# Summer Book Club: *Small Teaching Online*

Hello! We'll get started in just a minute.

Your mic is currently MUTED.

Make sure you have the participant list and chat window visible, so that you can raise your hand and/or type questions!

"Paying attention to the small, everyday decisions we make in teaching represents our best route to successful learning for our students, in almost any learning environment we can imagine" (xxii).

**PART I: Design**
- Backwards Design (from course goals to daily assignments, not the other way around)
- Designing for Engagement
- The Tech Itself

**PART II: Humans!**
- BUILDING COMMUNITY
- Giving Feedback (how to do lots of it without losing your mind)
- On Nudging

**PART III: On Motivation**
- Student Choice and Autonomy
- Students Talking About Themselves
- Designing Redux: SUNY's Online Course Quality Review Rubric

FLOWER DARBY
with JAMES M. LANG

small
TEACHING
ONLINE

Applying Learning Science
in Online Classes

Book is in basically three parts

   how to design your course before it starts
   remembering that your students are humans
   how to keep those humans in your course

I'm going to go through each chapter quickly, highlighting the MAIN TIPS -- you can find these towards the end of each chapter but I've curated them

If at any point you have suggestions or questions, put them in the chat or raise your hand and I'll keep an eye on those

## Chapter One: Course Design

1. Get students working on the final assignment in Week 1
   Can be speculative!
   Can also be audio/video

2. **WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?**
   The most important thing to clarify, over and over
   Do it for in-class activities, homework, major assignments

3. Reflexive check-ins
   Keep tabs on how your students are doing w/r/t the course goals
   Adjust as necessary
   **WEEKLY PLAN ANNOUNCEMENTS ON CANVAS**

4. Closing reflections
   What they've learned and what they'll take with them

The first chapter: macro course design
KEEP IN MIND: YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO ALL THESE THINGS! THEY ARE MERELY
SUGGESTIONS! FOR INSTANCE:

Tip 1: Consider having students try something related to, or talk about, the END of
the course at the very BEGINNING of it. Could be a response just to you about the
final project, or a low-stake quiz that looks a little like the final, or something

Tip 2: the most important thing. Constantly signal to your students WHY they are
doing whatever they're doing. You do this a lot in the classroom; without it, you must
be intentional

Tip 3: get organized about checking in. The weekly plan was my saving grace and
allowed me to send weekly reminders that they should check in with any concerns.
More durable than an email

**Chapter Two: On Engagement**

1. **Break Down Your Assignments**
   Create checklists!
   Big Assignment → Multiple small, graded, feedback-given assignments

2. Conditional Release Assignments
   The "Module" feature in Canvas
   WARNING: some students will find this restrictive; can hinder bird's-eye view of course

3. Are Your Students Confused?
   Add a **general Q/A forum** to Canvas, Slack, Discord – whatever your main discussion platform is
   Respond to common confusions **quickly, clearly,** and **to everyone**
   Re-center lesson plans on the troublesome topic

4. Provide Highlights
   Summarize discussions (in class and threaded) and archive somewhere (e.g. Canvas page)
   WARNING: do not abuse discussion threads!

Chapter two: engagement

Tip one: break down your assignments! Give them checklists. Give them small tasks that are a few points a piece. If you usually run a course that is readings then one final paper, RETHINK THIS

Tip two: conditional release. Use at your minor peril.

Tip three: the general Q/A. Can take many forms. Remind your students to use it.

Tip four: discussion highlights. Archive these! Note the discussion abuse warning. Lots of students complained to me last sem that they had to do 7 discussions a week. That's too many. I'll get to that in a minute.

## Chapter Three: The Tools

1. FIRST, DO NO HARM
   Introduce as **few new technologies as possible**
   Do not require purchase of expensive new tech or programs
   Test usability of all adopted technology

2. Don't stress about your videos! But do make them
   No more than six min; can be low-production but must be clear
   Canvas Studio is best for this

3. Is the content already there?
   Assign YouTube videos, TikTok compilations, TED talks, etc

4. Choose tech purposefully; consider **PRIVACY, ACCESSIBILITY, EQUITY**
   My suite: Zoom, Slack, Canvas, Google Docs. Others: Nearpod, Discord, Perusall, Hypothes.is…

Chapter three: the tech itself

Tip one: LESS IS MORE. Breathe!

Tip two: make a few practice vids now, get comfy with it

Tip three: gack existing content

Tip four: choose a "suite" and stick to it. Mine is 3.5: Canvas/Slack/Zoom trifecta, with Docs as signup software. Docs might become more important in the future, but I am not adding anything more. Assume your students can use Canvas and Zoom. ONLY REQUIRE ONE OR TWO NEW THINGS. NO MORE.

## Chapter Four: Building Community

1. Creating Social Presence
   - Intro videos (you do one too!)
   - Frequent group-work (shared Google doc, peer review in Canvas, scheduled Zooms)

2. Pedagogy of Care
   - *Do not require more work* to "make up for" lack of in-person instruction
   - Keep things simple & recursive: "read stuff / do stuff" (Stommel)
   - Be as flexible as possible with deadlines (Oops Tokens, etc)
   - Revisit your exams: can they be taken **without** intrusive proctoring software?

3. Discussion Forums (p. 83-85)
   - Is it actually discussion-worthy? If not, **make it a reading response** and give good feedback
   - Consider small group discussions

   **How do you plan to signal your PRESENCE to your students?**

Chapter Four: the most important chapter

If you read one chapter front to back, this one should be it

Tip one: intro videos. YOU DO ONE TOO

Tip two: LESS IS MORE, AGAIN. You will have to sacrifice content if you want connection. Turn it into a mantra.

Tip three: discussion forums?? Vs. reading responses. Do not have them do more than one of these per week. Sorry. Find other ways to discuss the reading.

Quick discuss: how did you signal presence to students? How do you plan on doing it in the fall?

## Chapter Five: On Feedback

1. Again: FREQUENT, LOW-STAKES ASSIGNMENTS
   Give short but real comments; use their names
   Can also be audio/video
   Consider the rubric feature on Canvas (carefully)

2. Deadline scheduling
   Make a calendar: schedule due dates for when you can give timely feedback
   Set aside "feedback time" for short assignments

3. Time for synchronicity!
   Formative feedback time is the most useful time for synchronous instruction
   Consider rethinking office hours: less frequent, more casual, scheduled, Qs in advance
   Schedule synch feedback time as part of the course hours, not as extra

Chapter Five: feedback time

This is how you establish your presence and trust throughout the semester. You will have to do it a lot.

Tip one: again, frequent low-stakes stuff. Break down your assignments.

Tip two: for your own sanity, don't have stuff for different classes due on the same day

Tip three: when to use SYNCHRONOUS meetings? For individual or very small group feedback! Again, SACRIFICE CONTENT FOR THIS. Do not heap it atop the course.

**Chapter Six: Persistence**

1. Strategic Nudging
    Develop email template
    Think ahead: what should trigger a nudge? How to keep track of students who need one?

2. Try a Goals Contract
    You come up with some; students come up with some (individually or as a group)
    See p. 140 for examples
    Check in with them (mid-term evals?) regarding these goals!

3. Try Mastery Quizzes
    Low-stakes, infinite tries, must get to 100%

4. Scaffolded Assignments
    Again: frequent, low-stakes evaluations to help students grow and to hear more from you

Chapter Six: keep track of yr students

Tip one: figure out a nudge template/schedule/routine ahead of time

Tip two: goals contract (beginning of semester activity)

Tip three: mastery quizzes. Sometimes conjoined with conditional release modules. Infinite tries IMPORTANT. (Either they get 100% or 0%)

Tip four: are we sensing a trend? FREQUENT LOW-STAKES ASSIGNMENTS WITH ACTUAL FEEDBACK FROM YOU

## Chapter Seven: Autonomy

1. **Give Students Choices**…
   …In discussion forums, problem sets, paper topics
   …About how to record their responses (text, audio, video)

2. Try Topic Groups
   Students self-select into interest groups related to course content
   You personalize tasks based on those interests
   Can help with community-building and discussion post participation

3. Try Specs Grading (p. 168)
   All-or-nothing system; risky but can be efficient when the **stakes are very clear**

4. Try an Annotated Syllabus
   Allow students to comment on your syllabus (via Docs or Hypothes.is)
   Be prepared to change the syllabus in response!

Chapter Seven: Autonomy

Tip one: give students choices! Do not be rigid about this kind of stuff!

Tip two: feedback from you is good, but you'll burn out if you have too many students. TOPIC GROUPS can help; feedback then comes from within that group (most useful for large classes)

Tip three: specs grading? (See all or nothing quiz)

Tip four: collective syllabus annotating -- again, reflexivity key here. WHY ARE WE DOING XYZ; be prepared to actually respond to student suggestions/concerns at the level of the syllabus!

## Chapter Eight: Personal Connections

**1. What do they already know?**
    Create small-stakes assignment to see what knowledge your class already has
    Can be short quiz, response assignment, discussion thread, Slack channel

**2. Try a Concept Map**
    Can be done individually or in small groups or as a whole class
    Make connections between course topics but also between topics and students' lives

**3. Try Student Curation**
    Get students to scour the web for stuff related to the course's topic
    Group-curated resource document (in Docs or Hypothes.is or Slack)

**4. Personal Learning Networks: a metacognitive tool**
    Running journal in which students map out who/what they depend upon to find knowledge
    Make your own as an example

Chapter Eight: It's about them
The following can all be made into low-stakes assignments:

1. Check what they already know (beginning activity)

2. Course concept map (keep somewhere, return to periodically)

3. Student curation (keep somewhere that isn't Canvas; they can't edit Canvas pages)

4. Personal learning network -- running journal
Introduce concept of EMERGENCY LEARNING
Your example: on a research day, record all the information you sought and how you sought it. Google? Library? Emailing someone? Etc.

## Chapter Nine: Ongoing Development

1. Take an online class!
    E.g. NYU Language House Zoom courses (entirely synchronous)

2. Use Models
    Digital Studies 101: https://dgst101.com/

3. Keep It Simple
    Do not burn out by trying fancy new things all at once
    Do not burn out by requiring too much work from your students

4. Use An Existing Rubric For Yourself
    SUNY Online Course Quality Rubric: https://oscqr.suny.edu/
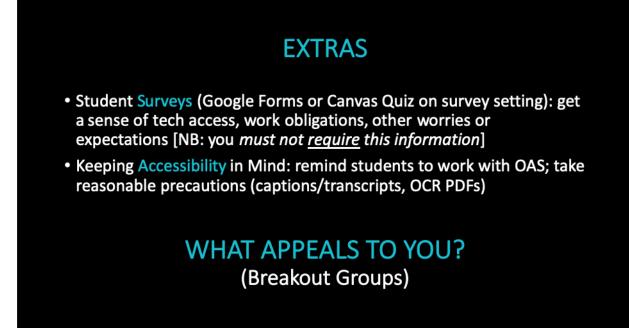    Fifty clear standards; work through them one by one

Chapter Nine: developing as an instructor
You should in fact start here, now

Tip one: if you can, take an online course (I did and realized how tempting it is to do other shit on your computer)

Tip two: do not reinvent the wheel

Tip three: SERIOUSLY, KEEP IT SIMPLE

Tip four: design your courses while following the SUNY rubric!

# EXTRAS

- Student Surveys (Google Forms or Canvas Quiz on survey setting): get a sense of tech access, work obligations, other worries or expectations [NB: you *must not require this information*]
- Keeping Accessibility in Mind: remind students to work with OAS; take reasonable precautions (captions/transcripts, OCR PDFs)

## WHAT APPEALS TO YOU?
(Breakout Groups)

Some extra stuff: consider a student survey before the semester starts (but make it optional) to get an idea of what problems you might run into or what tech might not work

Accessibility: I have had students who cannot easily type. I let them record audio responses. OCR is necessary for screen readers.

Breakout groups: groups of 5 or 6, discuss which tips stuck out to you as being something you could see working in your courses/disciplines
Someone be the SUMMARIZER!
Quick reports back

# FOR NEXT TIME

Work something from this slide deck into one or more of your syllabi

Be prepared to share it!