



NEWSLETTER

Each year at around the same time [the emperor penguin] will leave the comfort of his ocean home and embark on a remarkable journey. He will travel a great distance, and though he is a bird, he won't fly.

Though he lives in the sea, he won't swim.

Mostly, he will walk. But he won't walk alone.

March of the Penguins (2005)

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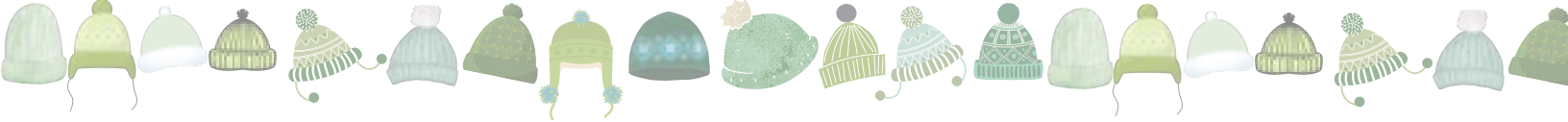
A Letter from the Editors

The first two months of this semester seemed to hit our campus particularly hard. The Bates plague (the horrible combo of COVID and influenza) made its rounds; search committees worked tirelessly; generative A.I. kept us on our toes; troubling local, national, and international news kept us awake at night—these are just a few of the reasons that have echoed down hallways and been confessed over coffee.

In this month's newsletter, we both highlight challenges we are facing (e.g., navigating difficult dialogues, p. 2; creating accessible learning spaces, p. 3; mitigating rising textbook costs, p. 6) and propose productive ways to come at and work through these challenges (e.g., Monthly Teaching Challenge, p. 5). Bonus: Many of our upcoming events and programs also address these concerns!

We are here to **march with you**, to be a support for you, and to bring you even more cute penguins images!

Lindsey Wells



DIFFICULT DIALOGUES AT BATES

(revisiting our 1/31/24 workshop)

A DEFINITION FOR "DIFFICULT DIALOGUE"

A conversation creating discomfort in both listeners and speakers due to challenges in navigating various individual perspectives, value systems, and sense of identity and worldview

made more complicated by...

Human tendency of right/wrong thinking

The fact that our upbringing, experiences, identities, and sociocultural norms relate to our privilege, power, and needs during a conversation

Human desire for clear and definitive answers

STRATEGIES FOR BOTH:

Intentionally Facilitating Difficult Dialogues

Responding to Unplanned Difficult Dialogues

Beginning of Semester

Before Class

In Class (During)

After Class

Create Community Agreements*
Establish Discussion Norms**

Craft a flexible lesson plan

Encourage and model self-reflection and self-regulation

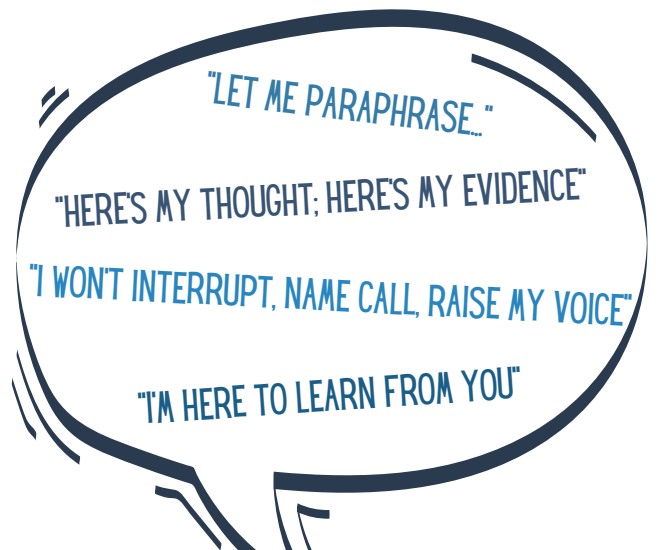
Follow up with students: Provide socio-emotional resources or more info concerning difficult discussion topic/content

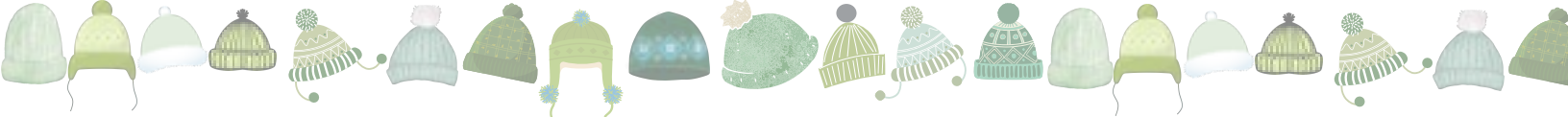
(many more strategies at the following link: [LINK](#))

*Creating Community Agreements



**Establishing Discussion Norms





ACCESSIBILITY & ACCOMMODATIONS AT BATES

(revisiting our 2/29/24 workshop)

DEFINITIONS FOR...

disability	Physical or mental impairment substantially limiting one or more major life activities (e.g., hearing, learning, interaction).
accommodation	<p>Changes or adjustments, tailored to the needs of an individual to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to programs and services and can participate fully and succeed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note 1: At the university level, students are responsible for self-identifying Note 2: At Bates, we have two types: Housing and Academic
academic accommodation	<p>An accommodation that aims to reduce or eliminate barriers in the learning environment, ensuring equal access to learn and participate fully in educational programming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note 1: Although most Bates students meet with our Accessible Education Office before they begin or during their first semester, our office sees new students come in at all points of their Bates careers, as they encounter unexpected barriers or learn something new about themselves. Note 2: In the Fall 2023 term, Bates had 309 students with academic accommodations. This has been steadily rising: In Fall 2022, there were 294. In Fall 2021, there were 270. In the Fall 2020, there were 257. The most common accommodations regard timed assessments, providing materials in different formats, and course participation.
accessibility	Physical, educational, technological, etc. design of product or services so that they are able to be used and enjoyed by those with and without disabilities on an equal basis.

TWO COEXISTING VIEWS OF ACCESSIBILITY

Inclusive Design benefiting everyone
(Proactive Approach)



Accommodations for those with disabilities
(Reactive Approach)

ACCESSIBILITY AS A MINDSET, GUIDED BY QUESTIONS LIKE...

(RATHER THAN A "TO DO" LIST)

How is my pedagogical idea (not) accessible and to whom? From which perspectives have I (not) heard?

How might I change my educational materials, spaces, and practices to be more accessible?

What types of assistive resources are available to me/my students?

Where can I access others' tips, research, or materials?

[many more resources (and some of those "to-do"s) at the following link: [LINK](#)]

What's on our desks?

Last week I read through the most recent *Teaching and Learning Inquiry* issue and stumbled across the article "Participation in Higher Education Classroom Discussions: How Students' Identities Influence Perspective Taking and Engagement" (Parker-Shandal, 2023).

For this research, Parker-Shandal analyzed survey data from university students on their participation in classroom discussions. She found that identities influenced how and when students shared their thoughts, especially when conversations concerned contentious or sociopolitical topics. For example, students with minoritized identities disproportionately reported lacking confidence during conversations about sociopolitical topics and opting out of active participation activities. Meanwhile, students with identities held by many peers enjoyed and engaged in these discussions more.

Findings

In describing class discussions as **minoritized individuals**, students reported...

- Experiencing inner-conflict between their own opinions & their beliefs concerning how others with their identity(ies) would or should respond
 - Experiencing fear of offending others of their identity
 - Experiencing fear of being seen of as the expert of the identity (then not "being correct")
- Feeling pressure to explain/teach about & defend/advocate for that minoritized identity
- Worrying they'd be criticized as "emotional" or de-legitimized as the topic was "hyper-personal"
- Adopting silence as a protection measure

In describing class discussions as **those with identities held by most peers**, students reported...

- It was easier to participate when they knew many others understood/agreed with their thoughts
- It was safer to share if their educator had their identities; they were less likely to "be wrong"

As we embrace inclusive teaching on this campus (it's baked into our center's name; we have multiple programs dedicated to it) and continue our work to intentionally bring in race, power, privilege, and colonialism into our learning spaces, **how can these findings inform our practices?**

As there is nuance and individuality to revising how we educate, CITL would love to chat with you about your individual learners, contexts, content, and learning goals in light of this research. Come find us in Dana!



As a member of the Teaching and Learning Committee which is tackling a revision to the student course evaluations this semester, I eagerly read Beth McMurtie's recent article for the Chronicle: **Teaching Evaluations Are Broken. Can They Be Fixed?** In this piece, McMurtie discusses the national effort underway to reform and transform the way teaching is evaluated. She concludes that currently, most colleges are evaluating teaching superficially and most instructors get minimal -and often useless- feedback from both student course evaluations and from peer evaluations. This concurs with a lot of what I've heard from Bates faculty - the majority of whom currently don't read their student comments!

A 2019 meta-analysis found little to no correlation between how highly students rate their instructor and how well they have learned the subject. ***If student course evaluations can't actually evaluate teaching quality, why do most institutions stick with the current system?*** Basically... it boils down to change is hard and numbers can be seductive and make us think something is objective when it is not.

This article buoyed me as we work through this process of change here. McMurtie reports that at institutions that have reformed their course evaluations and moved to student experience surveys, faculty members are largely happy and feel like it is easier to be a more reflective educator using these. More and more colleges are scrapping their old teaching evaluation systems in favor of these more thoughtful, coherent, based-in-research processes. ***Will Bates be the next college to join these ranks?***

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

March
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.

Send a note of appreciation

I (Lindsey) had three former students reach out to me this last week sharing with me their life and career updates and thanking me for having such a positive impact on them. Don't we all just love when former students reach out with appreciation? As soon as I moved those emails into my "Feel Good" file on my desktop, I wanted to share the love and appreciation. So I wrote a note to a few 'teachers' that have been impactful on my life and career. The first was to one of my graduate school committee members that I haven't been in contact with in over ten years, the second was to a University of Colorado departmental colleague I worked closely with for a few years, and the third was to a research mentor I worked for as an undergraduate research assistant. All were enthusiastically appreciative to hear from me and now I have three lovely virtual coffee dates set up to catch up further.

Who can you reach out to thank or send a small note of appreciation? You can think about teachers broadly here. Alternatively (or maybe additionally), consider starting your own "Feel Good" file of notes, emails, student comments from evaluations, etc that you can read when you are having a rough day.

What was Shared: Teaching with Love

"It was hard to let go of my irritation with my class when it was clear they hadn't done the reading... again. But instead of letting that fester, I came and chatted with you in the CITL lounge. One coffee and cookie later, I found myself feeling better and leaving with a few ideas to get my students to read!"

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: *Krystie Wilfong & Laura Conforte*

Ladd Library

The cost of attendance at higher education institutions continues to rise and many of the fees placed upon students we as educators can not control. However, one hidden cost that we can influence is that of the books and materials we assign as required in our classrooms, and how accessible those materials are for our students. Choosing an Open Textbook or Open Educational Resource (OER) when creating or updating a syllabus can make all the difference in the world to students trying to navigate the costs associated with choosing a course or a major. Students employ a myriad of strategies to access required learning material and in many cases choose to go without even before the first day of class (our fall 2022 student textbook survey indicated that 40% of students do not purchase required texts). OER can eliminate this stress point for our students. In honor of Open Education Week we encourage you to “bust” these common myths about OER and consider the possibilities!



“Free = Low Quality”

OER publishers have worked to ensure the quality of their resources. Many open textbooks are created within rigorous editorial and peer-review guidelines equivalent to traditional textbook publishers. Many OER repositories allow faculty to review (and see others’ reviews of) the material. For example, the Open Textbook Library, a collection of over 1,400 open textbooks, has a strict criteria that requires all textbooks be in use at 2 or more higher education institutions in order to be accepted into the library. Plus, 66% of their textbooks have been faculty reviewed, so you can get an idea of the book’s strengths and weaknesses before diving in yourself.

“All OER are Digital”

Like most modern textbooks, OER typically begin as digital files but can be used in whatever way best supports teaching and learning. For example, an open textbook can be printed, read on a screen, or heard through text-to-speech technology. The difference between OER and traditional resources is that students and educators do not have to choose between formats. From our fall 2022 student textbook survey, we know that 68% of our students still prefer print. With OER they can:

- Purchase affordable print copies (print-on-demand service) or print content on their own.
- Keep a print copy at home and retain a mobile version to read around campus.
- Legally convert content between formats to support accessibility accommodations.

“Open Textbooks are Difficult to Find”

Finding OER might be easier than you think! If you want to explore resources on your own, visit the our Scholarly Communications Guide to explore databases like the Open Textbook Library, Mason OER Metafinder, and many others. You can also reach out to your colleagues in Ladd directly to get ideas and support. Connect with your subject liaison in Research Services any time with questions.



For an overview of the Open Textbook landscape, and insights from our recent student textbook survey, join Ladd Library and CITL as we “Say YES to the Text” on Wednesday, March 6th @ 4:15pm in Dana. Register here. to support accessibility accommodations.

This Pedagogical POV on “OER Mythbusting” is adapted from “OER Mythbusting” by SPARC, licensed under a CC BY 4.0 license.

Thanks
for sharing
Laura &
Krystie!

Thinking about teaching and learning? What is on your mind?
We are looking for contributions for this newsletter! Reach out if you are interested.

Upcoming Events & Programs

Say YES to the Text

Wednesday, March 6th
4:15–5:30pm, Dana 219

Textbook affordability is a perennial concern for our students and one that we as educators have the power to address. Join CITL and Ladd Library in exploring the open textbook landscape, as we (a) review college costs, textbook market trends, and the impact these have on our students; (b) learn about Open Educational Resources (OER) and where to find materials that suit your courses; and (c) work with Research Liaisons to search for open materials.



Come with a course in mind and your laptop/tablet AND leave with a new open textbook you can read, review, or adopt for your course. If you want a little more information before registering for this event, [HERE](#) is an infographic highlighting how our students are impacted by textbook costs. [Register here.](#)

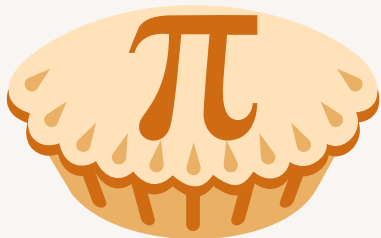
Pedagogy Matters Special Series: Generative AI

Meetings: Thur 3/7, Wed 4/4
4:00–5:00pm
Zoom ([link with registration](#))

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.



The March session will be focused on designing assignments & class activities with generative AI and how to mitigate against generative AI in our assignment design. [Register here](#) (for Zoom link).



KROEPSCH PEDAGOGY PANEL: **MAKING LOCAL CHANGES**

Thursday, March 14th 12–1 pm Commons 221

Katy Ott, Professor of Mathematics and winner of the 2023 Kroepsch Award for Excellence in Teaching, will facilitate a cross-disciplinary panel (**Erik Bernadino**, Assistant Professor of History, **Meredith Greer**, Professor of Mathematics, **Keiko Konoeda**, Lecturer of Japanese and Chair of Asian Studies, and **Marcelle Medford**, Associate Professor of Sociology) on incorporating reflection and inclusive pedagogies into our teaching. 3/14 is a special day for math! It is known as PI DAY and we plan to also celebrate the occasion with some pi(e) at this lunch time panel. Join us for lunch (through the line in Commons) and then upstairs for the panel discussion and plenty of pie! Register [here](#).



CITL Fellows Programs

want to come join our CITL team???

Faculty Fellows Program:

- Provides an opportunity for faculty to serve in a leadership role and (a) expand campus capacity for inclusive and evidence-based pedagogical practices AND (b) support excellence in teaching and scholarship at Bates.

Quick Facts:

- Commitments: Yearlong fellowship (Winter/Fall OR Fall/Winter semesters), 7-10 hrs/wk
 - First semester: Identify an area of focus and create an action plan for pairing that focus with CITL initiatives
 - Second semester: Implement and evaluate that action plan, later providing the campus an informal showcase on the work
- Benefits: One course release for each semester. Opportunities exist to attend and/or present at a teaching and learning-oriented conference. There is also a modest budget for action plan resources.

Application Process:

- Qualifications for Applicants
 - Bates College Faculty (all titles and all disciplines encouraged to apply)
 - Has 4+ consecutive years teaching at Bates
 - Has a desire to learn about and support colleagues in implementing inclusive teaching practices
- Submit (rolling basis):
 - CV & List of courses taught at Bates
 - Several 250-word reflections concerning topic(s) about which you are passionate, relevancy to your unit/division/institutional priorities, and how all this connects to inclusion and equity in our classrooms (ENTIRE PROMPT: FOUND HERE)



Your Summer-Projects

Would a collaboration with CITL be helpful?

Are you (re)designing a course?

Are you (re)designing a curriculum?

Are you (re)designing a program?

Are you (re)designing an educational event?

CITL is a resource for all teaching, learning, and educational projects here at Bates.

We work with anyone at Bates who designs learning materials & programs and/or facilitates productive learning spaces for others to develop specific skills and knowledge.

Does your work with others on or off campus look like this? If yes, we would be honored to collaborate with you on your (summer) projects!