

FDC HAPPENINGS

November 7, 2022



Two people stand at a bulletin board covered with notes in the front of a room with three others sitting at a table. The five are engaging in a group discussion.

SoTL Learning Community

Meetings monthly starting Jan. 2023 and going through April 2024 - Applications due Dec. 2

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) movement aims to enhance the value of teaching in higher education by focusing on the role of rigorous, scholarly inquiry in developing best practices. This seminar, facilitated by Cam McComb and Cynthia Macknish, will bring together for three semesters faculty and lecturers who are interested in exploring student learning in their classes through a SoTL project. Faculty will spend the Winter 2023 term engaged in seminar-style discussions of the SoTL literature and about how their own work may fit into this area, then work with each other to design a SoTL project to be implemented in a Fall 2023 course. During the second and third semesters, participants will have a chance to implement their projects, collect data, analyze the data, and prepare for publishing. Participants will receive a \$600 honorarium upon meeting identified targets, with \$200 being distributed at the end of each semester. For more information click [here](#).

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CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS:

Try One Thing

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Earlier this semester, the FDC launched our "Try One Thing" series, to help educators identify small things they can do in their classrooms to help students. This week, we bring you three ideas for one thing you can try to enhance how you give graded work and assess student learning.

From EMU Faculty



Kathleen Kargula
Part-Time Lecturer
School of Visual and Built
Environment

I would suggest creating rubrics in Canvas. The instructor can create rubrics specific for different assignments. The students can look at the rubrics specific to each assignment and know how much emphasis is placed on certain aspects of an assignment. It creates a level grading field across the class, and it saves time writing comments to each student.

Rebecca Louick
Assistant Professor
Department of Special
Education & Communication
Sciences and Disorders



One quick, informal assessment strategy I use is an in-class assignment for each class meeting: filling out a table/graphic organizer, writing a short reflection, etc. Students receive full credit for attempting (i.e., not based on the accuracy of their answers). This gives me an opportunity to see what they're taking away from each class, and what I should re-address the next time. It also provides a great attendance incentive.



A man sits in front of a laptop with two women, one of which is writing in a journal.



Angela Knight
Part-Time Lecturer
English Department
Eastern Michigan Writing Project
Co-director

I've created an Extension Request Form and posted a link to it in Canvas. Google forms now has a setting for notifications, so I get an email when a student has filled out the form. So far, one student who has used the form wrote, "I appreciate you being patient and understanding with me, as well as having created this form which signals that you understand that college is a challenging time and an adjustment period for everyone." You can access the form [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

READING IN
PRINT?
scan the QR code to
access the links in
this issue



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The Impact of Racial Microaggressions

*November 9
2:00 pm
109 Halle and [Zoom](#)*

The second session of this series will assess common racial microaggression examples experienced by BIPOC instructors in the classroom. There will also be a discussion of the impact of microaggressions and effective ways that we can help BIPOC instructors in coping with microaggressions. We will also come up with strategies for allies to effectively support their BIPOC colleagues in higher education. Click [here](#) to learn more.

In 2018, the Michigan Department of Education announced their updated "students-first" teacher certification system. Since then, faculty across EMU's colleges have taken this opportunity to revitalize our teacher preparation program to incorporate the new professional standards and state requirements. Join us for our next session on November 11 when we do Anchor Activity Planning. Faculty and lecturers will receive an honorarium for participation in each session.

Secondary Teacher Preparation Program

*November 11, 18 &
December 9
109 Halle
(See [website](#) for times)*

Hy-Flex Classrooms

*November 16
3:30pm-4:45pm
217 Pray Harrold*

EMU has invested in creating hy-flex classrooms, enabling instructors to integrate students who are both in the classroom and remote. Please join this session with Ashley Johnson Bavery, Ron Flowers, and Alankrita Pandey, instructors who have done exciting things with the hy-flex classroom. They will offer guidance on how to maximize the possibilities available in this setup. Learn more [here](#).

Let's take an hour or so to think about what our winter semester writing plans will be, and set ourselves up to achieve our goals. Join Sarah Walsh, the facilitator of this year's Research Writers Collaborative, to find effective ways to set and achieve our writing goals, even with the pressures we all face. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Planning Your Scholarly Agenda for the Winter Semester

*December 8, 3:30pm-4:45pm
109 Halle or [Zoom](#)*

UPCOMING EVENTS

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The FDC is co-facilitating a three-part listening series, *"The new tradition of the non-traditional student and what that means for teaching and learning."* The series will focus on caregiving; apologies and excuses; and work/school/life balance. The sessions are open to faculty, staff, and students, and will offer an opportunity to share challenges and successes in navigating teaching or learning in the last two years. If you are interested in leading or participating in a session, and/or would like to recommend a student for this series, please contact cbarrag1@emich.edu. Facilitators and participants will be compensated.

Age Friendly University: Call for Facilitators

CALLS FOR PROPOSALS:

FDC Winter Programming Proposals

Due November 21st at 12:00pm - Learn more or apply [HERE](#)

eFellows Grant Proposals

Due November 21st at 5:00pm - Learn more or apply [HERE](#)

DON'T FORGET!

Ongoing events throughout the semester:

Faculty Support Group

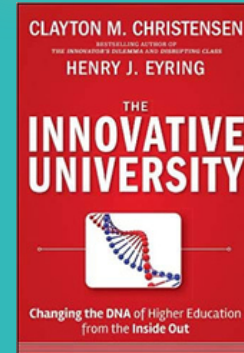
Every other Monday at 11:00am via [Zoom](#)

Research Writers Collaborative

Every Thursday at 1:30pm via [Zoom](#)

SPOTLIGHTS

This week's book spotlight is *The Innovative University*, written by Clayton M. Christensen and Henry J. Eyring. This book illustrates how higher education can respond to the forces of disruptive innovation, and offers a nuanced and hopeful analysis of where the traditional university and its norms have come from and how it needs to change for the future. This book uncovers how the traditional university survives by breaking with tradition, but thrives by building on what it has done best. Click [here](#) to read the full spotlight.



This week we are spotlighting Dr. Peter Blackmer. In his teaching spotlight, Dr.

Blackmer talked about the opportunities he offers his students to work on issues they care about and how he makes sure that his students can take what they learn beyond the classroom. To read the full spotlight, click [here](#).

Dr. Peter Blackmer
Assistant Professor
Africology & African American Studies

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Almost ten years ago, Jorge Cham's *Ph.D. Comics* brought us a cartoon version of scenes that are all too familiar for instructors trying to field students' questions about their courses: students ask questions, and the answer is always in the syllabus.

Even more than Cham's comic strip, the standard-model syllabus hails from an age when instructors might reasonably expect students to hold a hard copy in hand, and when it was not accessible through a modern learning management system like Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle, or Google Classroom.

Rather like a CV, the standard-model syllabus afforded a few variations for individual taste, but generally looked about the same from class to class, and even across many colleges and departments. Its rationale, format, and content have long been well-established:

- Basic information, like course title, CRN, section number, and instructor name, office, office hours, and contact information.
- Policies and guidelines, such as for attendance, late work, and academic honesty
- Grades and grade scales
- Schedule of topics, course readings, and graded assignments
- Helpful contacts for things like disability accommodations and subject tutoring

All of these appeared—and frequently continue to appear—in a word-processed document, black-on-white, neatly and professionally formatted with echoes of a legal contract. We have all seen them, used them, and if we stretch our memories back to when we were students, we might also recall looking at the wall of text, *not* really appreciating what the syllabus-as-contract really meant, *not* reading very fully after the first day of class, and, quite possibly, *neither* holding onto our hard copies *nor* recalling much of their contents.

Canvas and other learning management systems have lended a helpful hand by letting faculty build their courses first, and then writing the sc-

hedule of teaching and assignments backwards into a part of the course shell labelled “Syllabus”. So far as faculty can develop their courses before a given semester, this page is useful within its scope, but rather less with things like classroom ethos, course policies, helpful contacts, or a student bill of rights. What remains, then, is still the plain, black-on-white, word-processed contract-style wall of text that we know and love because it's more-or-less familiar, and that students today likely find even less memorable and compelling than the ones we knew and Cham parodied. What differs, however, is that we are no longer in the analog universe of hard-copy syllabi, nor even—thanks to developments like socio-emotional learning, or the much older faith-and-learning integration in religious schools—in the space of relating with our students merely or even primarily by contract. Inspirations vary significantly, from drives for equity and inclusion to more general student-centered teaching and learning design; but higher education is nonetheless moving—quickly and decidedly—toward a more humanistic vision of the instructor-student relationship.

By Matt Schumann

SUBMIT A BLOG POST

We welcome blog posts from faculty, lecturers, staff, and students on teaching and learning topics. Email us at faculty_development@emich.edu with your blog post idea for the opportunity to be featured in future newsletters!

Many syllabi now contain a student bill of rights. Many syllabi now refer students to more support resources. Whether or not our syllabi share them by name, we now have Starfish and other technologies that help us check in on students' performance—at least—if not on their well-being. Mindfulness has emerged as a notable pedagogical practice, as have games and gamification, and ever more emphasis on learning with visuals and animations.

So what if, instead of welcoming students into a contractual space, we welcomed them into a community of learning? What if, instead of black-on-white, we presented our courses in full, living color? What if we made syllabi look less like contracts, and more like brochures?

If these ideas sound appealing, then the answer is closer than we might think: still within the Office and Google suites, just migrating from Word and Docs to PowerPoint and Slides. Content can even remain largely consistent, but now with a lot more aesthetic options.

Especially for our increasing number of online learning spaces, faculty may do well to include their pictures on their syllabi. As we emerge from COVID circumstances that, for some of us, allowed students to peer into our home offices, kitchens, basements, in some cases our childrens'

play spaces, we can even use syllabi to introduce more of our lives beyond the academy.

Within both PowerPoint and Slides, tools exist to organize our space much differently and more effectively than Word and Docs. It is easier to set key content in boxes with highlights or other colors, and to add a variety of color to the syllabus, just generally. Moreover, while search functions can help students navigate a word-processed syllabus, PowerPoint and Slides both have handy toolbars for navigating slide by slide, and slides with sufficiently easy navigation markers—in much larger print than is appropriate for word processed documents—remain highly navigable in Acrobat and other pdf readers.

Beyond using the word-processing medium to describe and extol syllabi by slides, perhaps the best that this blog post can offer is a few examples, a basic template, and some additional resources.

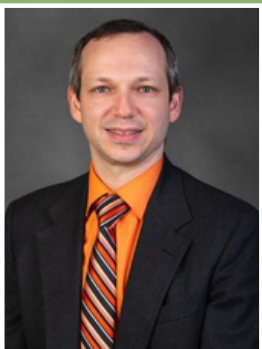
- An early model of [HIST 109](#) (first half of World), from Fall 2020;
- An early model of [HIST 124](#) (second half of U.S.), from Fall 2020;
- A [later version](#) for an introduction to International Studies at Bowling Green;
- A very basic [syllabus template](#) in Google Slides, with a focus on what goes where.

For templates that earn more style points from the start, here are two google searches:

- [Syllabus brochure template](#)
- [PowerPoint syllabus template](#)

I invite readers and viewers to note not only the differences of aesthetics and navigation in syllabi-by-slides, but also, crucially, similarities of content. For as much as a slide-through syllabus presents content in a new way, there is plenty from the word-processed version to simply copy-and-paste.

A final note as I continue to mature in my own syllabus-building: all the information for my courses still resides in the syllabus—my medium has changed, but the bulk of my content remains the same. Carrying forward the example that others have set for me in their word-processed syllabi, perhaps it's time that I set Cham's classic comic strip on its own slide.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Matt Schumann has taught at Eastern Michigan since 2005; a summer seminar through the Bruce K. Nelson

Faculty Development Center in 2014 prompted him to pursue the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as a second academic discipline. Dr. Schumann also began teaching courses for Bowling Green State University in 2019, won the BGSU Blinn Prize in 2019-20 for the design of his Historiography course, and earned a graduate certificate in Instructional Design and Technology in 2022.