

Inspiration and Innovation: From Emergency Remote Teaching to Emerging Pedagogy in Our Next Normal

CLT 2021 Virtual Symposium Re-cap
By CLT Team

In case you missed it, this year, CLT's annual symposium was fully virtual and extended over three half-days March 8 - 10. The theme was "Inspiration and Innovation: Conversations Around Emerging Pedagogy in Our Next Normal", and it included keynotes, workshops and a forum by international speakers, as well as an AUC faculty panel and two AUC faculty showcase sessions. This newsletter re-caps some of the highlights, and points you to relevant links to recordings and slides on CLT website: <https://www.aucegypt.edu/faculty/center-learning-and-teaching/virtual-symposium>

Keynote Session: Teaching Distracted Minds: Old Challenges, New Contexts

This keynote was led by James Lang (professor of English and the director of the D'Amour Center for Teaching Excellence at Assumption University in Worcester, MA, USA.), the author of several books, including *Distracted: Why Students Can't Focus and What You Can Do About It*.

In this keynote, Lang spoke about how instructors should stop thinking about distraction and instead focus on what we can do to retain student attention. "How to teach a distracted mind?" Since all human minds are distracted minds, the question could be rephrased as: how to teach effectively, knowing that we are usually distractible and that attention is a challenge for all of us.

Distraction is not a new phenomenon brought on by technology. There are push factors (it takes effort to pay attention) and pull factors: humans like novelty, and our devices provide endless novelty. We need to be deliberate in how we seek to achieve student attention and sustain it.

Lang's recommendations include partnering with students, by discussing with them, in a warm and empathetic manner, what distracts them, why it is important for every student voice to participate, and ask about what helps them stay focused.

Another recommendation is to "teach like a playwright" - how do plays sustain attention for over two hours? Structure the class with a "program" and "change the scenes": beginning class with an engaging activity rather than lecturing, using a low stakes assessment in the middle, and ending with an activity that engages students in making connections. Moving away from routine helps students stay focused.

For a deeper look at James Lang's ideas for keeping students' attention, we recommend reading his book, *Distracted: Why Students Can't Focus and What You Can Do About It* (available to borrow from AUC library) and following his blogs on the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

"Highly practical, very relevant and applicable to my current class situation. Excellent".

Andrew Dempsey, RHET

“Appreciated the grounding of distractedness and acknowledgment of need to “renew” attention to one’s course. (I’ve always sensed it but have never heard someone else articulate it).”

Anonymous faculty member via the CLT survey

Keynote Session: Hybrid-Flexible (HyFlex) Instruction Supporting Student Success in Challenging Times and Beyond

This keynote was presented by Brian Beatty, associate professor of instructional technologies in the Department of Equity, Leadership Studies and Instructional Technologies at San Francisco State University, and the person who coined the term HyFlex.

Beatty described Hyflex involves combining online and face to face classes, but emphasized that it is more than the sum of its parts: it is a new genre that builds “learning community with multiple different participation modes” at the same time. Ideally, students would be able to choose whether to attend face to face or online (synchronous, asynchronous, or bichronous) and institutions can choose to offer a certain model or a variety. Importantly, alternative paths and modalities should be designed to lead to equivalent measurable learning outcomes even if not all the students go through identical experiences. The flexibility given to students in terms of the mode of learning is key in Hyflex, and it is important to ensure that Hyflex modes are accessible to students with regards to technology and disability. To ensure fairness in Hyflex course assessments, Beatty recommends consistency such that all students have the same testing environment. This often means conducting online assessments for all, if some groups cannot come to campus, and this would consist ideally of low-stakes quizzes and authentic assessments that provide evidence of learning and understanding. A key consideration during Hyflex lessons is that teachers need to ensure they engage both online and in-person students.

When asked about the increased faculty workload that comes with Hyflex teaching, Beatty said that pre-pandemic, some faculty used to choose to design their courses that way, for example in order to enhance access to their courses for students who could not attend in-person. Where it might be required, the increased load could be managed by an additional stipend, course release, instructional design support, TAs, or doubling up teaching assignments (i.e. you prepare one, teach two sections) in case this becomes a department/institutional requirement. Faculty would need to work on time management and organizing and allocating time for the in-person, synchronous and asynchronous modalities. Although classroom technologies support Hyflex teaching, there are different ways of implementing it that may not require expensive technology.

Some useful resources to follow up on the session include:

- Podcast with Brian Beatty on The Hyflex Course Design Model: <https://thinkudl.org/episodes/hyflex-course-design-model-with-brian-beatty>
- *Hybrid-Flexible (HyFlex) Course Design* by Brian Beatty is available open access at: <https://edtechbooks.org/hyflex>
- FlexSpace website, a free website for educators to explore learning spaces: <https://flexspace.org/>

“I didn’t know about the Hyflex type of course delivery beyond hearing the name. It was extremely informative to hear about it from the person behind the concept, and it gave me ideas on how it can be applied to help programs with lower enrollment!”

Anonymous AMICAL member, CLT Feedback survey.

Plenary Workshop: Touring the Many Worlds of Virtual Facilitation

In this session, participants had the opportunity to choose two of five topics exploring virtual participation from different angles.

Alexis Pala's session focused on *Challenging how we inhibit engagement, using TRIZ*. We sometimes inhibit student engagement. Focusing on our hospitality as educators and using generative methods and tools, we may challenge these counterproductive behaviors. The generative methods focus on what people know, feel and dream, to find out why we inhibit student engagement. Using TRIZ, a Liberating Structure, Pala encouraged participants to find creative solutions by starting with an anti-goal "What could you do to make the most oppressive, inhospitable virtual environment that made participants feel un-welcomed, demoralised and utterly disengaged?" and from there, moving on to identify which of these elements may be happening in their practice, and then what they could do to rectify this.

Autumm Caines' session was entitled *Playing with the Zoom Gaze*. The session builds on Caines' article "The Zoom Gaze" which examines the inequities in Zoom and how the togetherness we're experiencing is an illusion of sorts, hiding power dynamics between the host of a session and students/participants. Using play, one can explore different dynamics and address different means of participation. One of the ways to ensure equity of participation is using the chat, since audio will not ensure everyone has time/space to participate. Three different areas to explore play: interaction, intersection of virtual/physical environment and our physical bodies and identities.

Mia Zamora's session was about *Telling Small Stories to Build Trust*. It started with how "You can't insist upon trust, it has to emerge from moments", and that typical introductions in classes can be awkward. Instead, Zamora showcased ways of using stories and visuals, because telling stories is "stories have sort of magic spells; it is similar to a tea bag that you place in a boiling water; you watch how it steeps over time and infuses (the meaning, that is), comes to our conscious and empowers us.". The first activity involved showing images and asking participants to choose which of these images spoke to how they felt, covering a "story we choose to share". The next activity involved participants drawing a surrealist self-portrait using their non-dominant hand, and represented "stories we tell ourselves" to cultivate self-awareness and also empathy towards others.

Theresa Ronquillo's session offered some *Theater of the Oppressed* techniques, developed originally by Augusto Boal. First, she used Zoom's "hide non-video participants" view to do an introductory activity, then she used the game "opposites" and encouraged participants to reflect on how it felt. For some it felt energizing and fun, for others, it felt oppressive to have to follow instructions. Finally, she used several types of image theater to encourage participants to use their bodies to express complex thoughts, working together to build an idea from the combination of their gestures. These were very different forms of online interaction than most online classes use.

Leah Lockhart's session focused on *Embracing Quiet*. This session focused on how many of us are feeling pressure to produce, to go fast, to cram as much in two hours as possible, what can we do to reduce stress? Session activities involved journaling quietly for a few minutes on "What feels to be in conflict (in tension) in having meetings that are quieter-slower? ", then reflecting on key points in participants' journals, then placing them on a triangle of three key focus areas. This session was different in how it encouraged quiet and self-reflection as modes of learning.

Plenary Forum: Cheating Lessons: What Can We Learn from Academic Dishonesty

James Lang (Assumption University) led this discussion, moderated by Aziza Ellozy (AP TLT).

This session tackled an important topic on everyone's radar this semester. Some faculty sent questions ahead of the session, including:

1. How can we have positive conversations with students about academic integrity?
2. Lessons learned and best practices for AI during the pandemic
3. To what extent does the impact of different cultures affect academic integrity operations??
4. Our problem here may be different in kind, not in degree, from the US (incentives, patterns). Does your work explore this question?

In the beginning, Lang spoke about the important ways in which the environment influences academic integrity (AI), and he cited Dan Ariely's book, *The (Honest) Truth About Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone - Especially Ourselves*. He also spoke about the pedagogical uses of software such as Turnitin.com.

Lang mentioned a recent study by Bretag et al (2018) researching contract cheating in Australian universities. It found that academic environmental factors that lead to cheating include not having opportunities to seek assistance from teachers, inability to understand assignment requirements, receiving insufficient formative/constructive feedback, having many opportunities to cheat, and being in an environment or culture where cheating is perceived as common.

Lang also responded to the culture question by citing research by Aljurf, Kemp & Williams (2020) on academic dishonesty in the Middle East. They noted that the culture was more collectivist, and therefore there was a heavier burden of "peer obligation", shame avoidance and paternal pressure involved, as well as a culture of "fahlawa".

Lang suggests that one way of addressing academic integrity is via rethinking assessments by adopting alternative assessments, assessments focused on unique content, or unique audiences, and alternative types of exam questions that are not cheatable, e.g. asking for reflections or making unique connections. To read more of Lang's ideas on academic integrity, you can find his book *Cheating Lessons* at AUC library as an eBook.

Spotlight Panel with AUC Faculty: Navigating the Emerging Pedagogies of the Next Normal

This panel was moderated by Hoda Mostafa (CLT). Panelists included Dina Abdel Fattah (Department of Economics), Firas Al-Atraqchi (Department of Journalism and Mass Communication), Jilian Campana (Department of Arts), Lotfi Gaafar (Department of Mechanical Engineering), Magda Mostafa (Department of Architecture), Michelle Henry (Department of Rhetoric and Composition).

The questions posed to the panel were:

- What are some of the challenges that faculty and learners face as we move to our next normal?
- How has remote teaching changed the way you think of yourself as an educator?
- What are some of the skills that our learners have acquired?
- What pedagogical approaches have emerged in your own practice? How has your role changed?
- When the pandemic ends, what changes will we want to keep?
- If there was one lesson learned during COVID in the Teaching and Learning Landscape that would help us build a better next normal, what would it be and why?

Some of the highlights and themes coming out of the panel were an emphasis on things we learned during the pandemic, such as learning to empathize with students and build community during a crisis. Jillian Campana mentioned “mirror neurons” (how we empathize with others we share a similar identity or experience with) and that sometimes learning online helped develop intimacy, and now we need to figure out how to lose the distance in face-to-face teaching. Firas Al-Atracqchi talked about how we need to keep our passion and dedication towards students and keep the community alive. Magda Mostafa talked about how important it was for students to recognize the professor’s humanity as well, which fits with what panelists discussed in terms of connecting with students: the connections can and should be reciprocal. Michelle Henry talked about the shifting role of the teacher, no longer just focusing on cognitive development, but social and psychological development and physical development, focusing on the "whole student" not just "student learner".

Lotfi Gaafar also spoke about some of the opportunities for innovation that online learning created: even for labs, which are of course challenging to teach online. Due to the pandemic, SSE explored alternative solutions that are useful for the future as well, such as simulation/virtual reality replacements of expensive equipment, which are not only more cost-effective but can promote better learning as students can interact with them safely. He also talked about the value of the “flipped classroom” approach to teaching and that lessons learned this past year can be taken forward post-pandemic.

Dina Abdel Fattah suggested that teaching on Zoom with everyone having the same size picture in Gallery view inspired a shift from one-to-many to more many-to-many interactions and discussions. Lotfi Gaafar asserted that he would prefer teaching online via Zoom to teaching in person with masks and distancing because students “see each other” more easily on Zoom.

Another opportunity Michelle Henry spoke about is that the challenges of academic integrity and fears of contract cheating encouraged faculty to look deeper at their assessments and modify them to arguably better-quality assessments of learning.

Michelle and Dina spoke about different literacies, habits of mind and skills both teachers and students developed during this pandemic - ones that were not necessarily on the agenda pre-pandemic.

Firas pointed out how we as teachers learned that we are able to be more flexible and tolerant than we thought we could. Jillian talked about how we recognized the importance of wellbeing and how it impacts our ability to learn. Michelle talked about the importance of developing a growth mindset.

Magda Mostafa reminded us that this experience has not affected all of us equally. There are many around the world with lack of access to digital infrastructure, and many facing mental health challenges and struggling to learn.

This session had a very active chat, and here are some of the things faculty wrote in the chat that caught our attention:

"Zoom forced me to think of new ways to keep students engaged and encourage active-learning, and they were very receptive. This is one thing I'd love to keep after this is 'over'"

Nadine El Sayed, JRMC

"It is not where we teach but how we teach that matters. F2F is not necessarily the ideal situation."

Hoda Grant, RHET

“These are inspiring times and [have] brought out a lot of creativity in how we go about to do what we need to do. Online teaching has somehow put administration, faculty and students in the same boat. Everyone is trying to navigate in these very new circumstances. It is challenging...but it shows how adaptable we are as a species. This is what it means to be human.”

Hadya Miniawi, RHET.

AUC Faculty Showcase Shift and Share

CLT held two virtual round-table-like sessions where attendees could virtually move from room to room and learn more about what AUC faculty are doing in their online classrooms.

“I found Shift and Share sessions very insightful. They were short and to the point. I also had the freedom to choose for myself instead of being restricted by a fixed sequence. I will apply some ideas I learned in "unessays". Additionally, in the chat box, the wonderful teachers shared valuable tools and websites that I am eager to explore further such as peergrade.io, Wakelet and CourseNetworking.”

Anonymous AUC Graduate student

March 8 Topics

- **HyperDocs: A meaningful learning structure in your online classes - Rania Jabr (Department of English Language Instruction).** Rania proposed that Hyperdocs are one of the best ways for scaffolding students learning. You “put learning in the hands of your students”. Hyperdocs help you revisit your design following 7 steps: engage, explore, explain, apply, share, reflect and extend, of which the last is an optional step where students get to extend their learning by assigning them a project or a video or a website to create.
- **Preparing and releasing tailored exams to minimize cheating - Omar Abdelaziz (Department of Mechanical Engineering).** Omar talked about using Google Sheets along with the script editor to send out mass individualized emails to the students. He shared his approach of using the same tools to send solution steps to individual students after grading their tests on Blackboard. Omar also discussed the use of Google Sheets to formulate questions and problems.
- **Flipped classroom approach during remote teaching - Andreas Kakarougkas (Department of Biology).** Andreas mentioned how his course was using materials from MITx, based on a collaboration between AUC and MIT, where students engaged with the content (videos and quizzes) from the platform. Andreas gave a walk through pre-COVID and post COVID, mentioning that before he used to only use videos from the MITx platform, but after he started also using his own videos. In his experience, when flipping the classroom online, it is difficult to recreate the collaborative in-class experience, but the Zoom breakout rooms are helpful for small group work.
- **Some simple techniques for encouraging participation - Adam Yassine (Department of Mathematics and Actuarial Science).** Adam mentioned that among the most important aspects is creating a safe environment for students that allows them a space to respond and ask questions. He mentioned that teaching online allowed him to take advantage of this setting and use animation and graphics for visualization. He suggested paying attention to what works for engaging students and what doesn't.
- **Exams to students: Decisions made about you NOT by you - Ezzeldin Yazeed Sayed Ahmed (Construction Engineering).** Ezz shared his experience with an innovative assessment he used with his students, which was, Student-Generated Exams. Students created exams in different groups, and the exams were shuffled between groups and each group took a different exam. The process of creating an exam and developing a marking scheme meant students ended up studying very well and learning from this experience. This eliminated their fear of the exam.

- **Are Civic Engagement components in our courses still possible online? - Mona Said (Department of Economics).** Mona talked about civic engagement and the benefits of this pedagogy in teaching and learning. She explained the impact of using infographics as a medium of presenting information visually. Moreover, she mentioned five main components of community based learning; alignment with learning outcomes, assessment using different formats, empowerment (hearing voices of workers [communities] and getting views across to those who can help them), reciprocity and sustainability. Some of the benefits Mona mentioned for students included applying concepts learned in class to real life, examining socially important issues and understanding multiculturalism and diversity. Furthermore, she discussed the benefits for faculty such as improving student-satisfaction ratings and providing new areas for research and publication as well as an opportunity to build strong partnerships with NGOs and government bodies involved in social development.

March 10 Topics

- **Online Instruction: 5 Phases, 3 Principles & 6 Tips - Ahmed Tolba (Department of Management).** Ahmed talked about three principles of teaching that instructors should always keep in mind: 1- Our goal is student learning. 2- This is all new for faculty as well as students. We need to adapt to new realities. 3- There are a lot of positives out there that we need to embrace. His six tips are based on his own reflections on teaching online: 1- listen to students; they too are suffering and need to share their feelings. 2- Get to know students early on and show empathy. 3- Motivation and trust lead to interactions. 4- Online tools are effective (and he plans to continue using some of them such as polls, chat and breakout rooms moving forward). 5- Seek one-on-one feedback from students or through group meetings to build rapport. 6- Don't obsess over assessment; remember that assessments should be learning tools. Finally, Ahmed emphasized that "it is all about the mindset and the attitude."
- **Navigating the River: Teaching and Metacognition for Challenging Times - Thomas Wolsey (Department of International and Comparative Education).** Thomas talked about becoming metacognitive teachers during a pandemic. He discussed the metacognitive cycle, talking about the different phases: reflect, plan and teach, apply strategies and think while teaching. Participants reflected on the different teaching approaches they do with their students and how effective they are.
- **Balancing pre-recorded lectures and live activities in STEM online classes - Daoud Siniora (Department of Mathematics and Actuarial Science).** Daoud shared his experience teaching Discrete Mathematics online. He shared the screen on his tablet to demonstrate some of what he did in class, and mentioned he uses both Panopto and Zoom for pre-recorded lectures. Students are asked to watch lectures ahead of class and he starts class with discussion and revision of the lectures then moves on to interactive exercises. He feels live lectures keep students on track to keep up with recorded lectures. He uses Latex for typed notes as it facilitates use of mathematical notation. Daoud uses Blackboard quizzes and students submit assignments via Gradescope which is suitable for mathematics assignments and allows grading with rubrics. Finally, Daoud shared that he hired undergraduate student assistants to answer questions on a student WhatsApp group, acting like a "hotline".
- **Peer Feedback: practical tips to make peer feedback quicker, more effective, and....maybe even enjoyable?! - Alyssa Young (Rhetoric and Composition Department).** Alyssa began by asking participants about their own experiences using peer feedback, and she acknowledged that this was not an easy process. She mentioned her journey of how she learned to stop worrying and love peer feedback, which gives students an active role in the language learning process, develops metacognition and promotes independent learning while also building learning communities. However, some research suggests that it is not always effective and students can sometimes resist it

or resist the feedback itself. On the other hand, there is a lot of research on its effectiveness as well, particularly in terms of fostering positive attitudes, self-awareness, confidence and a sense of ownership over writing. She suggests “selling it to students”, modeling how to give feedback with guidelines (e.g. checklist), and also modeling the revision process. Alyssa shared practical tips from literature and her own experience.

- **The 'Unessay' As a different format of preparing and discussing a topic - Irene Strasser (Department of Psychology).** Irene suggests that doing “unessays” has the benefits of promoting knowledge equality, providing experiential learning opportunities, making space for student creativity and building their capacity for perspective-taking. She does this by encouraging students to forget about all rules of traditional essay writing, focus on a topic, and then approach and present the topic "any way [they] please". She reminds them to make their argument convincing and focus on synthesis and analysis. The resulting assignment/project can be in the form of a podcast, poem, short story, t-shirt, children’s book, documentary, etc.
- **Handling students’ anxiety during online lectures - Hakim Meshreki (Department of Management).** Hakim first defined anxiety and how it can affect student learning. He suggested that teachers show understanding of what students are going through, be available and accessible for support, and read and respond to students’ body language cues. Hakim also suggested focusing on motivating students to participate while encouraging mistakes in a safe space. He advised participants that online teaching requires some changes to their course design, such as breaking projects into smaller more frequent deliverables to give students confidence, and making exams more about understanding than memorization. Flexibility is also essential, without letting students procrastinate.

CLT Wellbeing Sessions

In addition to the content-related sessions, CLT offered several wellbeing sessions, including a session on yoga offered by Nihal El-Naggar (ARIC) and two sessions on gratitude journaling and meditation with Nadine Aboulmagd (CLT). Resources from these sessions are available on [our website](#).

Please send us your feedback!

If you attended any of the CLT Symposium sessions or watched recordings, please give us your feedback via this [form](#).

For all session materials, visit CLT’s 2021 Virtual Symposium website:

<https://www.aucegypt.edu/faculty/center-learning-and-teaching/virtual-symposium>