The CTE Teaching & Innovation Colloquy

In Spring 2021, the CTE held its 5th Annual Teaching & Innovation Colloquy titled “Anti-Racist Pedagogy” with a cohort of faculty members from across campus. Participants included: Viola Ago (ARCH), Beth Beason-Abmayr (BIOS), Adrienne Simoes Correa (BIOS), Amy Dunham (BIOS), Emily Houlik-Ritchey (ENG), Molly Morgan (ANTH), Betul Orcan (MATH), Liz Petrick (HIST), Anna Rhodes (SOCi), Helade ScuY Santos (CLIC), Lujan Stasevicius (CLIC), Hiromi Takayama (CLIC), and Melissa Weininger (JWST). Using resources, readings, and reflection questions curated by CTE Associate Director Amanda M. Jungels, faculty explored a variety of topics related to anti-racist pedagogy, including equitable approaches to knowledge production and demonstration and how to implement anti-racist teaching practices in their classrooms. Participants will assess their development and implementation of anti-racist approaches, and report results to the CTE in the Spring of 2022.

CTE Umbrella Protocol for Teaching-related Research

Interested in conducting and publishing research on learning in your classroom? The Center for Teaching Excellence invites all interested instructors to join our umbrella IRB protocol for ongoing pedagogical research at Rice. The umbrella IRB protocol supports pedagogical research at Rice by considerably streamlining the IRB process. This program not only provides great benefit to our students and instructors, but it also enhances Rice’s visibility nationally with respect to teaching and learning initiatives. Since 2017, the CTE umbrella protocol for ongoing pedagogical research at Rice has supported instructors in over 30 research projects.

To highlight the exceptional research that is being conducted under the umbrella IRB protocol, the CTE’s first fall 2021 event in the series What’s New in Teaching and Learning Research featured Rodrigo Ferreira (Assistant Teaching Professor, Computer Science) and Matthew Wettergreen (Director, Global Medical Innovation Program & Associate Teaching Professor; Bioengineering, OEDK) discussing their experience designing, conducting, and publishing research on student learning in their classrooms. You can read more about Dr. Ferreira’s experience and his recent publication on our blog Reflections on Teaching & Learning.

If you are interested in learning more about the CTE’s umbrella IRB protocol, please visit our website or contact Sandy Parsons, Associate Teaching Professor of Psychology (PI) and Robin Paige, Associate Teaching Professor and Director of the CTE (Co-PI).
Teaching Moving Forward

Emily Houlik-Ritchey
Assistant Professor, English
Associate Director, Center for the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality
CTE Faculty Fellow

I seldom turn down an invitation to a conversation about teaching and learning. The collective endeavor of teaching and learning has been a sustaining joy and vocation throughout my years in higher ed: I happily carve out time in my schedule, however busy I otherwise am, to participate in CTE programming, arrange a chat with colleagues or grad students about pedagogy, and read the newest hot take on course design (this month it was William Germano and Kit Nicholls’ *Syllabus: The Remarkable, Unremarkable Document that Changes Everything*). And so it has been something of a tragic shock to find myself reeling close to burn-out as this fall 2021 semester lurches to a close.

Among COVID’s many other ramifications for our lives, 18+ months of negotiating the pandemic’s rampant consequences upon teaching and learning, both instructors and students are fatigued. We are fatigued despite the fact that many things have returned to a cautious “new normal”: we are back (mostly) in person; our campus community is (mostly) vaccinated; activities and gatherings that we put on hold have (mostly) resumed. And yet, the ongoing cumulative effect of renegotiating each next “new normal” as the pandemic stretches its tentacles through four academic semesters and counting, depletes us of more and more of the energy and motivation that teaching and learning needs in order to flourish. I am increasingly conscious that resilience is in short supply. We have not yet managed space or occasion to replenish our reservoirs, and I am deeply concerned about the long-term effects upon instructor and student mental and physical health.

The realities of fatigue carry implications also for any ongoing uses of hybrid teaching that we may choose to employ (and that students and administrators may expect of us) in the years ahead. I am currently teaching in a classroom awash with ceiling microphones and speakers, multiple cameras that can pivot to capture different angles of the room, and three large projection screens. In short, it is ideally equipped to facilitate multiple modalities of students. But in the collaborative and active-learning based literature courses that I routinely teach, planning for flexible class attendance and participation (much of which occurs last minute) takes additional work and creativity—especially if we are to give the students equitable learning experiences and opportunities. It is easy to tell a student on Zoom to listen in to the larger discussion and to jump on a Google Doc or the chat to post their comments but then turn back to the students physically in the room, privileging their learning essentially by default while more or less asking the remote student to take care of themselves. It is much harder to ensure that remote students receive analogous chances for interactivity, inclusion, recognition, and feedback as the students in the room.

If students and administrators at Rice will be asking us to continue hybrid teaching and learning as a matter of course, then we need to reckon carefully with the increased demands on instructor labor that this entails—from course planning to execution. We also need to know, I think, whether the hi-flex hybrid classroom is, in fact, worth pursuing—what can evidence-based studies of teaching and learning, as they emerge, tell us about the asynchronous and remote synchronous learning experiences of these hybrid classrooms? Are these modes of participation effective? Are they equitable? What does it take, on both the instructor and student end, to achieve desirable learning outcomes? And what kinds of changes and increases in instructor and student work will this demand? Given the current levels of deep fatigue for both students and instructors, where will that time and energy come from?