

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Hello, and welcome to You Got This!, a podcast about teaching, learning, community, conversation, and your digital life made for everyone at Thompson Rivers University. I'm your host, Brenna Clarke Gray, Coordinator of Educational Technologies, and this podcast is a project of your friends over at Learning Technology and Innovation. We're housed within Open Learning, but we support the whole campus community. I record this podcast in Tk'emlups te Secwepemc within the unseated traditional lands of Secwepemcú'ecw where I hope to learn and grow in community with all of you.

And you might have noticed that this episode is off schedule, but it's for a good reason. It's Digital Detox time. Let's get into it.

[Singing] It's the most wonderful time. Okay, I'm not going to do that, but I am very excited to be talking to you about the TRU Digital Detox this year. As I alluded to in our last episode, we're talking about artificial intelligence because, well, this is a conversation that's everywhere and I think this is a moment where it would be really useful to tease apart hysterical anxiety from fact, and also to really evaluate some of the promises that are made by companies that are engaging in various kinds of artificial intelligence or machine learning or algorithmic functioning.

They're selling us something and well, I love to take a part of sales pitch. So the Digital Detox is an idea that we got from our colleagues at Middlebury. I'll link in the show notes to the original Digital Detox that ours sort of spawns from. And this is the fourth year. If you've never participated in a Detox before, well it's easy.

You go to the website, [DigitalDetox.trubox.ca](http://DigitalDetox.trubox.ca), link in the show notes, and you register with your email. And I'm the only person who gets that list. I look after your data, I promise. And the only thing I use that to do is to send you notifications when new posts come out once a week about our Digital Detox topic. The first one will be out January 6th, and then after that they come out every Monday until the end of the Detox on February 17th. The point of these essays is to give you a hopefully short, I aim to be less than a 10-minute read introduction to a topic, but with enough research and external links that if you're interested, you've got lots of places to go to read more. And this is a podcast exclusive.

I'm going to give you the table of contents for the detox this year. So after our first essay on January 6th, where we'll spend some time defining our terms. On January 9th, the essay is called "Wither Comes the Data: Current Uses of AI and Dataset Training in Higher Ed." In this essay I want to talk about where we already see these kinds of tools in play in higher education where our students are already subjected to artificial intelligences of a kind. And I also want to talk about the complicity of higher education in training some of these data sets. So where do they get the data to come up with these tools? Well, there's an argument to be made that higher education has to a certain extent provided it. So I'm going to make that case in that essay.

On January 16th, the essay is titled "Performative Equity: Race, Identity and AI." I'm really concerned about some of the conversations I've seen around how innovations, well, "Innovation" in quotation marks, but the world's first AI model who happens to be a black woman. What does that mean for actual black women who might be seeking to work as models? For example, we know how performative DEI initiatives are in higher education. So to what extent are these kind of tools going to give the mostly white administrators of most of our universities an opportunity to disconnect further from the conversation. On January 23rd, the essay is called "Breaking What Was Already Broken: AI and Writing Assignments" where I'm going to argue against the atlantic. I don't think the college essay is dead, I think bad college essays are dead. And I'm also going to talk a little bit about what we can do in the way we teach writing so that we're not just teaching our students to do something that an AI can already do.

On January 30th, the essay is called "Whose Evaluation Is It Anyway, outsourcing Teacherly Judgment." I'm really concerned about the way we use algorithmic processes to evaluate our students already. I'm concerned about the kind of inborn biases that are part of these systems, and I'm concerned about the kinds of sales pitches we're going to see about what's coming next. On February 6th, the essay is called "Robots Marking Robots; or, the AI Arms Race." Here I'm interested in the idea of students both submitting work created by AI and also the kinds of tools that may be marking that work, like at what point do the rest of us just go on a beach vacation slash are unemployed? And what do credentials mean in that context? And what are the equity implications? Who's going to have access to these tools?

February 13th essay is called "Is Higher Ed Too Rigid to Save Itself: Planning for the Future?" Spoiler alert, yes. But here we're going to talk about what would need to change systemically in higher education in order to keep up with the kinds of innovations that something like a ChatGPT tool signifies. And then finally on February 17th, we're just going to have some resources, some tools for building community, some activism, like what do we do now? How do we keep the conversation going outside of the confines of the Detox? So that's the scope. That's what we're going to try to cover in this six week-ish period.

There's also going to be a couple of live chats. I will post links to those when I have them, but for now, you can sort of plan on saving the date for the 27th of January and the 17th of February, sometime around lunch Pacific Time, if you want to participate. Those are always really good fun. They give us a chance to dig into the issues of the essays. They give folks a chance to disagree and discuss. And speaking of disagreeing and discussing, an innovation that the Open Learning media team built last year is a guest submission portal. So if you think there's a missing topic or you want to disagree with something I write in one of the essays, we actually have a space where if your response is long form, you can upload it and it becomes part of the Digital Detox record for the year, it becomes part of the archive. So that's my favorite recent innovation and I hope you'll consider if you want to get in on this conversation using that.

Of course, there's also going to be the ability to comment on every post. And I'm hoping for a lively conversation, whether that's on Twitter or if it's gone by then, who knows? On Mastodon or, gosh, I don't know. TRU people, we could use the faculty-L listserv. That hasn't seen a lively discussion in a little while.

Anyway, I was eager to make this episode early because I thought it was probably pretty inappropriate to release an episode on Boxing Day. And also because yeah, I'm just hoping you'll get registered. It's always nice to know how many people are waiting for the essays. It's very motivational for me as a writer to know I have an audience. And I'm just really eager to have some time to read and to think over the break and to really start to put together a sense of what our response can be as a sector to these tools. We don't need to go with the best tech bro pitch. We can think long and slow, and I hope that this year's Digital Detox is the start of that thinking long and slow.

This is also the point where I tell you that You Got This! is going on a wee hiatus for the holidays. I'm taking a few extra days off in January, so we will come back with all new episodes the first week of February. So stay tuned for that. I'm definitely eager to pause, I'm eager to reflect. But in a couple weeks time I'll be equally eager to come back.

So that is it for season three, episode 10 of You Got This! As always, if you want to write to us, you can email me. I'm bgray@tru.ca. I'm also on Twitter @brennacgray And I feel like I should probably start saying this, I'm on Mastodon.Social @brennacgray as well. And in all three cases, I guess, that's a Gray with an A. All of our show notes and transcripts are posted at yougotthis.trubox.ca. And of course, you can always comment on individual episodes there. And this week I'm definitely going to direct you to DigitalDetox.trubox.ca to register for this year's event.

I'm not going to leave you today with a Tiny Teaching Tip because this is landing in your pod catchers on December 23rd. So instead, I am going to say that whatever you celebrate, whether it's a structured holiday or just the end of the term where you are, I hope that you find peace and rest and the companionship of the people who fill your cup. And I hope that you look after those people and yourself. Until I see you again at the beginning of February. Take care, everyone. Bye-bye.