog post now. But I do think it's a good question, that if you're not thinking about where you're putting that anxiety, when you

do actually get the opportunity to walk away from your computer, you have other people in your life probably who you want to be able to give yourself to fully. And how can you enable that for yourself?

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I was thinking of it in terms of our work as care work, but teaching, we know teaching is care work and we know student support is care work. So I'm sure everybody on the call is wrestling with the same ideas. I think, coming back to Colin's point, normalizing a conversation about the cost of all that we're doing right now is really important.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, Colin has expanded on some of the value of plain language. Colin, would you mind sharing that?

Colin Cheng:

Sure. Sometimes we do things not realizing that there are other benefits to certain populations of your classroom. And I'll use closed-captioning as an example. While closed captioning is traditionally designed for students who may have a hearing impairment, those who are trying to hear a lecture in a noisy environment, someone who maybe a non-native English speaker, might benefit from that second source of information. And in the context of using plain language, it has clear benefits to a diverse group of people, including those with hearing impairments, but also those with cognitive disabilities, non-native English speakers and so on.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Thanks Colin. Whenever I think about the universal applicability of captions as an example of why we want to design for accessibility from the ground up, I think about my days as a new mom and how I watched everything with captions because I did not have a good sleeper for a baby. I worried I could wake him up. If I'd been trying to do coursework in that environment, that would've been a really important resource for me to be able to draw on.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I see Guillermo has asked for some feedback on a welcome video, and I'm sure if you want to share it in the chat, that's something that, I mean, it would be after session for sure, but I certainly would be happy to take a look at it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Any other questions or anything that any of our experts want to share? Jun, do you want to weigh in on any of the things we've been talking about so far?

Junsong:

Yeah, absolutely. Just adding on to the plain language that we're talking about, it's really about thinking personalization and is something that we also learn from cognitive science where you personalize your language so that it's easier for people to learn. And if you look at it from a cognitive science perspective, when we're learning from online, we are essentially learning from the multimodal, multi-media perspective. And I think if people haven't read the multimedia learning principles, then I think is something we should share so that we sort of understand some of the basic principles of multimedia learning, either you are making a video or you are making animation, or you're providing voiceover, or

you're trying to provide images with a notation on it, I think it's helpful to just to get the basic understanding of the multimedia learning principles, which I can share through the chat link.

Junsong:

The other thing I will also say is that because we're also learning online, it's very important to scaffold students and cultivate the sense of self-regulation as well, because everybody's learning remotely. And sometimes it's really difficult to provide that much of one-on-one or face time. So how do you design those elements in your online course or blended course so that students get more chance to set their own goals or design assignments that motivates themselves or some of the stuff we use is that how do you provide worked out examples for assignments? Because sometimes we provide very high level assignment saying, "I want you to do a 2000 essay on this topic." Sometimes students doesn't understand what exactly you're expecting. So how do you scaffold that process so that they can actually learn how to do it. And I think that's a really important topic also in the online learning.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Please do share those tips because I think it's really important. We're all new to this, in so many ways, for so many reasons. Even if you've been doing video for your classes all along, you probably haven't had to do them under these conditions. So thinking through what those established practices are can be really helpful.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And I think if we can always come back to the principles of sort of maximizing access and demonstrating care, it'll help us make decisions when we don't really know what to do. There's a huge body of research on teaching and learning online, a massive body of research. But even that doesn't speak quite to this moment where the majority of learners in the online space didn't select it for themselves. So we all have a lot to learn in this moment, drawing on the examples that are there and also centering sort of just general good principles of ... I mean, in a lot of ways it's just like being good to each other, 101, and thinking about how we show that to our students is really important.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Parm, I was wondering if you wanted to speak to the ideas of previous samples of work to build on what Jun was talking about when it comes to giving students models to move through course material?

Parm Gill:

Yeah, certainly. I noticed a student made a comment in the chat about worked examples and how that helps to set expectations for students. I think that's awesome, like providing rubrics is one way to go. And of course, if you're providing examples from previous students, make sure you have proper permission, or just create your own example.

Parm Gill:

Another thing that I think is really helpful is ...

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think we may ... Have we lost Parm?

Ian Linkletter:

Parm, you've cut out.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

While we're getting Parm back, does anybody else want to speak to that idea? I wonder if Colin, if you have an accessibility perspective on the idea of worked examples or sample work from students.

Colin Cheng:

Can I think about that and then just ...

Brenna Clarke Gray:

No, absolutely not. Yes, you can.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think that this comes back to the idea of walking students through the course, just like you want to orient them to the learning environment, orienting them to the kind of assignments, particularly if you're trying to do something a little bit new or a little bit different. Lots instructors now are drawing on things like video assignments and podcasts in a way they might not have leapt into quite so much before because they're already working in this online space and it's really inviting.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

But making sure you're putting the supports in place for students to succeed at those assignments and that you have your expectations in place. Please do speak Colin and then Stu, you're more than welcome to jump it.

Colin Cheng:

Okay, so I'll start off by saying that, obviously this next semester that's coming up is going to be unusual in all sorts of ways. Within our department normally by this time we'd be compiling letters of accommodation sending out to instructors. And really it's almost impossible to do that at this point because we have no idea what the course is going to look like. And it's going to be ... Everyone's going to have their own idea about how to present given the limitations of what they have to work with. And so at this point, we're really inviting students to come back after a week of having attended classes, look over their syllabus, and find out how is assessment going to be conducted and what is the mode of instruction, and then we can think about assessments.

Colin Cheng:

But over and above directed accommodation, which is really where the Accessibility Services Department or your equivalent at your institution, where they're directing you to do something, you can ... I think there's lots of opportunities to really make this more open and inclusive to a wide variety of learners. I've seen just in the short period of time since we've gone online, instructors choosing really creative ways around asking students to demonstrate what they've learned. I've seen everything from song compositions and posting a video about that to uses of acting. And of course, a lot of these are unconventional and of course it does require us to think about, well, how do I assess that compared to someone who might have used more traditional means of handing in assignments such as writing a paper or something like that.

Colin Cheng:

And I think that's where the use of a rubric might be important. There's also the concept of maybe self-assessment. Some of these principles are borrowed from the K to 12 system as are many of the UDL principles. But those are some of the things that I've seen in the recent past semesters.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I love that. I love seeing how people are working so hard to, yeah, move it from the box, think about assessment in different ways. I mean, we kind of got pushed into it, but there's been some really exciting work happening and it's thanks to focus on the positive outcomes, especially right now.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Parm, do you want to finish your thought and then I'll invite Stu to jump in with his comments?

Parm Gill:

Sure. I think I have pretty much wrapped it up, but it was just basically making sure the students know why they are asked to watch a video or why they are asked to do this assignment. If you can tie it into the learning objectives, like watch this video, keep an eye out for this and this and this, it really helps students to focus.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, one of the things we talked about in the multimedia session is resist just dropping a YouTube link in your course. And instead, you want to write into the exercise and write out of it, why are you watching this? What are you going to do with that information? And ideally like a timestamp, what's the most essential window for students to pay attention to? Especially if it's a very long video, you're more likely to get them to watch the critical piece that you're asking for than wade through the whole lengthy video to get to the point you wanted. Stu, did you want to jump in with your thoughts?

Stu:

Yeah. Sure. A couple of things. I'm going to leave my camera off just because I'm moving and it's not a pretty picture in my place right now.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's really your choice.

Stu:

Yeah. I just wanted to echo what Parm was saying about the motivation piece of why. I actually added a section in all of my content pages that basically is called But Why Though so that the student's actually like know, because a lot of times we give them content. I remember being an undergrad and it's like, "Read this book, read this chapter." I'm like, "I don't even know why I'm doing this. So why? Tell me, please." And then that builds motivation.

Stu:

But earlier we were talking about the kind of examples and things like that. And part of my motivation to do that as an instructor is all about just, I don't want to assume that the students know something at all.

Because if we're all using, say if we're all using a similar LMS like we're all using Canvas or we're all using Moodle as you said before, like everybody uses those in different ways. So we can't assume that just because, "Oh, they've been learning online since March, they're fine. They don't need to have an overview of my course. They don't need to understand how I've organized things." And that's just ...

Stu:

Like to me, I always use the analogy of a face-to-face classroom. So it's like not orienting them to the room. Is like sending them into a face-to-face classroom with the blinds drawn and the lights off. So that's the reason that I try to provide examples and samples so that they can actually see, well, yeah, this is the level of work that I expect and what do they have to do and what don't they really need to include, because without that and without a good rubric then, yeah, it can get a bit confusing for them. That's all.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's really helpful, and it can get confusing and also overwhelming. I think my favorite tweet about organizing your learning management space is the analogy that you wouldn't just walk into your classroom with a stack of photocopies and drop them on the floor, and then lean back on the chalkboard and drink a coffee for the rest of the semester. I mean, maybe you would, but don't. And the idea is that in the learning management system too, you need to explain why this reading, how does it connect to the last reading, how did these things fit into our larger learning objectives.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

What makes it different in the online space is that need to be intentional. So much of what you casually communicate to students gets lost. And so taking the time to be really focused and intentional about these pieces is important.

Ian Linkletter:

It's so easy to take for granted some of that, especially some of the communication spaces that students are used to. This just ties back to the importance of building community spaces. It's important to just be considerate of what it is that students had in terms of being able to support each other. I always use the analogy of coffee between class or walking with somebody to the next class. Where are the opportunities for spontaneity, especially spontaneity in terms of building a relationship with you, their prof, or with each other.

Ian Linkletter:

Jun, you posted an article in the chat about the worked out example. Do you have anything more to share about that? Oh, and Stu just posted more on cognitive load there. Great.

Junsong:

Yeah, I just ... because we talked about a worked out example in my sharing. But I didn't explain it, so I thought I'll just post that so that you can take a look at what that really means.

Junsong:

Just going back to how to scaffold your student, sort of related to work out example is that how to actually do that in the online course. If you have a really big chunk of assignment coming at the end of

the term, or mid-term, it's really important to break them down. So that's sort of what breakout, what that example is saying too. You want to try to break down your assignment step-by-step so that your students could actually follow you.

Junsong:

For example, you're right, in the 2000 words essay, then maybe it's important for you to ask them to write a proposal for example at the beginning. And then the next two week you ask them to write a table content first, and the next week you ask them to write the first paragraph of the essay. So just really step-by-step you help them out to build an entire essay instead of just at the end of term, saying, "Oh, now the essay's due."

Junsong:

So just thinking about how to break it down. And also while you're breaking it down, what examples could you provide? Could you provide example with a draft? Could you provide example with a table, column table? So I think it's really important for you to think about how do we scaffold those learning process. And of course, if there is any flexibility in terms of the type assignment, does it have to be written essay? Can it actually be a presentation? So something to think about alongside of the scaffolding students.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I like that Jun and I'm glad you brought it up a) because it's a way we demonstrate care and build a learning community. It's still not just say everybody write an essay, because I assume you know how to write an essay. But that I bring you into my learning community, I bring you into my discipline, and I scaffold your experience of it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

But I mean, on a pragmatic level, something we're all thinking about, although we haven't really talked about it in these sessions much, but that also has an insulating effect on issues of academic integrity. We know that students are most likely to cheat on high stakes assignments that they don't feel well prepared for. So when the end of the semester comes and there's a 2000 word essay due and it's really the first time they've heard it mentioned since it was rhymed off in the syllabus at the beginning of term, that is a high-risk activity for academic integrity. Whereas when that 2000 word essay is broken down into component parts, scaffolded properly with clear examples and where students are sort of worked through the assignment all semester long, it's a much lower risk that students will turn to something like contract cheating service to get through that assignment.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So good design practice is good design practice for lots of reasons because it demonstrates care for students and also because it has good effects on learning outcomes. And also because it helps us deal with the risk of academic integrity that our institutions are so concerned about.

Colin Cheng:

Brenna, I'm just going to maybe just to remind everyone of something that we've been hearing over and over since March from our medical officer in this province, not going to claim to know it in order, but I know it's be safe, be calm, be kind. And I think we're doing at least two of those. We're being safe in

teaching virtually. And I think that we can be kind, and it's important to remember that in that kindness, it's not just to students but also to ourselves as well.

Colin Cheng:

And as we navigate something that maybe we're not so used to, I mean, a few of us can claim to be ... This is normal for us to teach online. So recognize that this is ... there's going to be some learning curves for each and every one of us. And as we experiment with different strategies to connect with students, that it's okay for us to make mistakes and that this isn't all going to be perfect in one go. It might take many semesters before we figure out the best way that we can connect with students. And I guess the hardest one out of those three would be to be calm. Fortunately, a lot of times because we're doing it online, people can't see that you're not so calm, but the kindness piece is something that I really wanted to throw in there.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

You know, Colin. It's funny, I've been signing off all our workshops at TRU since the beginning of August, we have Dr. Henry sign-off because it does, I think it speaks to this moment so well. But Dr. Henry had some other advice. Like, for example, please don't send all the students to their local medical centers to pick up sick notes in the middle of a pandemic. It's not a super responsible use of resources.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So when we think about enacting care and we think about constructing a course that speaks to this particular moment, I think we need to be spending some time if you haven't yet thinking about your classroom policies and practices. So requiring sick notes for absences might not be the most appropriate use of resources right now. Can you rethink that and that common practice? I'm also thinking about things like late penalties. And this is about showing care to yourself as the instructor for the scenarios you're going to have to deal with. What's a plan that you can have that you can live with based on whatever it is that your sense of why deadlines exist and what rigor is happens to be for you, but that offer some flexibility for the inevitable situations that are going to come up in your class.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

We've had lots of examples over the course of the last few weeks. We've talked about blanket extension policies. Everybody gets a week without any reason. You don't have to tell me about it. Everybody gets a week. Or maybe you set more flexible deadlines in your class. As long as this essay comes in by the end of unit three, that's fine. And you can plan it around your other assignments in your other classes. But finding a way to establish and build that flexibility into your own classroom experience now so that when you do get the flood of requests which may well come to you, that you have a plan and that you have a plan that can allow you to stay calm, that can allow you to demonstrate kindness, and that can allow you to keep your students safe. I think that's really important.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And it really does come back to that idea of rereading the syllabus right now and thinking about what your syllabus is communicating to your students and how.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Emily, that's something I used to do as an instructor. You can hand in your paper a week late, but I only give you your rubric back in that case because I have to manage my workload. And so you do need to think about that, if you're taking in papers late, how does that change how you're evaluating them and what feedback you're able to give. I think as long as you can communicate that explicitly to students, that's okay. You have to manage the workload, particularly those of us who teach four and four loads or five and five loads, you need to manage your own health and well being.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Jun, I absolutely cut you off. Can we bounce back to you with whatever you were going to say?

Junsong:

No worries. I thought you shared something really interesting about assignments. I just want to share an example of what one of my instructors in the past did. She actually allow all the students in the class to submit the final assignment as many times as they wanted to, as a way to say you're allowed to make mistakes, and if you want to get a higher score, you can submit the assignment again after reading my feedback and you can try unlimited time, of course, until the deadline, but you can try unlimited time so that you get more feedback from me and you keep working toward it.

Junsong:

I thought that was a really interesting ... Not suitable for everyone, because that course was very small. It was a small-size class, but it was a way to encourage students to try and get feedback and revise and try again and get better. For her, it wasn't the idea of how much score going to get. For her it was about getting feedback and the student iterate on it again and do it again. So I thought that was a really interesting example of how she wanted to you to work harder.

Junsong:

And then the students, what happened is that in the class some of the students actually worked on that paper three times just to get better with the feedback. And I think it actually turns out student worked harder on those stuff instead. You think that it'd be easy. It's not. Actually getting student to work way harder than they usually do one time feedback and then you can score type of class was a really interesting example that I wanted to share based on what you said.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's interesting, Rodney and Sherry have both shared in the chat examples of working with faculty as students or as faculty on campus who do the same thing. Sherry points out not that many students seek you up on it. So as you're thinking about workload, it's sometimes just having that security, having that option that gives students who are unsure another path.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

You do need to think about your workload and maybe that example that Jun's sharing isn't perfect for you. But I do think it's worth thinking about the philosophy behind it in terms of when you time your feedback in a class. If all of your lengthy feedback comes after an assignment is due, maybe that's not the best use of your ... like after the assignment is finished, maybe that's not the best use of your time, right? If students can't then take it and work with it towards something else. So maybe in the case of an

iterative assignment, like June was talking about before where you break up that 2000 word essay, if the time you would normally spend at the end of the assignment can come a little bit earlier and then students can actually use that feedback towards the final product, maybe it's just about thinking when you spend that time rather than necessarily expecting that you need to spend more of it because I know that none of us have more time.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, Rodney says an ethos of consultation and coaching. I like that. I like that way of thinking about learning.

Colin Cheng:

And then since we're on the topic of assessment, I'm wondering if maybe we can talk a little bit about tests and exams, because while we're talking about flexibility for assignments, there's also the possibility that for the other extreme. I know that sometimes with tests, some instructors are asking students to provide and in some cases students will have to go out and purchase a webcam in order to ensure that academic integrity. And while I fully acknowledge that no one wants to see academic dishonesty. Sometimes some of these measures have real impacts on students, particularly those who may have financial challenges during these times.

Colin Cheng:

There's also over and above that setting up this equipment. And then in terms of students with disabilities, you've got students who might have injuries that where having to sit really still because if they get up and stretch, that might be perceived as cheating. Students who have ADHD and can't focus and they're looking all over the place, and now they're possibly being flagged for dishonesty. You've got students with mental health disorders. Just knowing someone's watching them. So I think, well, I'm not saying that absolutely don't do it. Be very clear about why you think that might be really important to institute something like that.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Did you see my pain face while you were describing surveillance proctoring tools Colin? I find this whole conversation really troubling. Practices are going to vary by institution. But the more that we can think about alternative ways of assessing rather than that individually final exam as sort of the ... I mean, we don't just treat it as the gold standard. We treat it as the only standard often of final assessment.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

We're in this great moment where we can really re-imagine what a final assessment looks like to be something that is perhaps open book and collaborative and engaging and not ... maybe not we've done before. And I think that there have been some really neat examples of faculty really embracing that. On our campus we tell everyone that every exam is pretty much open book and collaborative right now. So you might as well plan for it because that's the world we're living in. We're not using a proctoring service. So that's sort of the reality for our students.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Does anybody else want to speak to that issue, final assessment? There's many people on the call with more expertise than I.

Ian Linkletter:

I can speak to proctoring service for a little bit or a lot-

Brenna Clarke Gray:

You can Ian. Yeah.

Ian Linkletter:

Yes, I sure can. But I just want to echo what Colin said about how the software can make students feel and how the software, the way that it works can be biased. I've posted a link in the chat to a Hybrid Pedagogy article. The companies that are being written about in this peer-reviewed journal article came after the author and the journal editors pretty hard. So I think that there's that saying about that ... I'm going to have to look up the saying, but it's basically about like the news being what people are trying. I'm going to look up the quote, I'm butchering it. But it's really important to read this because it's part of listening to students. And that is sort of a central theme of what we have been talking about for the past four sessions, is listen to your students. And if they are telling you and they are telling you that this software makes them feel unsafe, makes them feel anxiety, then I think that we all have to step back and just say, "Is this necessary?"

Ian Linkletter:

It's dear to my heart to just look up the words, look up the names of these software companies and see what students are writing about it. Because every single day if you do a search on Twitter, people are talking about just that it makes them feel untrusted. It makes them feel like they're under suspicion. And that's totally contradictory to the compassionate and careful pedagogy that we're trying to promote.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I completely agree. But you know that.

Ian Linkletter:

Very important article. I'll just leave it at that and I'll look up that quote I butchered.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, critically important article for everyone to read and to pass on to administrators who are making those decisions at your institution. Parm, I wonder if I could get you to speak to the idea of alternative final assessments or something else. But I know you have a lot of experience with alternative assessments.

Parm Gill:

That's excellent. I wanted to add to what Ian was mentioning. And I think one of the key things about pedagogies that are tutor-based is perceiving your students, you're basically you and your students have the same objective. You want them to learn. And what you're trying to do with assessment is to gauge how they're learning. So you don't look at them as like that you're against them. You both have the same objective.

Parm Gill:

So I think well designed assessments, authentic assessments, assessments that ... frequent assessments sprinkled throughout the course, you can get an idea of the learning that is happening. And sometimes it's easier face-to-face when you're constantly interacting with students, you can gauge their learning and how their learning is progressing. An online, you might have to build in some other types of assessments other than multiple-choice NSAs, give the students options, let them pick a topic, let them pick a medium. Do you want to do video or do you want to do a podcast? I think that really helps.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, I agree. Stu, you mentioned in the chat that you'd like to share something about alternative final assessments?

Stu:

Yeah, I was just going to say. I'm teaching a pretty big class in the fall that I have about 70 students and no TAs. So I think it has to have a final. But I wanted to take this approach that everybody is talking about here and just provide options for that. So I just wanted to share my experience in that.

Stu:

I usually do constructive alignment on that, meaning that I align my outcomes with all of my assessments to make sure that they're all. So how do you do that with providing options for students? So with my final, I think I worked out, I'm providing three different options that are all very different assignments, but they all have the same rubric. So that way I'm able to kind of assess the same thing, but the form that it takes is going to be a very, very different. And then based on the LMS, I think you can selectively release things based on what their choice is, and I'm going to tell them right upfront what their options are so that they can sort of plan across the term which one they want to do at the end.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I really like that. I like the idea of the same rubric across multiple assignments. That's very cool.

Stu:

That was a bit tricky to do honestly, but-

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, no I just going to say-

Stu:

I'll let you know how it works.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm very curious. I think this is the unfortunate time of the day where Duane makes me hand things back to him. I was hoping up the closing slide as we come to the end of the session. Duane, this is all you I think.

Conclusion

Duane:

You should never start before introducing me. I'd be unfortunate. But yes, thank you, Brenna. So on behalf of BCcampus, I'd like to thank and acknowledge our appreciation, both Brenna and Ian, for this, the fifth in a series for facilitating this, for bringing together experts to assist, and thanking our expert guests today, Parm, Jun, and Colin for participating and sharing your thoughts. I really enjoyed this. I enjoyed this whole session. We had 25 people start the session. 25 people who are here at the end ... 24 because Emily had to leave to care for a faculty member. I love that.

Duane:

So thank you for participating today and I think many of you returned for a number of these sessions. I did mention this session's recorded. There's a link there if you want to go back and get the recording. Also, you can sign up for the BCcampus newsletter so you receive updates of upcoming webinars. The Adapting to COVID series will continue through the fall, with many of the themes really being about caring for ourselves, caring for our students. It's been great to be part of this. Thanks again.