



## What We Are Learning About Learning, S1 E2

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Kim: Welcome to episode two of "What We Are Learning About Learning," a podcast created and produced by the Center for New Designs and Learning and Scholarship, also known as CNDLS, at Georgetown University. I'm Kim Huisman-Lubreski.

Joe: And I'm Joe King. In our first episode, we heard from a group of students on their experience with remote learning in fall of 2020.

Gwyneth: For me, I really, really love my classes.

Isabel: There is currently a violin being played across the hall. There's someone to take care of. There's babysitting to do. Someone needs me to make them lunch. Someone's playing a game and loses and yells, and I'm in a discussion group.

Margaret: I want to throw my laptop into a lake.

Gwyneth: And so the fact that some of my professors set up specific times just to get to know them for every single one of their students-- that's been amazing.

Joe: In this second episode, we're featuring the voices of our faculty members from across Georgetown, in addition to conversation facilitator Daniela Brancaforte, a faculty member from the McDonough School of Business. In the time of Coronavirus and throughout a politically charged year, this conversation covers what's been working for faculty.

What have they learned from their students about remote teaching and how to do it effectively? How have they created a sense of community in an isolating time? And what do they plan to do differently in the future?

Kim: We found the responses you are about to hear incredibly insightful and reflective of Georgetown's core values and ignatian pedagogical approach. Teaching to the whole student has never been more important. You will hear about the value of social presence and connecting with students individually. We heard over and over that small group structures help students develop relationships which, in turn, deepens their learning.

We were also struck by how faculty have powerfully reimagined the instructor's role as guide, as curator, as support system. And we saw the notion of community grow legs. It goes beyond the classroom. It's about creating connections between students, of course, but also between students and experts through guest speakers, students in the community through revised assessments, and students in the world of



public scholarship. And all of this was bolstered by flexibility and a willingness to change plans on the fly in response to students' needs, interests, and what's working.

Joe: This conversation was originally a panel hosted as part of a faculty development initiative led by CNDLS called Digital Learning Days, which took place on December 8, 2020. We've edited and condensed the conversation for the purposes of this podcast.

Daniela: For those of you who don't know me, I'm Daniela Brancaforte, a Senior Assistant Dean in the MSV undergraduate program. I am also teaching-- or just finished teaching on Tuesday-- a first year seminar of which-- I am an anthropologist. I teach a business anthropology class. And I'm also teaching-- or taught-- the senior honors thesis seminar, which I will be continuing in the spring. So without further ado, I'm going to ask the panelists to briefly introduce themselves and share what courses they taught this fall, or even in the spring. And I will turn it over to Shelbi first, if you wouldn't mind introducing yourself.

Shelbi: Hello, everyone. My name is Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner. I'm a second year assistant professor in the philosophy department. This semester I taught intro to ethics and intro to indigenous philosophy. Intro to indigenous philosophy is my favorite class to teach. I got to design it from the ground up. And I'm teaching it again in the spring, so I'll get to implement all the changes I need to implement. And I'm also teaching philosophy of language in the spring as well.

Alphonso: Good morning. I'm Alphonso Seville. I'm a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. And this summer I taught the problem of God and American slavery course. I taught it again in the fall as one of the-- I forget the term we used, but it was one of the courses that was flexed where there was the pre-fall intensive course. So the format there was interesting. And then I also taught a Black Lives Matter course, and then also Black religions and protest. Thank you, Alphonso. And I will turn it over to Tom, please.

Tom: Yes. Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us today. This semester, I was just teaching one course with way too many students, called music and politics. It's a government course. It's a political theory course in our department. In the spring I will be giving the course called the Civil and Social Community, as well as team-teaching a course with Josiah Osgood in the Classics Department on leadership.

Rhonda: Hi. Good morning. I'm Rhonda Dzakpasu. I'm faculty in the Physics Department. And this semester I taught a biophysics course. And next semester I will be teaching a modern physics course. And unfortunately, it is supposed to be a lab course. But because we're virtual now, we are about to start trying to put things together so that we can have some semblance of a virtual lab for the spring.

Daniela: Thank you all for introducing yourselves. Let's start with what worked for you this fall. What was effective for you and your students?



Shelbi: So this semester in my intro to indigenous philosophy course, I had some time over the summer to design a brand new style of teaching for me, since it was online. And I broke the class-- it was a 27 person class. I broke it into learning pods of three and then had them stay in that same pod all semester. I gave them a workbook which I wrote beforehand that was designed around a weekly flow where, on Tuesdays, during their synchronous pod meetings, they would work on discussion questions. And then on Thursdays they would work on some sort of activity I had pre-planned in this workbook. And the workbook was on Google Slides. It was really interactive.

The students ended up really, really enjoying it. And even though they only knew two other people for the majority of the class, they ended up bonding with each other really well. And since it is a project based class, it ended up with some really, really phenomenal final projects that I'm laughing and crying and learning as I'm sitting here grading them. So I think that was a really, really successful way of structuring a class.

Alphonso: I really utilized the features that were available to me via Canvas. So utilizing those modules helped keep students organized. And then also utilizing guest lecturers-- I guess I found out how good of a colleague I have been in the-- or perhaps not been in the class. But I certainly was able to utilize guest lecturers.

And I think it broke up some of the monotony of our regular class rhythm. It seemed to be a highlight of the students' experiences. And then also, the guest themselves also seemed to really enjoy it. The last thing I'll say about the guests is that I also shared the students' reflections and responses with the guest lecturers themselves. And so they were able to create-- for some students, not for every student. They were able to create some ongoing dialogue that lasted throughout the course of the semester. And so I think it really highlighted that as a positive experience for a lot of students.

Tom: As CNDLS suggested back late summer, the pre-course survey to send out to your students about what sort of technology they have available to them was invaluable. And what I also did was a version of that midway through the semester to sort of check in how they were doing with the technology they have as well as modifying some of the questions that would normally be asked on the end of the semester student evaluations, just to get a sense for myself as to how students thought of the class, what I could do to maybe make modifications to the course.

The course, by the way, has 56 students in it. It is primarily a lecture course when I have given it in the physical classroom. I've had to modify that approach quite a bit for the online experience. Another thing that I thought worked very well-- and I realize for some of you this would be very time consuming-- is, at the beginning of the semester, meaning the first couple of weeks, I insisted upon individual meetings with each student. 15 minutes is sufficient time for doing this. And much to my delight and surprise, all 56 of them made appointments to come and see me. Just so I could get to know them, they could get to know me a little better. And it worked very well. It was a very nice icebreaker, in other words.

The other thing I found very, very important was using the breakout room function in Zoom. And every week, sometimes for one class meaning, sometimes for both class meetings in a week, I would put up on Canvas discussion questions, or a discussion question, which, then, when we would get to the breakout room portion of a class, I would assign the students usually six to seven-- I thought was a good number in each of the breakout rooms. Give them several minutes to think about and discuss the question among themselves.

And then we would reassemble as the full class, and each group would report back-- usually one student. I don't know if they self designated, because I did get a nice variety of students responding over the course of the semester-- to do what they thought of the question or how they wanted to respond to the question. And it ultimately was a really nice way of getting the students to know one another because Zoom randomly assigns the participants in these breakout rooms. And I suspect that throughout the semester, by the time we got to the end of it, everybody had a chance to spend at least one breakout session with every other student enrolled in the class.

Actually, two more quick points. We really need to be very flexible in our office hours. We can't just say, I'll be available Tuesday from 1:00 to 2:30. To accommodate the students who are living literally around the world, we have to be prepared to meet with them sometimes at rather odd hours. I realize everyone that this is extra work on everyone who is already very tired and stressed from this very different sort of environment.

But for example, Monday evening, I met with a student who's living in Hong Kong right now. Our meeting started, I think, at about 9:30 PM. So we just have to be prepared to be able to do that.

And then finally, what I've found effective both back in the spring and throughout this semester is starting the class with something a little more personal, sharing something personal. And what I do is, as my students know, I'm a fanatic about cats. So I will usually use a picture as a background picture of one of my cats at the start of each class, say a couple of words about it. It's just a nice way of making them feel comfortable. Another of my colleagues does sort of the same thing, except with his children.

Daniela: And Rhonda, please.

Rhonda: One of the big things that I learned-- I guess there were two that I was reluctant to do but I ended up doing. The first was preparing the entire course online. So fortunately this is a course in biophysics that I had taught before. So I did know the arc. But I tend to prepare a few days before the lecture when we were in person.

But I took the advice. And it was a lot of work to really plan and have every single module uploaded before the semester began. That was a great help.

And then the second thing I did was dramatically reduced the time that I lectured. So rather than lecture three times a week, I only lectured-- and it was really more meeting with the class as a group once a week. And I broke the class up into groups of two students.



And the course is very interdisciplinary, so I've got physics majors and biochemistry majors and biology majors. So I would pair students from different majors. And I met with each group every week. So everyone had more of a one on one or two on one with me.

And I took the weekly meeting as a time for me to distill questions and issues that arose the week before to present them to the entire class. And so I found that to be really useful. And it worked well. The students really appreciated it because I took to heart very seriously their concerns from the spring semester with having Zoom fatigue.

And so they could meet on their own. And I encouraged them to work together. And when they met with me in these groups, each student would present one of the solutions to the homework set that I assigned the previous week. So again, this gave them a chance to communicate with me not just the solution. But if they had issues with getting to the solution, this was their chance to tell me where they were able-- where they got stuck and then, of course, when they were able to successfully solve the problems. And then, like I said, I could just carry that over and then distill general issues that I would see in each group presentation and present that to the class each week.

Daniela: Thank you all for your in depth responses to this question about what was effective in the fall.

Shelbi: One of the things that I learned very early on in the semester was that the students were just profoundly lonely. I think a lot of us are dealing with that right now, but these students were just craving, just hungry for meaningful interactions. They were hungry for outlets for their creativity. I think we all kind of feel this right now, where you can only call your mom so many times in one day. You can only talk to so many people so many times in one day.

And one of the really meaningful things about the way this pod structure ended up working is that each and every pod-- all nine of them-- ended up talking with each other. Remember, I don't content lecture. That's not part of my class structure. So these students are meeting with each other synchronistically two times a week and became really close friends with one another.

And I had scheduled appointments with them so that-- I know you have that awkward moment when your students are in breakout rooms and then you pop in and you ruin the vibe of the conversation. So the great thing about this pod structure is that I had a scheduled 15-minute appointment for pods on Tuesdays, five pods on Thursdays. They knew which 15 minutes I was going to be there for, so they were ready for me to pop in and kill the vibes.

And I would always walk in and see them all in these really, really emotional and personal and creative conversations. It seemed like it really helped them get close to one another, which was so exciting and obviously, eventually, beneficial for their final projects. But throughout the semester, that was just the-- the feedback I kept hearing is that so many students were worried that they were going to miss out on an opportunity to meet new people and that this class with the particular type of structure that it had made it so that they at least made it through the semester with two people that they got to consistently see and



talk to and process not only the hellscape that is our reality right now, but also to process the really difficult material that we work with in my particular class.

I often teach about genocide and violence against women. It's a really, really emotionally loaded course. And them having that close relationship, reoccurring conversations with people that they eventually learn to trust I think was a really helpful way for them to make it through the material as well.

I think Tom mentioned it earlier-- the awkward silences that we are perhaps accustomed to in the physical classroom setting were a little bit more unsettling in the virtual space because it was also more difficult to read the room. So a lot of times if there's that awkward silence, when we are gathered in person, you can kind of read the room, read the body language of various students. There are other types of clues that you can utilize that really enable the interpersonal interactions that students and faculty are looking for. That's a lot more difficult to do as a faculty member in this virtual setting. And I felt, I think-- I didn't realize it until, perhaps, towards the end of the semester. And this is really where I thought I was failing, but it wasn't necessary for me to be as involved in that process as I thought I needed to be. I wanted to take a much more-- I think I was more accustomed to feeling, at least, as though I was much more in control of the ways in which students interacted. And I learned that I didn't need to be.

Alphonso So one of my big frustrations-- I, like many others, tried to use the breakout room feature. And I think the students-- this was probably one of their favorite aspects or more preferred features of the course. And I didn't like it because I would create three or four different breakout rooms. And I couldn't strike the balance between making the breakout groups small enough that students could have meaningful engagement. And by doing that, I create so many groups that I couldn't get to each one of them.

But I learned later in the semester that it wasn't always necessary for me to be a part of the individual learning experiences that the students were having. And so I think just learning to trust their ability to be self-directed learners-- and it really helped me to understand my role in a different way.

So if I'm not responsible for micromanaging this process, what other role could I have and still responsibly fulfill my duties as a leader in this learning community? And so it really became about equipping students with the tools to do some of the critical thinking skills. And then I'll also say, to that end, utilizing other university partners--

Tom: Yeah. I'd like to just add to what Alphonso was saying about trust in micromanaging. And I found the same thing as we went through the semester that, paradoxically, they're lonely on one hand, yet they don't want to be hand-held too much on the other side of things. And it's adjusting and finding a balance between how much I need to insert myself.

And one of the things I decided right at the beginning of the semester with the breakout rooms is I'm not going to drop in. I don't want to come across as big brother to these students. They're perfectly capable of carrying on a conversation about the question I'm asking them to consider on their own without my eavesdropping in on that conversation.

Daniela: Thank you. And Rhonda, did you want to add something?



Rhonda: Sure. So I think the biggest thing that I learned from my students is, at least for this semester, they appreciated the routine. And I say that because, like I said, I reduced my lecture time. So as a class, we only met once a week. And I even told them that, I'm recording this. So if you can't make it-- different time zone, whatever-- you can clearly watch the recording asynchronously. And there were two-- yeah. There were two weeks during the semester that they did not have an assignment due. The assignment was not due until the subsequent week. So in theory, they didn't have to start the problem set. And when we met in our groups, they did not have to present anything. And it turned out that the students showed up. So I didn't cancel the lecture or the meeting. And I just thought I would have just a couple of students. But the students would show up. And they would ask a question. They came to the regular group meetings, even if they didn't have to present something. And they would discuss maybe tangential items, maybe not exactly the problem set, but they were able to tie in what they were learning in this course, since the course is so interdisciplinary, with other courses that they were taking. And so I just allowed them that time to integrate and synthesize the materials. Recording the lectures is absolutely essential, given the fact that our students are scattered all around or sometimes they just can't make class, particularly graduating seniors who are quite often involved in job interviews and that sort of thing.

Daniela: That actually brings up what I was going to talk about, which is the sense of community. And you all touched upon it, but if you could just talk a little bit more about how you created that sense of community in your classrooms.

Shelbi: For the synchronous class I taught, as I mentioned, it's that pod structure. So for an hour and 15 minutes twice a week, they're just on a call with their two new best friends. And they're just like chilling. They can be on voice without their cameras on. They can really do whatever they want as long as they get those assignments done in their workbooks.

And it seems like that really helps with the Zoom fatigue because it's not the same kind of sitting perfectly with your makeup and hair done. It's more of just meeting with your friends and having a conversation about whatever topics I happened to pick for that week. So that was really helpful for them. But on the issue of building community, I think it's really important, not just obviously in the situation we're in but with the content that I teach about indigenous resistance movements. I want my students to build community not just among themselves but also with the resistance movements that they research alongside. So it's always been part of my-- it's always been part of this class to do a final project where you're practicing research reciprocity, where you're working very, very closely with a particular community and in a non extractive sort of way. And that means that I have to set aside an enormous amount of time in the semester to help prep them for how to build those types of meaningful relationships.

And they end up generating-- I can't exaggerate enough-- these truly phenomenal projects around student activism, where they're building community not just between themselves but with the Georgetown community, with indigenous communities, with other spaces around campus. And that was actually even more so this semester because of the online nature of it that I think that was just kind of a surprising and really beneficial component of that class.



Alphonso: One of the things I utilized-- and I think it may have been Tom who mentioned it earlier, but this idea of a kind of informal check in. So normally, at least once a week-- because I did tend to-- so we met twice a week in all but one of my classes. And I tended to utilize synchronous meetings more than asynchronous meetings and then learned and adapted more so towards the end of the semester. But for the majority of the semester we were meeting twice.

And so one of the things that I would start as a kind of ritual is to ask at either the beginning 15 or ending 15, 10 to 15 minutes about-- so we started at the beginning of the semester and it was just, more generally, what exciting things do you have planned for the upcoming weekend? And then when we would meet for the first day of the following week, we would either follow up on those plans or what-- and then over the course of the semester, gradually, that began to shift to, what Georgetown related news stories did anybody see, or anything Georgetown related at all?

And so at first, initially, a lot of them were sports related, things that were not obviously related to our course content or any course content. But again, the students were smart enough to begin to make those types of connections. Maybe I telegraphed it a little bit, but they certainly saw where I wanted to go with this kind of activity. And they really beat me there.

And I think because I didn't have to hand hold them to the, hey, let's now begin to connect this back to course material in interesting ways, they were able to do that a bit more organically. And because it was such an enjoyable part of the class, I thought, well, let's utilize this to offset some of the monotony of longer papers and longer assignments. How about a reflection on what seemed to be an enjoyable discussion today?

And this could be a part of course credit that wasn't previously outlined and discussed in the syllabus.

Part of my flexibility is to always be as transparent and to try to do what's always in your best interest.

And so I didn't make any changes that I didn't explain. And I think the students appreciated that.

One of my concerns was that because-- a major concern was that we weren't able to utilize textbooks.

And so we had to, in midstream-- in one course, anyways-- switch to electronic readings. And so I thought, oh, I'm going to lose them because here's this huge change to this format.

And there were frequent explanations. A lot of students reached out via email. And it was some busy work on my end. But most of the students appreciated and stayed together through that kind of change. So I think the transparency and the frequent and ongoing communication was vital in terms of maintaining that community.

Tom: The only thing I want to add to what I've already said and what Shelbi, Rhonda, and Alphonso have said is, try to create the sense that you're there for your students, which means sometimes setting up odd hour office hour meetings on Zoom, responding as promptly as possible to emails because they are so isolated, and many of them are feeling very, very lonely. And I think some of us, probably, as faculty members are feeling very lonely and disconnected from what we normally do and how we normally do it-- is just to create the sense that, yeah, I'm here. I'm supportive of what you're going through.



Rhonda: Yeah. So with me, just two brief things. I mentioned before that I paired the students. And so they had the same group of two that would work throughout the semester on problem sets offline from the course. And then each of them would meet with me as a group during the week regularly. And so that was one way that I tried to incorporate community.

And then the other, which I did not mention, is that, because I was not lecturing, I decided that I would have the use of the discussion tool in Canvas as a way for the students to report on what they read in each chapter. And so initially I said, oh, they're not going to do this. They're going to just put one discussion. It's going to be very, very thin.

So I think I initially said that they had to do four and had some metric as far as how rich each discussion point was. I didn't need to do that. So I was getting-- especially in the beginning of the semester when they didn't have other work to do, the students were telling me that they were spending hours. And I'm like, yeah, I know because I'm reading 150 of your discussion points and then trying to synthesize and integrate them for my weekly meetings.

But what they did-- I was very hands off. And so students would post. They would either post a comment or their opinion about what they read about a particular phenomena, or even a question. And then another student-- if a physics student posted a question, maybe a biochemistry student saw this in one of their courses that a physics major would not have seen. And so they're posting responses, links to journal articles of experiments to support what they were saying. And I just decided, I'm not going to, in any way, intercede until, like I said, spending Saturday and Sunday reading all of these posts and then putting them together.

And then on Monday, when we met, I would say, OK, I'm seeing this as a common theme from this chapter on diffusion. And then I would give more of an authoritative-- but the students themselves were able to just take this and run with it.

Daniela: Thinking about your experiences this fall, for those faculty who maybe didn't teach this fall and who are teaching in the spring for the first time or who are thinking about how to adjust classes in small ways, I'm wondering if you could think about your experiences and maybe what you would do differently or if you have some bits of advice and wisdom.

Shelbi: At the end of this semester, I noticed how overwhelmed my students were just in every aspect of their lives. So I ended up canceling the last three weeks of class, canceling the pre-planned parts of our workbook, our entire last unit, and then just giving that as time for them to work on their final projects. And that was something that I realized I needed, they needed, we all needed. Especially since they were putting so much work into these final projects, I didn't want them doing double time for the class. So that's something I'm absolutely doing next semester. I'm going to write it into the syllabus that, by that time, we're going to be ready to work full time on our projects at your leisure with your 15-minute appointment a week with me. And that's it, because they need that, especially since there's no breaks.

Alphonso: I also adapted the model of-- so we didn't meet-- none of my classes met synchronously after Thanksgiving, so maybe the last two weeks as opposed to three. But we also had-- by the time that they would have theoretically come back from the Thanksgiving break, final assignments and everything that they would have needed to be prepared to complete the course was ready to go. So I would second that as a strategy.

The other thing in terms of thinking about-- again, I'm piggybacking from Shelbi. But I had thought about adopting what she's calling the pod learning model, because what I found is-- my courses are generally fueled by discussion and conversation and interaction. And in a in-person setting, you can manage, I think, or I could more easily manage a discussion group with 28 to 35 students.

It becomes much more difficult in the virtual platform. I think it's and much more easy for students who don't want to participate to hide by either just staying silent, turning off the cameras. And so I'd see the advantage of creating the smaller learning units.

Tom: I've just tried to be as accommodating as I can while maintaining intellectual standards. For example, in my classes, I generally have a mid-term essay and a final essay, both prompt based, though the final essay also allows students to choose a topic of their own. And for mid-term projects, it's very simple to allow extensions where needed. We don't have as much flexibility, of course, at the end of the semester because we are up against deadlines from the registrar's office.

But I've also slightly shortened the minimum length for particularly the final essay, dropping it from, say, 15 pages to 10 pages because everybody is basically running on empty right now. And it's a way of accommodating their needs at this point while, I think-- I hope at least. We'll see when I get the papers over the weekend-- still maintaining the intellectual standards that I would demand from my students or expect from my students in the physical classroom.

Much to my delight, the midterm essays were among the best batch of student papers that I've had. And I've been teaching at Georgetown for 12 years now. Again, it's flexibility, flexibility, flexibility is I think what we have to be quite cognizant of in teaching in a virtual environment.

So one of the stress points just in general are assessments. And of course, this is a physics course. And so they are always worried about their mathematical skills. Are they going to be able to solve the problems, and how can I assess that?

Rhonda: So what I decided to do-- they didn't have exams. They will not have a final. But I can look at and understand their mathematical sophistication because they're presenting every week a solution to a problem set. And so what they have to do now to, again, integrate the work, I put the burden on them. So they're constructing a digital portfolio using the Canvas tool. And in this portfolio, among other things, the important thing is the self-assessment. I want them to tell me, what did they learn? And also, how did they know they learned it well? And then, what did they feel they didn't learn so well?

So again, we're always testing them on, what do they know? And they're trying to prove that they've learned everything that you've taught them. And I want them to realize that you didn't and that's

acceptable. And I want you to tell this to me. And guess what? This will help your grade if you can tell me what you did not learn so well.

And then, they also have to do a concept map where, again, I'm asking them to put together the different components and the different concepts. And it's different from each student just because they're coming from a different science discipline.

Daniela: I see that Suzanna had a question for Alphonso. It was about the ongoing dialogue with guest speakers. Did you find that all students did that or connected with the speakers? And she's thinking about the time-- or how that dialogue might have had an impact of their learning.

Alphonso: Sure. So to answer the question, no. It certainly wasn't every student, I think, that made those connections with guest speakers. So I think, for each class, I did-- there wasn't a class where I had more than two guest speakers for any individual class.

And so students who-- so one of the things I did is I created prompts for students to respond specifically to the readings and topics shared by the guest speakers. And then I shared those papers specifically with the lecturers themselves. And if there were students who I thought really showed a pretty keen grasp of a concept, or here's a student who has been interested in this particular topic and highlighted something in his or her reflection that I thought would be of interest, I pointed that out.

Like, hey, take a look at student X's paper. He or she really seemed to be drawn to your discussion of this or that topic. Though you might be interested. And then, a lot of times, those scholars would have a response-- oh, hey, that was really cool. And so I could relay that message.

And the other thing that will happen is that they would connect in ways that were really informal. So the guests would share their email addresses and social media handles for students who wanted to follow. And so some of those students would maybe go and follow a particular scholar on Twitter or Instagram. And if that scholar shared something that they thought was pertinent to our class conversation, that student would then bring that new material or that new resource back into the class conversation. And this became one of those Georgetown-related weekend icebreakers that students would share.

The other thing is that-- So if a student had a link to an article or video or-- we used a lot of artwork and images. So if students shared those types of things, we added them-- so we kept a collection of these as a part of the-- there was a page in our Canvas site.

And so I think-- and the other thing I did is-- I borrowed this from-- my daughter's a middle-schooler. And so her middle school teachers do this in their Google Classrooms. But they changed the layout of the classroom periodically so that, when the student logs into the classroom, you see a different image. You see a different arrangement.

So when we introduced a new module, it was like, oh, the course has been redesigned. It hasn't. I've just uploaded a new image. But I think it created that kind of effect, particularly when students started to you



see the images that they had submitted now being the thematic representation of the class. I think it created more of an investment in the learning.

And so those were some-- a lot of that was-- I thought that interest, for better or worse, was stimulated more so when the guest lecturer spoke. So I don't know if that suggests something about my lecturing style or if it's just that the guests break up the monotony.

Shelbi: Yeah. So not only have my students, similar to Alphonso, been able to make really cool connections with scholars all over and actually show gratitude to scholars in a way I think scholars aren't familiar with getting-- so that's really kind of sharing the love all over the place. That's been a great thing on Twitter.

Another thing I do often, in person and especially this semester, is what I call Twitter research projects, where I give the students an activity to synergize their reading and philosophical concepts that they have put together for the week, where they go on to Twitter and see what indigenous activists are using that word for or are using that philosophical concept for. And then in their little workbooks, I have them make these little comparative analysis charts where they show all of the different ways a term like sovereignty is being used by indigenous activists all over the world. And I'm just like, shout out to all these amazing people using Twitter to do scholarship because it's making my job easier too.

Daniela: I would just like to say thank you so much to Shelbi, Tom, Rhonda, and Alphonso for really giving me a lot to think about for the next semester. And thank you for sharing your experiences.

Joe: So there you have it. We hope this conversation gave you ideas for how to structure small groups in a virtual setting, how to rethink your role and support self-directed learning, and how to build community in the classroom and beyond. We know the new semester is right around the corner. And we hope you'll feel empowered to learn and change as you go, as these faculty have.

If ever there was a time for flexibility and responsiveness, it's now. And we can think of it as an opportunity to learn and grow together.

Kim: This was "What We Are Learning About Learning," faculty edition. In our next episode, we will continue to drill down on what we are learning about learning. This episode was made possible by many people at CNDLS, including Molly Chehak, James Olsen, Eleri Syverson, Meghan Modafferi, and Lee Skalerup-Bessette. Special thanks to the faculty who shared their teaching experiences with us-- Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner, Alphonso Saville, Tom Kirsch, and Rhonda Dzakpasu-- as well as to our moderator Daniela Brancaforte.

Again, I'm Kim Huisman-Lubreski.

Joe: And I'm Joe King. Thanks for listening.