

# Teaching and Learning Services

## Successfully Navigating Challenging Teaching Situations

New Faculty Orientation

14 August 2024

Upcoming TLS Events & Training Opportunities

[carleton.ca/tls/events-and-programs/events](https://carleton.ca/tls/events-and-programs/events)

# Our Goals for This Session

- Discuss common situations we all face as educators, and share strategies for prevention or management
  - Each table will choose a theme, and will be given a couple of examples as “conversation starters”
  - In small group, you will discuss managing situations related to your chosen theme
    - Beyond the “conversation starter” scenarios, what other situations might we have to manage?
- Return to large group, sharing our thoughts on preventing or managing these situations

# Agenda

- 1:05-10: Introductions
- 1:10-25: Activity Set-Up
- 1:25-45: Small Group Discussions
- 1:45-2:40: Large Group Discussions
- 2:40-50 Wrap Up



[dare.org](http://dare.org)

# Our Panel of Teaching Mentors

**Chris Motz,**  
Psychology

**Don Myles,**  
Linguistics & Language  
Studies

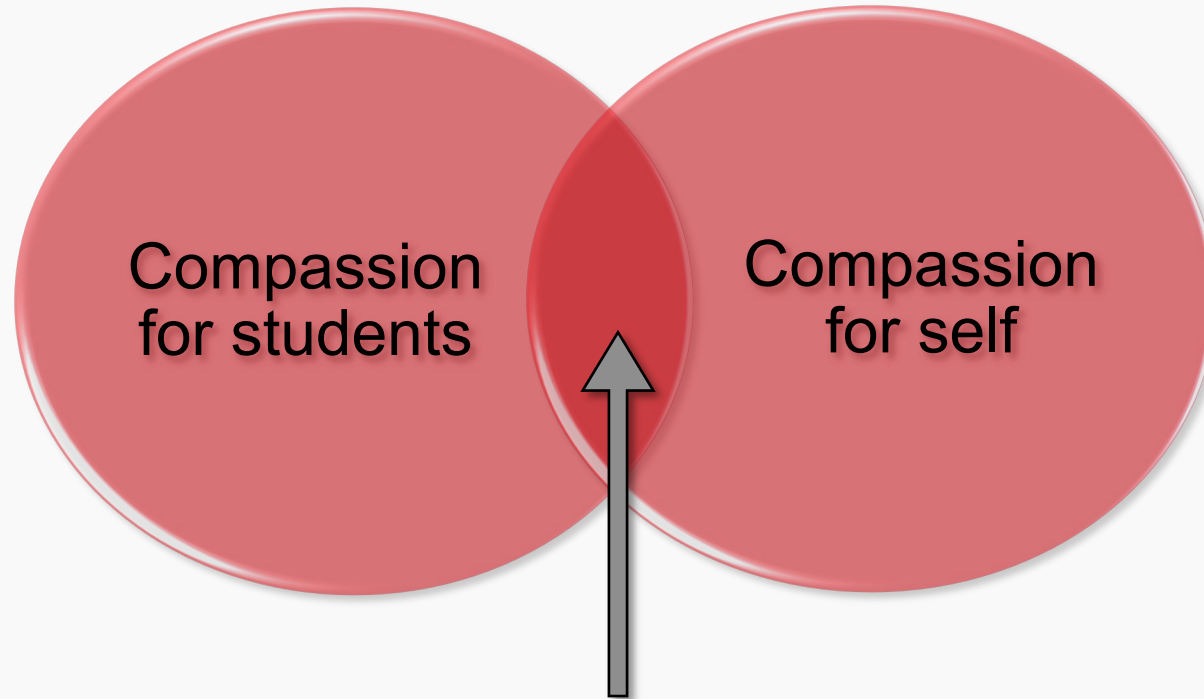
**Rebecca Renfroe,**  
Business



**To Find a Mentor in Your Unit:**

[carleton.ca/tls/events-and-programs/programs/faculty-teaching-mentors/](https://carleton.ca/tls/events-and-programs/programs/faculty-teaching-mentors/)

# The Challenge Eternal



One of our challenges as educators is to find this “elusive” middle-ground where we can balance our needs and the needs of our students

# Top 3 Themes – Each Table Chooses 1

- **Theme 1: requests for flexibility**

- How might we determine when to hold firm to the rules and course structure set out in our syllabus, and when it would be appropriate to provide some flexibility? What obligations does the new Academic Considerations Policy introduce for instructors?

- **Theme 2: academic integrity issues (including unauthorized use of generative AI)**

- How might we design course structures and supporting materials to help students avoid academic integrity violations? How should we/our courses adapt in response to generative AI?

- **Theme 3: managing student work/expectations**

- How might we effectively shape student expectations so that they are prepared for the coursework? And what might be some ways to manage students' workflow so that they are getting the information they need, and doing the work they need to do, in a timely manner?

# Additional 5 Themes – Each Table Chooses 1

- **Theme 4: accessibility**
  - How might we organize our courses in ways that reduce barriers to learning, increase options for students, and proactively reduce the need for accommodations?
- **Theme 5: student disengagement**
  - How might we encourage students to take ownership of their learning? How might we help them find reasons to engage with their classmates and with the course material?
- **Theme 6: classroom management**
  - What are some optimal ways to address classroom interactions at the start of the term? And what are some ways to reshape unhealthy classroom behaviours during class?
- **Theme 7: managing our TAs**
  - How might we recognize the stress points that impact our Teaching Assistants and that get in the way of effective teaching and effective teamwork?
- **Theme 8: diversity, equity, & inclusion**
  - How might we effectively design courses and learning experiences that include all members of the course? What course designs and practices can you use to make your course inclusive?

# Small Group Discussion

- **20 mins**
- In your groups, discuss your 2 themes
- Prepare to report back
  - Note: examples provided in the handouts are just to get you thinking – your group need not respond to the specifics in your report back



[i.pining.com](http://i.pining.com)



# Return to the Large Group Discussion

- What themes were discussed at your table?
- What were some of the strategies that were proposed to manage these situations?
  - How might we use course design to address the situation or prevent it from arising?
  - How might we address the situation proactively at the start of the term?



[reportback.eff.org](http://reportback.eff.org)

# Theme 1: Requests for Flexibility

- How might we determine when to hold firm to the rules and course structure set out in our syllabus, and when it would be appropriate to provide some flexibility?
- What obligations does the new Academic Considerations Policy introduce for instructors?

# Theme 1 – Example 1

A student bombs the midterm and comes to you before the final exam, claiming that they have not been doing well throughout the term and asking if you could you maybe just maybe re-weight the final exam to be worth more.

What do you do?

# Theme 1 – Example 2

In the final 48 hours prior to the first midterm in your course, you receive short-term requests for accommodations from 10 of your 150 students via the Registrar Office's official form.

What do you do? What can you do in the future to help reduce the number of such requests?

## Theme 2: Academic Integrity Issues (including unauthorized use of Gen AI)

- How might we design course structures and supporting materials to help students avoid academic integrity violations?
- How should we/our courses adapt in response to generative AI?

# Theme 2 – Example 1

As you're marking a batch of assignments, you notice that, for a few questions, a cluster of students have submitted similar responses that don't really seem to be informed by class lectures and readings. You suspect the use of AI chatbots such as ChatGPT, but there is no 'smoking gun' to substantiate the concern.

What do you do? What do you do differently for the next assignment?

# Theme 2 – Example 2

You have discovered several students with the exact answers (and mistakes!) on an assignment. You also discover that the assignment had been posted to a note-sharing website such as CourseHero.com or Chegg.com, and that students have copied their answers directly from the answers provided there.

What do you do?

# Theme 3: Managing Student Work/Expectations

- How might we effectively shape student expectations so that they are prepared for the coursework?
- And what might be some ways to manage students' workflow so that they are getting the information they need, and doing the work they need to do, in a timely manner?



# Theme 3 – Example 1

You're in week 7 of a 12-week course that features a multi-stage group project. While all groups completed the first stage of the project submitted 2 weeks ago, it comes to your attention that 3 members of a group have cut out the 4<sup>th</sup> member (who they determined was unhelpful) without telling you. The remaining group members are very opposed to any reconciliation.

How do you resolve this situation, and how can you prevent it in the next version of the course?

# Theme 3 – Example 2

It's Tuesday of week 6 of your large first-year course (200+ students), and you have a midterm on Thursday. In the last 48 hours, you have been overwhelmed with ~50 emails from students, largely asking questions about the upcoming test. Some of the questions are ones answered by your syllabus or earlier announcements, but some are new and warrant a response with new information.

What do you do now to manage the workload, and how do you prevent a repetition of this situation in the future?

# Theme 4: Accessibility

- How might we organize our courses in ways that reduce barriers to learning, increase options for students, and proactively reduce the need for accommodations?

# Theme 4 – Example 1

You have a 300-student course next term, and you're planning to have 3 in-person unit tests during class time. You've heard from colleagues about the high volume of requests for alternate arrangements (e.g., re-scheduling, re-weighting) that those assignments can create.

What can you do now, at the course design stage, to reduce the likelihood of such requests?

# Theme 4 – Example 2

Weeks before the new term, your department returns your syllabus to you, asking you to add a late policy. You want to be flexible, but you have deadlines, too, and terms are only 4 months long after all.

What are the terms of the late policy that you develop and submit?

# Theme 5: Student Disengagement

- How might we encourage students to take ownership of their learning?
- How might we help them find reasons to engage with their classmates and with the course material?

# Theme 5 – Example 1

A few weeks into a new term, you notice that one specific student is regularly missing from class. Also, you can see on Brightspace that they are not completing weekly quizzes and have missed the first assignment.

What can you do?

## Theme 5 – Example 2

You hold office hours each week but rarely have students show up. You know there are students who are struggling and are at risk of failing - you've reached out - but still no one is showing up to office hours.

What do you do?



# Theme 6: Classroom Management

- What are some optimal ways to address classroom interactions at the start of the term?
- And what are some ways to reshape unhealthy classroom behaviours during class?

# Theme 6 – Example 1

You have a student who repeatedly raises their hand throughout lecture to ask questions that are only tangentially related to the course content.

What do you do?

## Theme 6 – Example 2

You have a student who comes to your office hours, sits down, doesn't say much, but seems content to stay there the entire time slot... and is reluctant to leave when your official time is up.

What do you do?

# Theme 7: Managing Our TAs

- How might we recognize the stress points that impact our Teaching Assistants and that get in the way of effective teaching and effective teamwork?

# Theme 7 – Example 1

It's Tuesday of week 7 of your course, and your TA has just returned the marked midterms to you. The class average is 48% and your review of the scoring and feedback suggests to you that your TA has been marking in ways that don't reflect the expectations you discussed. You promised your class that grades would be available on Friday.

What do you do this week, and what do you do to avoid a repetition of this scenario for the next assignment?

# Theme 7 – Example 2

You're in week 4 of a first-year class that features 600 students and 13 TAs, and the first assignment was submitted three days ago. Your lead TA, who set up a marking meeting with the other TAs, reports that the TAs in this course have broken down into two factions—their current argument is about whether or not to use a rubric, but the lead TA makes it clear that they have been disagreeing on just about everything.

What do you do to make sure this first assignment and future assignments are marked fairly and in a timely manner? And what do you do differently the next time you teach the course?

# Theme 8: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

- How might we effectively design courses and learning experiences that include all members of the course?
- What course designs and practices can you use to make your course inclusive?

# Theme 8 – Example 1

A student approaches you to describe a conversation they had with a peer. The peer approached them and said – “Can I study with you? You’re Asian, so you’ll get an A.” The student is uncomfortable with this statement.

What do you do?



## Theme 8 – Example 2

There is a 10% participation mark in your course. You notice one white young man dominates the class discussion, talks over others, and interrupts others.

You can see other students are frustrated. What do you do?

# Conclusion

- Don't lose sight of *self-compassion* in your efforts to be *compassionate to your students*
- Teaching need not be a siloed activity: identify & connect with colleagues in your dept/faculty and across the service depts that support you



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# Conclusion

- While there is no escaping challenging teaching situations, what matters is that we learn from them and take preventative steps the next time around
- It's a wicked problem, not a wicked person—students are not the problem, the situations are



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# Where to Go for Help?

- Your department likely has a Teaching Mentor
- Senior faculty, and/or the Chair of your department
- Teaching and Learning Services (TLS)
- Paul Menton Centre (PMC) for guidance on student accommodations



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