



NEWSLETTER

“January” came from “Janus,” who is the Roman god of gates and doorways, symbolizing beginnings and endings. Janus is often depicted as having two faces, one views the past and one views the future.

almanac.com

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A Letter from the Editors

Let us state a fact you already know: Our academic year bisects the (Western) calendrical year. This then means, that in January, we are both **halfway though** and **at end and beginning**. We are in position to both build atop and start anew.

So, at the cusp of this new semester, we invite you think about the **here & now** and consider the **then & there**. That “then & there” might be taking an interdisciplinary lens to your work (p. 2) or learning about others through forming relationships and adopting equity-minded practices (p. 2). Wells attempts to unite the now & then through Native American storytelling (p. 4), and Marianne Cowan’s FYS students asks us to shoulder their packs and consider their perspectives on grading practices here at Bates (p. 6). Finally, CITL is hosting many events this semester and hopes to see you then and there (pp. 7-8).

Lindsey & Wells

New Research and Insights in Teaching and Learning

There were topics that surfaced again and again at our annual conference, [POD Network](#), this November:

1. Gen Z students characteristics, needs, & wants
2. climate and environmental justice
3. generative technology and AI
4. inter- and transdisciplinary teaching
5. relationship rich education
6. equity-minded practices

In our December newsletter, we discussed the first three. Now, in January, we will address the last three.

[Inter- and Trans-Disciplinary Teaching](#)

Interdisciplinary learning asks us to connect and interpret, critique and infer, create and illustrate because it asks us to explore “our preconceptions of *what is* and the framework by which we arrived at *what is*” ([carleton.edu](#)). Other than the catchall “the world is interdisciplinary” argument, why might inter- or trans-disciplinary instruction be discussed at a teaching and learning conference?

Interdisciplinary learning helps students recognize & refigure their biases through perspective taking and tolerate ambiguity through encounters with conflicting insights from alternative disciplines ([Repko et al., 2009](#)). This connects to work on meaningful and deep learning, which is uplifted by understanding how and from where ideas might emerge (foundational knowledge), understanding how and when ideas might be used (application), and developing capacity to connect these ideas to other ideas, peoples, and the self (integration). [Marilyn Stember \(1991\)](#) defined interdisciplinarity as integrating the contributions from several disciplines to a problem or issue to bring interdependent parts of knowledge into harmonious relationships.

Here is our takeaway from conversations about interdisciplinary work: Rather than have courses use “solvable” disciplinary-based problems, intentionally work with complex, real-world issues that necessarily involve examining topics from other disciplinary lenses.

[Relationship Rich Education](#)

[Felten & Lambert \(2020\)](#) write: “What single factor makes for an excellent college education? As it turns out, it's pretty simple: human relationships.” As Isis Artze-Vega described it at POD, all students should experience welcome and deep care through relationships. When quality relationships with peers, staff, and faculty are forged and nurtured, students enjoy increased learning, well-being, and persistence – especially first-gen and students of color. And such quality relationships need not require substantial resources or specifically qualified faculty and staff. As Felten and Lambert point out, a single, well-timed, well-meaning conversation can make a difference in a student’s professional and personal life. During the anchor session at POD, we were all encouraged to think back to a specific person who impacted our life during college and what exactly they did for us. When we discussed our people and their actions, patterns emerged: They had shown genuine interest in getting to know us and supporting us. They believed in us when we didn’t believe in ourselves and they expressed joy when we finally did.

[Equity-Minded Practices](#)

Equity-minded practices encourage and uplift students who have been historically excluded from or marginalized within our institutions through shifting the conversation from “are these students prepared for my course” to “are my curricula and pedagogies prepared to teach and serve these students”? Equity-minded practices go beyond inclusion (beyond nurturing belonging and preparing students to succeed); they disrupt the systemic inequities that have shaped and continue to shape educational disenfranchisement. We might integrate instruction on note-taking into our lectures, respond to microaggressions in the classroom, explain how oppression is about barriers and not deficits, and/or recognize the strengths that multi-lingual students bring to their work. We can also create brave spaces (rather than safe spaces), in which students might find discomfort, feel vulnerable, and encounter conflict. Such learning spaces allow us to express ourselves, challenge another (in a positive way), and practice self-reflection and peer-support.



Have a student-athlete in your winter course?

Probably! Here's what to know!

Bates Athletics At-A-Glance

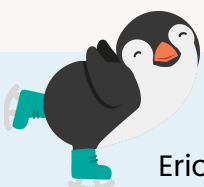
- Bates is a Division III (DIII) school in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).
- As a DIII school, Bates does not award athletics scholarships.
- Approximately 40% of students participate in one of our 31 NCAA sports!
- Over 600 students compete in club sports each year.

Guidelines for Faculty

- Be clear and consistent: clarify your expectations on your syllabus and in person early in the semester (*this is good practice in teaching for all student t*)
- Be specific about course assignments, exams, and meeting times, *including any expected meetings outside of class time.*
- Communicate with student-athletes and their coaches (*use the [athletics directory for varsity coaches' contact information](#)*).
- If you have questions or concerns regarding athletics and would prefer to talk with another faculty member, you can reach out to the chair of the Athletics Committee, the [Faculty Athletics Representative \(FAR\)](#), or the team's Faculty Liaison.
- If you have trouble communicating directly with a student-athlete, consider using BatesReach. "Flags" put into BatesReach by faculty members are immediately sent to a student-athlete's head coach, along with members of their support team.

Some Key Points for Students and Coaches

- Student-athletes may request missing class only if there are conflicts with competitions, including travel time. They may not miss class for practices or meetings.
- Student-athletes should anticipate conflicts and work with their faculty *in advance* to meet their class requirements.
- Coaches can assist faculty in making up work, for example by helping to proctor exams while the student attends a competition away from campus.



Do you have follow-up questions?

Erica Rand, Chair, Athletics Committee
Celine Cunningham, Deputy Director of Athletics
Lindsey Hamilton, CITL Director

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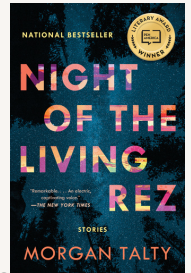
What's on Our Desks?

I was passed Talty's bestseller out on the quad in early December.

"It's our community read," I was informed. **"And it's really good."**

I flipped open to the first page.

At the bridge to the reservation, the river was still frozen, ice shining white-blue under a full moon. The sidewalk on the bridge hadn't been shoveled since the last nor'easter crapped snow in November, and I walked in the boot prints everyone made...



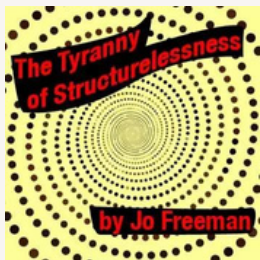
I made an immediate connection because I had walked in those shoes too, tiptoeing in others' tiptoes to avoid snowy boots. But had I really? Talty's debut collection is set in a Native community in Maine and brings David, a young Penobscot member, to life through snapshots of child, adolescent, and young adult escapades about being skeejin and living in our challenging 21st century world.

In my own work towards integrating race, power, privilege, and colonialism into our courses here at Bates, I began reading Teaching Race In Perilous Times (2021, eds. Jason Cohen et al.). This edited volume begins with Scott Manning Stevens' chapter titled "On Native American Erasure in the Classroom." Stevens centers this essay on the importance of working through Native American history and modernity—in all its complexity, violence, and beauty—in US classrooms. He writes: "The pernicious habit of placing Native Americans into the United States' distant past means that students never have to confront [destructive attacks on Native sovereignty and culture] as contemporary social justice matters" (p. 32). This said, we must understand the contemporary through the lens of the past (p. 32). Stevens invites us to learn about Native peoples in the here & now and in the then & there, together. Although repatriation is "seemingly impossible" (p. 24), he asks that our curricula include Native narratives of past and present. Otherwise, "[Native] erasure in educational curricula and thus contemporary consciousness only results in Indian removal all over again. This time, no Trail of Tears, no forced relocations, just utter institutional and social science" (p. 36). *Night of the Living Rez* might be our community read,* it might be really good, but there is also a responsibility to reading it and learning from Talty's stories—stories of peoples with boots and bridges different than my own.

Wells

*Stop by the Mary Pole's office in Lane for a book and information about this semester's community read

The Tyranny of Structurelessness



Group work is a topic that comes up in CITL a lot! Why? Leading our students through group work is challenging! So many issues can arise with group work from poor communication, personal issues, unequal contributions, chaotic decision-making, and lack of focus. Jo Freeman's "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" is a 1970 paper that explores some of the structural problems facing groups. She draws her argument from the women's movement and aims it at the same audience, but her insights are relevant to all groups.

Freeman discusses the unavoidable presence of "elites" within groups, defining them as small clusters wielding power without direct responsibility or the larger group's awareness. These elites emerge due to informal networks formed by friends within a group, granting them more influence over decisions and discussions. Freeman emphasizes that these informal structures aren't inherently bad but pose risks, like decisions favoring friendships over competence. To address this, she suggests countering informal networks with formal structures that grant broader access and power to all members. Freeman's argument applies to our work as educators when setting up group work in class—establishing clear guidelines and equal opportunities ensures fairness and prevents one student or a clique from dominating the group's decisions. **Structure is the key to inclusive group work!**

Lindsey

Do these topics interest you too? Do you know similar pieces or pieces in dialogues with these? Please reach out or stop by our office to offer your thoughts or to recommend what might be "on our desks" next month.

Monthly Teaching Challenge

January
2024

CITL offers a monthly teaching challenge—and that challenge might sound different or difficult, but we encourage you to try it out and see if it works for you, your course, and your students.

In addition, we would love to hear from you during the month. What has it been like to incorporate **this** teaching challenge into your current course? Write us or stop by Dana to share.

Three in Three Challenge

Could you have three forms of assessment (not necessarily graded) in the first three weeks of the semester?

Multiple early semester assessments encourage students to engage in the course, identify where they might concentrate their attention (figuring out what they do/not know), and engage with you feedback. Early, low stakes assessments can also reduce assessment anxiety.

As the instructor, you can also benefit from this challenge: You might better understand how class content is being received and understood, while there is still time to adjust. You might also be able to identify students who need extra support with their learning. A goal this year for CITL is to showcase the benefits of “3 in 3.”

Read more in our August 23 newsletter.

August 2023 CITL Newsletter ([link here](#); page 5)

Top 3 Reasons to Do the 3 in 3 Challenge

1. Gives students a realistic idea of their performance early in the term, enabling them to seek appropriate resources (Hi, [SASC](#) & [SWLC](#)!) as needed
2. Opens up lines of communication between students and their instructors, and may increase students' willingness to ask for help
3. Increases the likelihood that students will attend class and be active and engaged

If you do try out this teaching challenge, please consider letting us know how it went.

What worked and what did not work?

We highlight individuals who share their experiences with us in next month's newsletter.

So please reach out or stop by to share.

Pedagogical Point-of-View: Marianne Cowan's

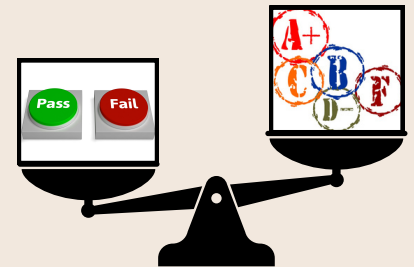
FYS 551

In the Fall 2023 FYS course Purpose, Work, and College: A Holistic Introduction to Purposeful Work at Bates, Marianne Cowan and her students asked "What is our Why?" They explored how a sense of purpose relates to our work and studies, our wellbeing, and our plan for meaningful academic, professional, and personal lives.

At the conclusion of their course, the class brought together both the content and skills they had been developing over the semester and engaged in a close-to-home debate concerning awarding A-F grades to first year students here at Bates.

Students were randomly assigned to a team that would argue either an affirmative (pro A-F grades) or opposing (no A-F grades) view on this issue. The students of FYS551 spoke eloquently, listened attentively, typed furiously, conferred privately, responded appropriately, and engaged in wonderful, respectful back-and-forth on this complex topic—CITL can attest; we were invited to attend (lucky us!). At the conclusion of the debate, a majority of the students voted in favor of awarding A-F grades to first year students.

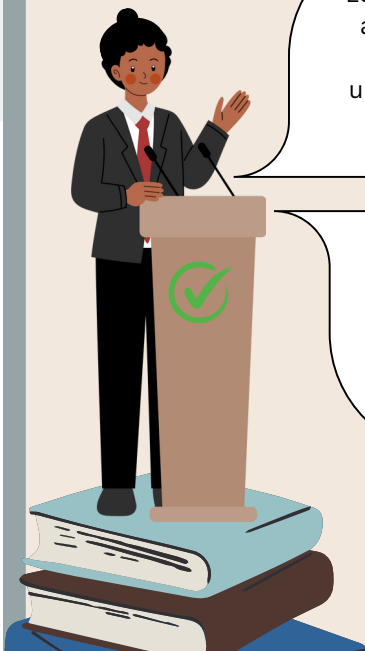
The following captures just a fraction of the excellent points raised and defended during this debate. If you would like more information, you can access the students' full memo to Bates faculty at this link ([LINK](#)) or reach out to Marianne directly (mcowan@bates.edu).



Letter grades (a) allow students to track academic progress, (b) foster healthy academic competition, and (c) are universally understood and therefore a clearer heuristic for students

Eliminating letter grades would (a) increase feedback provided to students, (b) remove current academic barriers students who come from high schools with fewer resources face, and (c) decrease student stress (and increase personal development)

We emphasize the need for reform rather than elimination. Feedback can supplement letter grades. We need academic support for our most vulnerable and this is separate from letter grading. And alternative systems would be mentally taxing too!



Thanks for sharing, FYS 551!

What might your students like to share with the Bates community, if given the chance?

We are looking for contributions for this newsletter! Reach out if you are interested.

UPCOMING WINTER '24 EVENTS

1/2

Syllabus Finalization Workshop

Friday, January 5th

10:00–11:30am, Commons 221

Followed by brunch!

Bring your Winter syllabi to this workshop and focus on getting them finalized! We will share information about components of the syllabus and getting students to read through it. We will also provide resources (e.g., course workload estimator, the syllabus template, and the inclusive syllabus guide). Afterwards, feel free to grab brunch on us from Commons, and we'll stick around to continue chatting about teaching and learning. [Register here.](#)

Difficult Dialogues

Lunch & Learn Workshop

Wednesday, January 31st

12:00–1:00pm, Commons 221

Go thru Commons line (charge CITL)

Sometimes we know which topics are hot buttons for students and sometimes we are surprised by the fires that ignite in our classrooms. In this workshop, we explore how we might feel more confident leading difficult dialogues by encouraging self-reflection and self-regulation, connecting content to larger learning goals, and articulating what will and will not be allowed in our own classrooms. [Register here.](#)

Pedagogy Matters Special Series: AI

Meetings: Tues 2/13, Thur 3/7, Wed 4/4

4:00–5:00pm, Zoom

Join colleagues across Colby, Bates, and Bowdoin for a 3-session reading group. Each month, a brief article, video, or website will be shared ahead of the session. Then during the session, we will discuss generative technology and its impact and potential in our learning spaces. These sessions will be facilitated over Zoom by all three colleges' teaching centers. [Register here \(for Zoom link\).](#)

Beyond Binaries Panel

Thursday, February 15th

12:00–1:00 pm, Commons 221

Go thru Commons line for lunch (charge CITL)

Postponed from last semester, Beyond Binaries has been rescheduled. Besides contributing to more inclusive classrooms, expanding beyond gender (and other!) boundaries and binarisms can enrich possibilities for creativity, learning, understanding, and joy. Join **Hanna McGaughey** (Asian Studies), **Ian-Khara Ellasante** (Gender & Sexuality Studies/Africana), **Kat Anderson** (Biology), **Brian J. Evans** (Dance/American Studies), and CITL Faculty Fellow **Erica Rand** (Gender and Sexuality Studies/Art and Visual Culture) for this across-discipline panel on the generative potentials of thinking beyond binarisms in our work. [Register here.](#)

Winter '24 Communities of Practice



FYS Instructors

2nd Thursdays of the month

4:15–5:15pm; Dana 216

Snacks and drinks provided



Staff Educators

4th Wednesdays of the month

12:00–1:00; Commons

Go thru the line for lunch



New Faculty

1st Fridays of the month

12:00–1:00; Commons

Go thru the line for lunch

[Register for Communities of Practice and Other Events](#)

[on our Calendar \(click here\)](#)

UPCOMING WINTER '24 EVENTS

2/2



BRING YOUR OWN ASSIGNMENT

A series of 3 working sessions to develop/refine course assignment(s).
Come to 1, 2, or all 3 sessions, whichever are useful for you!
Each session is offered two times a week (Dana 216).

Session 1: Developing a Rubric

- Tuesday January 16 (11:00am) **or** Friday January 19 (9:30am)

Session 2: Assigning Peer Review

- Tuesday January 23 (11:00am) **or** Friday January 26 (9:30am)

Session 3: Providing Meaningful Feedback

- Tuesday January 30 (11:00am) **or** Friday February 2 (9:30am)

Bring assignment(s) of your choosing!

- The assignment(s) can be just an idea
- Or in the beginning stages of development
- Or one you want to revamp, redesign, rewrite
- And focused on writing, creative, or group-based work

[REGISTER HERE](#)

INCLUSIVE TEACHING

ONLINE COURSE & LEARNING COMMUNITY



hhmi
BioInteractive

BioInteractive Online
Professional Learning

Inclusive
Teaching

ONLINE COURSE

HHMI BioInteractive has launched an [Inclusive Teaching MOOC](#) designed by Dr. Bryan Dewsbury and other experts in Inclusive Teaching. The course consists of six modules on developing an action plan, interrogating self and systems, nurturing empathy, and creating support structures.

LEARNING COMMUNITY

We'll meet twice monthly to discuss how these themes fit into our work. The modules do represent about 3 hours of "homework" between meetings, but we're bribing you with food and good company. **All educators, not just STEM-educators, are invited to participate.** Join on us Tuesdays or Fridays throughout the winter semester at lunchtime in Commons.

[REGISTER HERE](#)



GIFT

Interested in having CITL perform a non-evaluative midterm focus group with your class? Request a "GIFT" for your course!

We are especially excited to work with faculty members who have not yet done a GIFT in this academic year.

WHAT IS GIFT: GIFT (Group Instructional-Feedback Technique) has been empirically tied to higher student satisfaction as measured by students' perception of the course, the instructor, and their motivation towards learning (Mauger, 2010; Gray and DiLoreto, 2016). GIFT allows students to feel heard, allows you to receive constructive suggestions mid-semester allows time for educator adaptation, until waiting until the end of the semester. Examining your teaching through the student lens is an important reflective practice.

WHAT IS GIFT AT BATES: After requesting a GIFT, CITL will meet to discuss your course, then CITL will visit your course for 20-30 minutes and lead a focus group. Students are encouraged to create constructive feedback using open ended questions in small groups and then in a full group discussion to reach consensus. After this, we meet to discuss and you get a confidential report on what your students are thinking!

I found the entire process to be very helpful and rewarding, as my students felt heard

[REQUEST HERE](#)