2022 Midwest SoTL Twitter Conference - Renewing the University Experience
Thursday, March 31   **#MWSoTL**

Conference Program with Schedule and Presentation Information

Welcome to our Twitter Conference on "Renewing the University Experience," part of the Midwest Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Conference. A Twitter conference is a social media event that occurs from the comfort of your desk/sofa/whatever. This event is meant to bring together instructors from around the Midwest (but it can extend further) in an online setting to encourage communication and collaboration. It also happens to be easy to follow and allows for multi-stranded communications, without the hassle of long drives, accommodations, and the ubiquitous stale hotel-lobby bagel.

Each "speaker" will have a ten-minute slot in which they will present information, using the relevant hashtag #MWSoTL, about their new or improved ideas for teaching and learning in higher education. There will then be five minutes for folks to catch their collective breath, reflect, and pepper the presenter with questions, again using the appropriate Twitter handles and hashtags.

There will inevitably be some crossover, over-tweeting discussions, and unforeseen problems with it all. This is an ongoing experiment, using a public and accessible format. We should expect it to be a bit playful, a bit messy, and not to look or feel like a real-life conference. You are participating in something fun and supportive, and the presenters and organizers have given up their time for free to be part of it.

New Ways of Thinking

12:00 pm EDT   "How I Became a Better Instructor: What I Learned from My College-Age Daughter"
            Julie Saam (@JulieSaam), Indiana University Kokomo

In online (and in-person) learning, we speak of the necessary interactions for active learning: Student to Faculty, Student to Student, and Student to Content. The student-to-faculty interactions can come in many formats: feedback on assignments, syllabus, announcements, office hours, etc. Over the last three years, I have improved my student-to-faculty interactions by incorporating the suggestions of my college-age daughter. She has helped me understand what students expect from their instructors, what students need from their instructors, and what students need their instructors to avoid. These suggestions, of course, come from just one college student's perspective. However, her insight has helped me navigate teaching students in the era of Pandemic uncertainty. Understanding the student perspective during this uncertain time is quite challenging. Hopefully, this insightful snapshot into one college student's mind will help you navigate these new waters as well.

12:15 pm EDT   "The Importance of Teaching Taboo Topics in the College Classroom"
            Skyler Miller (@miller_kientz), Indiana State University
            Emilie Kientz (@miller_kientz), Indiana State University

The purpose of this presentation is to focus on the importance of teaching taboo topics to students, despite the awkwardness that typically occurs. The topics at hand include analyzing diets, understanding eating disorders, mental health amongst college students, drug and alcohol-related addictions, and the importance of healthy practices within sexual health. The inclusion of such challenging topics is influenced from a graduate assistant perspective and understanding lived experiences of students within our course whose needs are not met by outside resources. Strategies to enhance student engagement amongst such topics should include open discussion forums both in class and online, with the freedom to incorporate alternative assignments for students who find difficulty within these discussions.

12:30 pm EDT   "Online Learning Post-Emergency Remote Delivery - Changing Perceptions"
            Dale Munday (@Dale_Munday), University of Central Lancashire

Restructuring and redefining a traditional face-to-face campus-based course into a fully online course, with active engagement and individual accountability at the forefront was challenging. After the pandemic enforced immediate emergency remote teaching, course re-validation as an online MSc offered opportunities to reimage the student experience and redefine expectations. The course was redeveloped with a pre-session, session, post-session structure that directly engaged students in a range of multimodal tasks to encourage participation and the development of a community of practice. A mix of asynchronous and synchronous activities in a collective learning environment (not a traditional VLE) was central to the variety and options available to staff and students. This replicable model offers opportunities for both academics and students to engage and collaborate in a more sustained and structured manner.

12:45 pm EDT   "More Than Mad Libs: Reconciliation, Indigenization, and Decolonization in Higher Education"
Danielle E. Lorenz (@daniellelorenz), University of Alberta

Following the 2015 release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Final Report and Calls to Action, Canadian post-secondary institutions began to make institutional commitments to reconciliation. With the recent advent of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies, Indigenization and decolonization have also become institutional priorities. In turn, many educators have expressed concerns about what they should and should not be doing in their higher education classrooms. For instance, What do reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization mean in the context of post-secondary classrooms, course design, and pedagogy? How does one do reconciliation, Indigenization, and/or decolonization? How does one avoid causing harm when engaging in reconciliation, Indigenization, and/or decolonization praxis? This Twitter paper focuses on the necessity of humility that non-Indigenous educators must exhibit when engaging in reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization in their classrooms and beyond.

1:00 pm EDT   "Large Scale SoTL: An Online Institute to Facilitate Faculty Training"
Maria Gallardo-Williams (@Teachforaliving), North Carolina State University

The presentation and publication of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) papers are expected outcomes for teaching faculty in most higher education institutions. Most faculty members don't have prior training in this area and struggle to excel in this task. Faculty leaders developed an online faculty development program to provide insight into SoTL research through the delivery of an online institute designed to connect faculty with resources and experts. This presentation will highlight the design and operation of the institute and its perceived outcomes from the perspective of the organizers as well as faculty participants, with a focus on written outcomes and publication in peer-reviewed journals.

New Uses of Technology and Media

1:15 pm EDT   "Applying Twitch Streamers' Engagement Strategies to Synchronous Online Learning"
Kristina Wilson (@NUSPSOnline), Northwestern University

Early in 2022, I joined Twitch to support a friend who was just beginning to stream. As I explored the community beyond video games and discovered coworking and live music streams, I couldn't help but think: "This is a lot like synchronous online learning." As we shifted to remote and online instruction during COVID-19, I heard about Zoom sessions where instructors felt like they were shouting into the void as students joined with their cameras off. However, on a Twitch stream, that configuration is normal. Often, a single person streams and participants join in via chat. And participants are involved, connected... dare I say *engaged*? In this presentation, I will suggest engagement techniques for synchronous online class sessions based on the engagement practices of Twitch streamers. (This presentation does not advocate the adoption of Twitch or any specific tool; instead, it promotes techniques that may be used on any platform.)

1:30 pm EDT   "Pop Culture as Pedagogy: A Case for Using Student-Generated Memes"
Alison Kelly (@akelly613), University of North Dakota
Virginia Clinton-Lisell (@drclintonlisell), University of North Dakota

This Twitter Quick Hit includes results from a project examining students' perceptions of creating scientific memes for course assignments. Students from undergraduate and graduate courses created and shared memes that either communicated the main points of research articles or dispelled commonly-held psychological myths or misconceptions. Students then answered open-ended questions about the perceived usefulness and costs of creating memes. Response themes will be discussed, as well as suggestions for how to effectively implement student-generated meme assignments into courses.

1:45 pm EDT   "Asynchronous Voices: Using Digital Platforms to Enhance In-Class Discussions"
Carter Moulton (@cartermoulton), Northwestern University

In this discussion, I walk through a number of community-building strategies I used in a course I recently taught called "Media Experiences & Digital Culture" (https://rtvf298.cartermoulton.com/). Central to these efforts was an attempt to create synergy between our digital spaces and physical meetings, to make a shared learning "place" that felt cohesive even as it moved across platforms and extended beyond the walls of our classroom. Utilizing a wide range of platforms, this placemaking involved bringing asynchronous contributions into our synchronous meetings and vice versa. I highlight student voices to consider how course design initiatives—voice memos submitted via Slack, check-ins on Typeform, community-based assessment on Medium, forming Brave Space Agreements together on Padlet—worked to springboard in-class discussions and cultivate a more horizontal learning community. Ultimately, by bringing together asynchronous and synchronous voices, we can create a kind of consistency that strengthens inclusion and fosters student belonging.

New Thoughts on Student Assessment

2:00 pm EDT   "Collaborative Grading: Why and How"
Christian Aguiar (@cpaguiar), University of the District of Columbia Community College
Ahmad Wright (@playback1906), University of the District of Columbia Community Coll.
Andrew Howard (@howardam), University of Maryland – College Park

In this Twitter presentation, the authors will discuss their use of collaborative grading, a student-centered teaching and assessment practice that invites students to sit down with their professors to collaboratively assess their writing works. By leveraging direct student involvement with the assessment process, instructors are able to increase engagement and ownership in the writing classroom. The authors will share the reasons they sought out this practice and some of the lessons they've learned over several academic years of collaborative grading.

2:15 pm EDT   "Reflection Enriched: Deliberately Teaching the How and Why of Reflection"
                 Jennifer Dobbs-Oates (@JenDobbsOates), Purdue University

Reflection is a common practice and is often familiar to students. Many instructors utilize student reflection as an important part of their teaching practices. But do students know why they are being asked to reflect? Do they know how to reflect effectively? For a long time, I didn't think about these questions. The result was that my students tended to reflect shallowly, if at all. Eventually, I realized that reflection is a skill, and students benefit when we teach them directly about reflection. This presentation shares some simple ideas for teaching students to reflect. With a small investment of time, we can help our students reflect more effectively and be more motivated to do so.

2:30 pm EDT   "How Ungrading Has Saved My Soul"
                 Sybil Priebe (@ihaveabug), North Dakota State College of Science

Ungraders can list all the practical reasons they're happy they switched to the theory and process of Ungrading. There's the focus on feedback and student learning, there's the newfound joy in reviewing student work, and there's the elimination of grading behaviors. Now, that list alone should probably convert teachers, but my presentation is about what this switch has done for my mid-career attitude, my mental health, and my soul. It's completely flipped everything I was in the classroom: I was a jerk to my students; I was not the guide on the side. Ungrading has changed so many things about me as a teacher, faculty member, and human.

2:45 pm EDT   "Stimulating Student Scholarly Discourse Through Discussion Threads"
                 Catherine Smith (@catfsmitharch), Indiana University

As emerging faculty, I have experimented with various ways to promote a scholarly conversation about a topic that includes both engagement with academic literature and real-life applications effectively in the classroom. Student engagement tends to vary in terms of investment level in the assignment when I was the sole recipient of reflection submissions. Switching to structured discussion threads has greatly increased the depth and interest of the students, and I have received positive compliments on the change in student reviews. The format is conducive to the social media culture of public-facing outlets but also helps students learn how to engage with academic sources as evidence in communicating their perspectives.

New Approaches in Collaborative Learning

3:00 pm EDT   "Performing Your Future: Encouraging Career Forethought through Performance Art"
Ryan Olivier (@R_KOmponist), Indiana University South Bend

Intending to have my student ensemble perform a timely work on the state of the labor market, I accidentally stumbled upon a thought-provoking exercise where-in students found themselves pondering the trajectory of their working careers, raising challenging questions about what kind of work-life they seek. This Twitter presentation will include a brief video excerpt of the performance piece, Labor Market: for semi-autonomous instruments and too few performers, as an example of how one can ask thought-provoking questions about student career aspirations through masking such questions in the guise of artistic necessity. I will share the score for the work and ask the participants to consider their own work-life trajectory and how it might sound and look when performed on stage over the course of ten minutes.

3:15 pm EDT   "Incorporating Experiential Learning and Community Engagement Activities in the Classroom"
Matthew Warner (@ISU_SoTL), Indiana State University
Amy Wotring (@ISU_SoTL), Indiana State University
Matthew Hutchins (@ISU_SoTL), Indiana State University

Our institution places major emphasis on experiential learning and community engagement. These types of learning opportunities give students the chance to serve community partners and to learn in real-world settings. When these activities are well coordinated, the benefits are numerous and often synergistic in nature. This presentation will offer insights into these types of learning opportunities and discuss a specific experiential learning and community engagement activity used in our program several times over the past years. We will describe how we have been able to coordinate social marketing and screening-related activities across courses in our curriculum in a way that gives the students a true hands-on experience. Typical feedback from students and ways to overcome certain barriers with these types of activities also will be shared. In short, the benefits of this approach are numerous and well worth the effort required to coordinate them.

3:30 pm EDT   "The Single Bracket Elimination Tournament as a Teaching Tool"
Danielle E. Lorenz (@daniellelorenz), University of Alberta

This Twitter presentation discusses the confluences of knowledge mobilization, informal learning modalities, and social media within a disability justice framework. As an Associate Editor of the Canadian Journal of Disability Studies, I applied principles from literary studies to casually educate people on disability (mis)representation in popular media through an online single bracket elimination tournament. Specifically, utilizing irony, dark humour, and writing back, The Worst Representations of Disability Tournament ("The Worsties"), functions as a form of narrative resistance to normative, problematic disability tropes. In addition, as an example of gamifying learning, The Worsties and similar tournaments may suggest a way for educators to engage students in critical thinking in ways that had not been considered previously.

3:45 pm EDT   "Not the Field Placements You're Hoping For: Alternatives to Authentic Learning"
               Nicole Patrie (@patrie_nicole), University of Alberta

One unfortunate side-effect of the ongoing pandemic has been a dwindling of the availability of field placements. Students in a correctional services program normally have two field placement experiences that immerse them into potential careers. In one field placement and discussion seminar section, none of my students were assigned a traditional field placement. This presentation will outline the process of designing an alternative authentic learning experience for these students. The learning experiences needed to accomplish multiple goals: to connect students to professionals, to achieve the course's intended learning outcomes, to develop professional skills and professional identity. Additionally, the experiences needed to be authentic – replicating aspects of real work in correctional fields and not disadvantaging them in the job market relative to their peers who received traditional field placements.

4:00 pm EDT   "'We're All Just So Tired': Tips for Pandemic Zoom Pedagogy"
               Rebecca Gibson (@RGibsongirl), Virginia Commonwealth University

Is anyone out there listening? Teaching to a sea of grey boxes over zoom can be exhausting and demoralizing, as can being one of those grey boxes, but there are ways to relieve some of the effects. This presentation will highlight pedagogical tips and tricks to increase engagement and stimulation and make even the mid-semester doldrums scintillating for professor and student alike.

New Paths for Professional Development

4:15 pm EDT   "Objectives and Assessments: The Role Graduate Assistants Play in Education"
               Megan Karas (@ISU_SoTL), Indiana State University
               Amy Wotring (@ISU_SoTL), Indiana State University
               Matthew Warner (@ISU_SoTL), Indiana State University
               Matthew Hutchins (@ISU_SoTL), Indiana State University

Introductory health and wellness courses are a requirement for many undergraduate degree programs. These courses typically cover a variety of topics including nutrition, cancer, physical fitness, and addictive behaviors among others. This session will discuss the need to re-think these courses in terms of learning objectives and assessment. Introducing topics in ways that are more practical and immediately applicable to students are suggested. Anecdotal evidence suggests GAs bring a unique perspective that leads to more active classrooms and a sense of connectedness. These courses should focus on encouraging students to participate in strategies to reduce disease risk factors and improve overall health status. Now may also be a good time to adjust topics to those that are most relevant to current happenings in health-related fields. As with all courses, the more applicable the material is to the group, the more students will engage with the material.

4:30 pm EDT   "Graduate Assistants' Role in Today's Classroom: Challenges and Considerations"
                Amanda Borden (@ISU_SoTL), Indiana State University
                Felicity Wimsett (@ISU_SoTL), Indiana State University
                Matthew Hutchins (@ISU_SoTL), Indiana State University
                Matthew Warner (@ISU_SoTL), Indiana State University
                Amy Wotring (@ISU_SoTL), Indiana State University

In past years, many Graduate Assistants (GAs) have served as more of an aide, while the primary instructor was in charge of teaching the class. However, today GAs are the face of freshman-level courses and are primarily responsible for the entire course: teaching the class, grading, communicating with students, and classroom management. With this position comes some challenges, as many GAs are close in age to their students. This can be an obstacle when acting as an authority figure and receiving respect from the students. Both inside and outside the classroom setting, students may view a GA as another student or as a friend. Female GAs may face additional challenges as some have anecdotally reported that students are more likely to be disrespectful of young female GAs and to cause classroom management issues. This session will discuss challenges and offer suggestions on how to best train GAs.

4:45 pm EDT   "Encouraging Mid-Career Faculty to Engage in SoTL"
                Melanie Hamilton (@melly_rn95), Lethbridge College

Mid-career faculty (MCF) currently compose a predominant number of faculty at higher education institutions. The employment cohort referred to as MCF applies to those in the long period of achieving tenure at a university or who have been teaching within post-secondary education for more than five years but are still more than five from retirement. As faculty move into the middle phase of their career, there are decreased opportunities for professional development (PD), reduced opportunities for advancement or leadership, and a lack of mentorship. Educational developers or other individuals within an institution responsible for faculty PD should encourage and support MCF to examine their teaching practices and have conversations that will enable these faculty to move from scholarly teaching to scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). SoTL is one way for faculty to focus their PD initiatives in the middle years of their career.