

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Hello, and welcome to You Got This! A podcast about teaching and learning and pivoting to digital for the whole TRU community. 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 unceded traditional lands of Secwepencul'ecw where I hope to learn and grow in community with all of you. And today's episode is well, it's a little bit about looking ahead. You know, Remembrance Day has come and gone. The Christmas decorations have taken over Canadian Tire. Starbucks Gingerbread latte is out and it's time to start thinking about what comes next, looking ahead to winter term. So let's get into it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

You know, our fall programming this year has centered around the idea of lessons learned. What can we take from the experience of this term, the good and the bad and change in the winter term so that we create a semester that's a little bit more survivable for all of us -- students included. I know folks are struggling. I hear about it all the time. And you know, I've been struggling too. I think that we've all undertaken a pretty Herculean task this semester. It's a lot for the entire university to be in full swing in fall semester, fully online, and still keep up with things like our service commitments, our committee work, our -- dare I say research and writing? I don't know about you guys, but, Ooh, am I ever behind on literally everything?

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think that -- I hope that -- if nothing else, we've all received an object lesson this semester (it's my favourite phrase) about what to do next semester in terms of going easy, pulling back, letting some things go. I think some of us have been doing it on the fly. Some of us were clever and planned ahead. I'm not including myself in that category by the way. But I think we realize now that teaching and learning online takes a tremendous amount of additional effort because everything requires intention. Building community online requires intention. Connecting with our students requires intention. Gosh, marking is harder and developing content is harder. And many of us are making changes on the fly as we go, as we learn what works and doesn't work in this environment: all of this is harder.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Back in the summer. I was advising all of you to think about trying to cover like 70% of your course content and 70% of your traditional assessments in your courses. I'm not telling you to abandon learning objectives: those matter, and you need to cover the course material that you need to cover. But sometimes there's a lot of extra stuff too. And I'm guessing that if fall has taught you anything, it's that there's no space for the extra stuff. So as we look ahead to winter, I think that we all need to prioritize streamlining, cutting back and establishing a workflow that works for us. I feel like I say that every week, I feel like I talk to you a lot about ways to pull back and things that we have to let go of. And I think that that advice is hard to hear mid-semester when you feel kind of trapped, but I'm hoping that now that you have this experience under your belt, you can hear it for the winter term.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Um the student survey is out right now. It'll get wide distribution on the 17th of November, and I've only had a few responses back. But the responses that I have had so far, they bring tears to my eyes. Our students are feeling incredible pressure to achieve in intense circumstances. They're managing care

responsibilities at home. They're dealing with crappy internet or a laptop they share with their mom or roommates with wild hours or roommates that they're nursing through COVID. They're dealing with a lot and we want class to be a priority for them, of course, but I don't think we can ever imagine even in good circumstances that it's their only priority. So I hear about our students struggling, and I hear about how you're struggling and I really want to invite you to try something different in the winter. What that something different. It looks like it's going to be different for everybody.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

We've talked in the various sessions that we've done about workload and workflow about offering student choice, about relaxing content, about not marking everything, about taking a grading amnesty and extending an assessment amnesty to our students as well. We've talked about lots of different strategies. I hope you'll think now about the ones you can apply to winter today on the show I've invited Catherine Ortner and Crystal Huscroft to come and talk to you about the way they designed their classes, using a technique called interteaching. It's not a workload easer I don't think, but it is a strategy for thinking about your teaching that might turn some of your expectations on their head. What if the time that you spend on lectures was better spent with targeted focus on the areas that students are struggling, and what if you had a really great strategy for figuring out what those areas are? Crystal and Catherine have kind of got it figured out. They'll laugh at me for saying that because I know they're struggling too, but I was really inspired by our conversation and I think you will be too.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Okay. So the chat portion of the show today, I'm here with Crystal Huscroft and Catherine Ortner, and I'm going to let them introduce themselves, but what's exciting for me is Crystal and Catherine are both actively teaching this semester and have done some really interesting things in their classroom that I want them to have the chance to reflect on and talk about with all of you. So maybe I'll start with Crystal, if you would introduce yourself and let folks know where they might have interacted with you on campus before we all went home.

Crystal Huscroft:

Um yeah, so I'm Crystal Huscroft and I am an associate teaching professor in the department of geography and environmental studies over in the faculty of arts and people might've interacted with me just about anywhere on campus. 'Cause I've been with TRU for 16 years now. So yeah. Wow. Yeah, that's awesome. I'm teaching a science class, but I'm in the faculty of arts. So I've been kind of like connecting a lot with science faculty across campus.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Very cool. And Catherine.

Catherine Ortner:

So I'm Catherine Ortner and I'm an associate professor in the department of psychology, also in the faculty of arts. And I teach classes from first through fourth year and I also study emotion regulation. That's my area of research interest. So I've seen people in classes and also in sort of more research oriented settings as well. Now I've been at TRU for, I suppose, 12 years now, but that includes two mat leaves. So maybe ten, if you don't count the leaves, but they count [Brenna interject: those count!]. They do, you're never really fully away from it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

No, it's so true. Thank you both for agreeing to come on the show today and to chat about your experiences. I wonder if I might ask you to rewind all the way back to March, if we think about maybe the emotional experience, the affective experience of transitioning to online. I think sometimes once we are comfortable in the space, or we see other people who are comfortable in the space, it's hard to remember that there was a lot of flailing that starts the process.

Crystal Huscroft:

I'm not sure past tense.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I wonder if you might talk a little bit about your, your feelings when we transitioned to fully online in March and how prepared you felt for that transition.

Crystal Huscroft:

Catherine, or would you like to go first?

Catherine Ortner:

I think you should go first because I was on leave in March. So my answer will be very different and unusual maybe. Yeah.

Crystal Huscroft:

Well, me too, I guess, because I was actually on sabbatical because and I, when the pandemic kind of started hitting us I had my kids come home. I have two elementary aged children and and I, I couldn't concentrate on my sabbatical project anymore.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I wouldn't imagine so.

Crystal Huscroft:

No, not only because of the children in the house or anything, but just thinking forward to September and feeling really worried about what was going to happen to my teaching because I think that my teaching strengths are definitely felt in the lecture room and that's where I kind of like, I really identify as a teacher having, you know, I'd worked really hard on creating these, you know, artful, but formative sometimes pseudo entertaining kind of experiences for students all in the same room. And I was terrified of losing that. So I started and I also felt a little bit left out because a lot of the colleagues that I was collaborating on with my sabbatical project which was an open textbook, they were still actively teaching. And so yeah, we were, I started kind of like gathering my like disciplinary team. Well, they were too busy to think about September during that time and creating a bit of a collaborative on, you know, sharing resources and forums pieces, and like have a plan of attack for, for the next academic year. A lot of them were just emails and you don't really have to reply to me right now. Wait till April, but here's some ideas I was thinking, I don't know if I was just causing undue stress or not. So I was in this luxurious position in some ways of being on sabbatical, but my sabbatical project definitely kind of suffered.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I can only imagine. Catherine, how about you? You were on leave, you said.

Catherine Ortner:

Yeah, I was on parental leave when it all happened. So I missed the excitement of the end of the winter. And, and also looking back I'm I'm relieved. Cause I can't imagine with, I would've had a five-year-old and a one-year-old at home if I, or he wasn't yet one at that time, but if I had already been back at work, you'd have just been, you know, six months or whatever, close to one. And I'd have had them at home and been trying to finish up the semester. So I was relieved not to be at work then, and then also starting to worry and flail about what the fall semester would look like. And I actually ended up ending my mat leave early because I, I could see what was coming and anticipated that my summer was going to be very busy with preparation for the fall. And I think a little bit, unlike Crystal saying that she feels, you know, the sort of the classroom is it's her space. I was really actually looking to make changes in how I teach. And so for me, I was actually kind of excited, especially when I saw all the programming that was coming up in the summer. I actually started to get quite excited about, Hey, this is actually going to be a chance for me to make some changes that I've been wanting to make for a long time. Anyway. So there was definitely a silver lining there for me. Yeah.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That's so cool. That makes me really happy. You've all raised the issue of parenting and working in the pandemic and that's something that is of personal. I was going to say interest obsession for me and the way in which labor shifts. So I mean, Catherine, the decision to end your mat leave early is actually a really significant one. Right. And Crystal, you're talking about how that had an impact on your ability to complete your sabbatical. I don't know. I just wanted to highlight those two. I don't know if either of you want to expand further on, on anything to do with kind of caregiving and, and that, that weight you don't have to. I just, I struck that you both raised it and it's something that's on the top of my mind all the time as well.

Crystal Huscroft:

Yeah. I would love to go deeper into it. I think that there needs to be a bit more of a dialogue about that on, on campus and whether it's for parenting and caring for parents. But I think it's helped me in my teaching too, because I've been really open with my students about the challenges that I've had this semester with, you know, getting COVID tests and having kids home for a week while I'm teaching and kind of going, but, but also be reassuring. Like we can do this, but we have to do this differently than we've done this before. And so these are the mechanisms I've introduced to accommodate this and you need to let me know, you know, as students, what, what you need accommodation for too, like let's have some open dialogue and I've been trying to kind of model that with my students because I've really kind of taken to heart that this semester, you must introduce that ethic of care into your pedagogy and your assessments and all that. And I think one of the reasons it's been easy it's because I've needed that care from my students in a way, like, it just like, it's the same thing with flexibility of deadlines. I've needed them to be flexible about my deadlines for returning work to them. So, you know, it's, I haven't actually said the quote, but we're all in this together. Like I think that they, they know that that's my approach.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think it's powerful to make those connections for students and to demonstrate care in that way. I -- well for everybody, just to see it, I, I was talking with someone in office hours one day, who was like, it was really great in the summertime that you always had your kid in the room with you when you were doing sessions, because, you know, it gave me a sense of like what was coming for me and what that was going to look like. And I was like, I'm glad you found it useful. I didn't really have a choice. Right. But modeling a certain amount of grace in difficult circumstances. And also yes, if you can internalize that so that it's not just about you receiving grace, but about that extending to other people, right?

Catherine Ortner:

Yeah. I think every, I mean, I would echo everything Crystal said. She said it so well. And also how I've been, honestly, I've been really touched as well by how some of my students have responded. So I did have my, my youngest one was sick at home for a whole week. And you know, I had them emailing me and saying, I hope your little one is okay. And you know, it's in ways that I haven't had those kinds of interactions with them before. So there's something about this whole thing. That's a little bit humanizing, I suppose, when you kind of make yourself a bit vulnerable then and then, and then they also do the same because I've had more of them kind of come and share their own stories and personal experiences. And I think it gets back to, you know, just that the importance of that human connection, which I know you've talked about a lot, Brenna, in podcasts and over the summer and things. So that's been really sort of a positive thing.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. I think it's really important if we're asking for vulnerability from students, like we need to know what's up with them so that we can serve them that we -- professionally, but -- we model that as well. Right. And I think, I think that's something a lot of folks have struggled with like, what's that line? How much do I share? And you know, I don't know, we, we, I said this all the time, but if, if nothing else I hope the pandemic has helped us to sort of break down this body brain barrier in the Academy. Right. This idea that like, well, my kids are in daycare and I am teaching and this is I'm. I have to perform exactly the way someone without those responsibilities would be performing because that's how I have to behave. And we just, we just can't. And in the same is true for folks who have elder care responsibilities or who looking after sick family members. Right. There's just, there's so much about the way we needed to change our approach if we were going to support each other through this. And I'm heartened to see how that has happened within our community. I was a little nervous, but it's been good. I think. Yeah. I think it's been, well, I won't say it's been good. It's a pandemic, but you know, it was a silver lining with this. So we've talked a little bit about interjecting more care into your classroom, but I know you both have taken a really interesting approach with the online space and the way you're delivering content to students and the way you're inviting their feedback. And I was wondering if you would talk a little bit more about how your classes are structured.

Crystal Huscroft:

So we're both using a method of teaching called interteaching, and it there's like a flow or a sequence of activities for students. And it starts several days or a week before class where they get a bit of a prep guide where students have reading and some preparatory activities that they do. And that can look different in different types of courses. And for, for Catherine and I, we have separate type of activities. And then they have a bunch of prep guide items or, or questions, activities that they have to complete. And before class, then in class, they get and this would be if it was face-to-face, they would come into class and then they would work on those items, perfecting them or teaching each other information that you know, that they need to fill the gaps in their learning when they were trying to learn it on their own.

And then they fill a record sheet at the end of it, which both Catherine and I have called like these little exit tickets, these little forms that they fill out at the end saying, what are they still muddy on? Where are their challenges? Where are their gaps of knowledge that they need to complete these activities or be evaluated on the learning objectives that are within the preparatory guide. And so and I also use that as an opportunity to have students kind of fill out a little form that says, how are things going to how's, you know, what did you learn about your learning last week and what are you, what are your goals for next week? And then after that they have some time. And so I call those like, in, in that little feedback for those exit tickets I, in my class, I asked the students, you know, what would you like me to make a little mini lecture about? And so I call it lecturing on demand. So I don't give those overview lectures necessarily. Sometimes I do at the beginning of before the students enter a new subject, I give a short, short kind of like, this is, what's cool about this new thing you're gonna learn. I have these lectures on demand. And so there's these little mini lectures. And if students can't show up to the live sessions where there's these small discussions, so in breakout rooms, they can access a discussion forum where they can post about their -- and look for help in their learning from other students. Then after that class where they, I gave my mini lectures, the next one, they have their summative evaluation, which is for me, it's, it's a test. Based on the material before that they did with I called my preparatory, like item is, it's a pretest kind of thing, a pre quiz don't call them tests, call them quizzes, but practice quiz, they do a practice quiz that they tackle the questions together in groups. Then they say what they're muddy on. I give a lecture about their muddy points and then and then they get their quiz afterwards a week later.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So I love this because of the aspect where students are really creating their knowledge. Like they have a lot of agency over their learning experience in the structure of two practical questions. One is when you see a mini lecture on their muddy points, about how long do those run you?

Crystal Huscroft:

So I strive to have them be seven minutes each. I go over, but I also leave time for questions. And I think it's really important for me to record those questions too, because they're always so insightful. They give me a lot of insight about what are the aspects of the items. So they try to, I try to encourage them in their little feedback forms to describe not just the topic, but what is it about the topic they don't get? So how should I approach it and what should I make sure I talk about when I talk about that topic? And and it also says it moves them away from being, I want you to lecture about the answer to question number seven. Yeah. I will not do that. I told them I'm like, what do you need? Do you feel you don't or what do you feel you need to know in order to answer that question too? Yeah. But Catherine has a totally different setup.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I want to ask you one more practical question and then I want to speak to Catherine's experience for sure. But my other practical question, just because we hear across campus such a wide range of responses to synchronous versus asynchronous, and I was wondering what percentage of your students would you say week to week are making it to those live discussions versus choosing to do the discussion forum?

Crystal Huscroft:

So this points to what I have to do for the winter, the discussion forums are wildly unpopular, I need to figure out how to promote. And so I am using right now, Moodle forums, and I think I want to go to

something much less formal. I've been using Mattermost for all the other discussions, but I thought I wanted to kind of be able to track participations in Moodle. So I didn't use those discussion forums, my interteaching discussion forums on that, on Mattermost. And if there's faculty that haven't used Mattermost before it's like Slack it's how would you describe Mattermost Brenna what it is? It's a place to have online conversations,

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Your comparison to Slack is perfect. It looks identical to it, it functions almost exactly the same, but it's an open source alternative that we support, and all the data is stored here at TRU.

Crystal Huscroft:

Yeah. so but again, participation my lowest was just almost a third of the class and that was two weeks during midterms. And it really worried me because before that I was getting 80% of the class for almost all of September. And then now I'm back up to I had, I can't do the math really quickly, 41 out of around 57 them show up last week. So, and that was right before Remembrance day. And I didn't know whether students would be coming too, but I was just so happy. It was so much better than the week before.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So Catherine, I wonder if you could speak to your experiences using interteaching, especially what's different from the way Crystal is executing it, but also your, how your experiences have been similar.

Catherine Ortner:

Okay. So, you know, the overall structure is similar sort of the overall weekly flow of, you know, students during some doing some preparation and then coming to class and discussing what they're struggling with, figuring that out. And then the clarifying, I do what I call clarifying mini lectures, which I also try to keep to five to seven minutes, but so I do them one for each topic that they want me to cover for each concept. And sometimes one of them will run to 10 minutes. With mine the preparatory exercises are always discussion questions. So for each chapter each week, we're covering one chapter and they might have three or four discussion questions that are sort of short essay questions that really sort of challenged them to think a little bit beyond, you know, the facts that are in the textbook sort of thing. And I've so far I'm getting good feedback on that. I think the students are really enjoying, really being challenged. A lot of them are really rising to that challenge of thinking about the material in a different way. And it feels very different from just having them come in and write a test and then forget about it and move forwards because, you know, they'll do a first draft, which they submit to me and I basically just grade them based on whether they did a good faith effort on that. And then they have to revise and resubmit them after they've participated in the discussion and the clarifying lecture. And so it's nice that they get to kinda keep working with the material for that whole week and stay engaged with it rather than just, Oh, I forgot about it off that they write the test. I think they get more out of it that way, and that's what they're telling me anyway.

Catherine Ortner:

And I have both synchronous and asynchronous options. So they, if they come to the live discussion, they can do that. Or if not, they can discuss on Mattermost, which I really like, because it is somebody had recommended that to me, that they were using Slack in their classroom. And so I, you know, that's when I kind of discovered that we had Mattermost here and that's what I'm using. And it is way more informal than Moodle. You can, you know, post smiley faces and other emoticons, thumbs up, and those

kinds of things. I really think it really facilitates them engaging with each other. And and then also for the clarifying factors. Yeah, of course I record those as well. And similar to Crystal, I had a drop-off in attendance around this, this little midterm time, and it's picked up a little bit now, but it's still a little bit lower than it was prior to the midterms. But then I am getting people participating in the discussion on Mattermost if they're not in the, in the live discussions. So I think that's working as a, as an alternative way for them to engage and they, they see that they're, they're liking that place to communicate as well. I'm curious how many of them have started up like private channels on Mattermost? I don't know if they're doing that or not. Right. Cause they can, and she can too, but I don't know if they're doing that obviously. Yeah.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think it's first of all, it's really cool to hear how you guys are using Mattermost as a tool. It's something that we do offer. And if folks are finding that the discussion board is a little bit too rigid or stultifying, or you just want a discussion option that much more closely mimics other kinds of web 2.0 platforms, like a lot more like a Facebook Messenger, a Twitter, it has a lot more of that kind of feel and aesthetic. We use it in Open Learning as our main means of team communication. And I drive everybody crazy posting animated gifts, but that's because they're fun.

Crystal Huscroft:

I want to learn how to do that because I think my students would think I'm so cool if I learned how to.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I love animated gifts. And I once had students do course evaluations in animated gifts. This was after I was regularized at Douglas. So it wasn't, they weren't formal course evaluations, but I had them review the course in animated gifts and it was eye opening, especially the ones that they chose for the essay they chose for that really taught me a lot about what they thought of the essay question.

Catherine Ortner:

So fun.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's so fun and Mattermost would enable that really easily. It's a little bit harder on Moodle.

Crystal Huscroft:

But just a side note about Mattermost, because I think that was one of the things that I love about this semester is having Mattermost. My students, especially with getting going at the beginning of the semester when there was so many questions, I felt far less overwhelmed for some reason, getting messages through matter most and being able to reply really fast versus if I was getting all these emails in my inbox. And I was like, I was Mattermosting Catherine going, OMG, I love Mattermost. Because it was so fast. Rather than, like, a hi dear student and writing email and describing things I could screenshot and cut and paste. And I dunno, it was just, it was fast. I could be making my kids a snack and, you know, maybe that's, I, you know, I was like, I don't want to do this habitually, but when they were so lost and they needed so much help getting going, I was so happy to have Mattermost.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Okay. I think Brian's going to think that we paid you to say, OMG, I love Mattermost. Okay. Here's the question I feel compelled to ask because you know, one of the things that folks are really trying and in, in many cases, feeling like they're failing to manage right now is workload. And in many ways, part of why the traditional lecture structure and the traditional assessment structure has emerged is because it's pretty efficient from the instructor's point of view. Right. I prepare a lecture, I deliver a lecture. Maybe I have some discussion questions. I give you an exam, you take the exam and we're done here. Right. I'd love it. If you could talk, as honestly, as you wish about the workload involved in choosing an alternative course structure, like interteaching.

Catherine Ortner:

Huge. I mean, honestly this summer, I mean, normally in the summer I'm doing research and I don't honestly, to be honest, I really don't think about teaching all that, that much in the summer. We're a little bit of, you know, editing or preparing. But this summer, all I did was prepare for teaching this fall. But now during the semester it is more work and that I have more grading than I normally would. But I, I have a confession to make here is that I don't grade all of their discussion questions. As I mentioned that first round, the first draft, I just, it's just based on good faith that, but so I'm not reading them in detail at that point. And then I actually just grade a subset of the discussion questions each week, they get to vote on which questions they liked and which questions they didn't like. So I, I kind of drop the worst question and then I pick one of the remaining questions to grade, so that lightens the load a little bit, but it does feel like a lot of marking compared to what I, what I used to have. So but I'm spending less time actually lecturing and preparing lectures. So overall, I'm not sure if there was a lot of preparation -- in the beginning, but now that it's flowing along, I don't know if I'm putting that much more in than I was before, but I had everything set up before because I didn't know what was going to happen with school and daycare. I had absolutely everything set up. All my discussion questions were prepared before semester. This semester started. If I was still making up the discussion questions as I was getting along, then I would definitely have a much heavier workload right now.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think it's true in general that a well-structured fully online course, if it's going to rely on students, building knowledge themselves requires a ton of upfront labor. But that hopefully that pays off as the course unfolds. And it sounds maybe like you're having that experience, Catherine. Crystal, what's it been like for you?

Crystal Huscroft:

Oh my gosh, not like Catherine at all. So Catherine was like, all right. So Catherine and I started going for these distanced, walks around a track at a high school, you know, six feet running. Okay. Yes. Running. Sometimes I convinced her to walk the other way around and we'd be discussing this and getting, and she was at the end of the summer, she was like so prepared and everything's like really nicely laid out. I was totally opposite. I felt like I was like, I took one of the first sessions of the FLIM course -- facilitating learning in Moodle -- and I felt like a flunky because I was stopped by the first session that was talking about learning objectives and aligning everything with your learning objectives and the idea that you really need to focus on those learning objectives and cut out all the extra fat. And so I, like I realized, and I looked at my textbook, I needed a brand new textbook because my textbook was really worked for me before, when I had so much lecturing to frame everything. It was really strong in images, but it didn't have the narrative around the images. So I was like, so I'm building as I'm evaluating. And right now I am looking at this wall of awful. I'm like super behind in my marking, struggling with that. And I think next time I teach this -- and I get to reteach it in the winter. I'm so lucky. It'll be a lot easier, but I need to be

smarter in my and just not actually the interteaching. I'm also teaching lab activities that needed to be completely remade. And so it's mostly my lab if I really think, honestly, I guess it's my lab marking that I need to be smarter about because the lecture marketing for me is not that bad either. Again, my practice, I have a lot of my questions I have as in their pre lecture activities our multiple choice questions, but then they ask for discussion the rationale what's behind it. My multiple choice often ask them to apply the, the theory. And so then in the explanation they do, and then my, my my summit of quiz is either new, multiple new, but similar multiple choice questions. Or I ask them for that rationale may here was your question, what was your answer? And what is the rationale behind it? And so they explained those things. So they're preparing all 20 practice quiz questions, and then they get a subset of 10. Some of them are automatically marked by Moodle and then some of them that I need to read their long answers for. So I think it lecture wise, it's, it's similar, but my lab's a whole other pot of beans.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I appreciate you both being so honest about the experience. I think it's really helpful for folks especially, well, I just think we all think we're the only ones who are struggling sometimes and we're not right. And, and the struggles are different depending on the choices that you made in the semester. We're at the end of the time that I promised you this would take -- we've run long, because this is fascinating. So maybe as a last thought, I would ask you, I'm going to share some resources around interteaching in the show notes for today's episode, if somebody is listening and they're thinking, I want to try this in the winter term, if you could offer them one piece of advice going in what would you each say? And I know that's hard, I've been told not to ask that question. And yet here I am one piece each, specifically about jumping into interteaching. If that's what they want to try,

Catherine Ortner:

Keep it simple. I mean, it is simple, but -- so one thing I did read about into teaching as you should stick as closely as possible to the original method, because we don't know how sort of taking pieces out would change it. And the students sometimes resist it and I've had some of them give me a feedback thing. You know, I want you to lecture before we have the discussion and I've had a few times I've had to remind them. No, no, no. The whole point is that you grapple with these questions together with your peers before I lecture so that I'm not just repeating the stuff that's in the textbook that you've already read and can understand, but that we really spend our time together in the best way, grappling with working on the concepts that you are struggling with and use our time most effectively together. So I think, and preparing the students for it as Crystal mentioned, and I found it as well. Those first couple of weeks were a little bit crazy with the number of questions coming from students. And so if someone were to go this route I would say, make sure you really explain really carefully to the students, why you're doing it and how it works. And I would, I'd be glad if anybody didn't want to try this route, I'd be glad to chat to them more and send them some of the resources that, that I worked on developing, because I think having it really clear to the students up front, but then, then they find that there's a really predictable rhythm each week. It gets easier, right? The first couple of weeks are a struggle and then it gets a lot easier after that.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That's good to know Crystal, what would be your advice?

Crystal Huscroft:

Very, very similar. And I just want to kind of emphasize that the students really appreciate it. I shared with them the evidence and why I chose this because there is, they really like, you know, having the lecture first and I can see that and I tell them, you know, it might feel really comfortable, but how much are you actually learning and retaining when you watch a video rather than practicing using your knowledge first? So I would say in my case, I needed to make sure I had a strong textbook that they did there first, but it's really low stakes. It's just pass fail. They have to just get 50% on that first effort of trying. But when I've -- I have this anonymous feedback tool at the top of my Moodle page, just saying, how's it going, let me know anonymously so that I can get some some honest feedback. And they're saying that they really appreciate that this is an efficient use of their time. And that they feel it's not because -- or that it is an efficient use of their time, because I've shared with them, the evidence on, you know, how much does somebody retain from a video and how much does somebody retain after discussing the content with somebody else? And how much do you retain if you've taught somebody else the content. So some of my students come up to the group, interteaching, and they have a really strong command. And I was worried about them feeling like they're not learning. And I was like, no, they're like, the evidence shows that if you can teach a concept, then you will remember it, you know, and be able to use it in such a more powerful way than if you just hear about a concept.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So true. And I think in general, anytime we try something with students that is different than, you know, what we've acculturated them to learn, like the style in which we've acculturated them to learn. It's very fixed And they've seen it over and over again. And I think when we provide them with evidence of another way of doing things, it can be really powerful for them in terms of taking agency over their own learning and their own learning preferences, which often they don't get a lot of choice over. Right. and I think that's true. I mean, I think anytime you're having difficulty getting students to take up whatever it is, they don't seem invested in an assignment. They don't seem to care about an exam. They don't like a reading -- oftentimes it's because they don't have any clear sense of how it fits into the bigger picture of the course and taking the time to provide that to students and to explain why you're making the choices you're making can be really, really powerful. I'm grateful to you both for coming and chatting about this today, because I think that this is a really unique and interesting approach. And it's certainly not one we presented -- like, wow, you got to do this really cool thing that we didn't even think of talking about. So I'm super chuffed that, that you've brought this to the community. I guess so a one word answer before we, we let it go. Do you think that when we return to in-person teaching, you'll continue to use the entire teaching structure at that point? Or will you, do you think you'll go back to a more lecture heavy format?

Catherine Ortner:

Yes. Yes to the first one, but that goes back to what I said at the beginning, how I'd been wanting to make changes for a while and interteaching had been on my radar for something to look at. I just needed the impetus to, to do it. So, and now that I've done it, I'm really convinced that some style of this, or, you know, it's kind of flipped classroom, but I, I liked that even more than just the regular flipped classroom where people do video lectures and then, you know, discuss things in class. I even prefer this actually. Sorry. Yeah.

Crystal Huscroft:

I'm never going. Yeah. I'm never going back either, but I definitely need to perfect my delivery.

Catherine Ortner:

Yeah. Never going, never going back.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

You guys are in the very early days of taking on a huge new teaching challenge and you're doing it in a pandemic. So I would be shocked and amazed if you were like, and I'm perfect at it now. Sweet. Thank you both so much for your time today.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So that's it for episode ten [editor's note: actually, 11] of You Got This. As always, if you want to write to us, you can email me bgray@tru.ca. And I'm also on Twitter [@brennacgray](https://twitter.com/brennacgray). In both cases, that's 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.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm going to leave you today with a tiny teaching tip. And the last time we talked, I think I told you to take a rest. But the time before that, when we talked, I think I told you about reflective practice. I asked you to think about what it is you love about your job, and I hope that you did. Today, I've got another little bit of reflective practice for you. And that is to ask yourself, what is one thing I did this semester that had a negative impact on my experience of my class? And can I get rid of it? It's a hard question because oftentimes we think everything is essential. Everything feels essential right in the moment, but I think with a little bit of distance and a recognition of the pressures that we're under, we can try to be really clear eyed about what is, and isn't, mission critical for our classes. So I'm going to encourage you to think about that this week and to be brave enough, to make some real changes in the winter term. Even if that just means cutting an assessment that you've always done, that just doesn't translate well to the online space, or delivering content in a different way, or trying out interteaching, or maybe just figuring out a way to cut yourself some slack, but start with that question. What am I doing this semester that's really not serving me -- and can I get rid of it? And see where it takes you. Good luck with it. I missed you all the last two weeks and then glad to be back. I hope you've enjoyed today's episode. We'll talk soon. Bye-Bye.