

SOPHIE TAMAS: Like many of you, I suppose, I spent last summer vacillating between panic and despair as I tried to figure out how to flip my courses online in a format that would have any hope of actually reaching my stunned and lonely students, wherever they may be. I'm an emotional geographer, which means I'm interested in how feelings animate and shape spaces, bodies, objects, and practices, especially the emotional and affective dynamics of higher education. I also teach qualitative methods with a focus on critical feminist indigenous arts-based, autoethnographic narrative and reparative approaches to producing knowledge.

This background draws my attention to the relational frame in which learning happens. In the classroom, our bodies do much of the relational work through mostly unconscious, non-verbal negotiations of interest and security, or proximity and distance. Our campus design and the spaces within it also place us in roles with feeling rules. So I know how to be a professor and students know how to be students. We tend to rely on this relational containment and structure, even as we critique the institutional hierarchies that they maintain.

By moving Zoom University into our bedrooms and basements, we open up all kinds of room for innovation and creativity. But we also place something scary-- professorial judgment with financial implications-- in the safest or the only space that our students may have at a time when ambient fear is way up and most of our self-soothing strategies are unavailable. Remember, this is building on the student mental health crisis that was already in progress before the pandemic hit.

So when I was making that pivot online, my top priorities were relational. I could not teach them if I could not reach them. I haven't really studied pedagogy, but I have studied methodology. So I've been experimenting with transposing principles and practices from one to the other. I essentially began teaching autoethnographically. This has produced some surprising results.

In addition to learning theory and methods as usual, students in my large mandatory second-year course reported significant improvements in engagement and self-directed learning, as well as big changes in their reading, writing, thinking, perceptions of others, and personal ethics. They attributed these changes to how I

taught them, especially the personal voice in which I wrote to them each week.

In this workshop, I will show you what I did in that course and what I'm doing now with collaborative pedagogies in my graduate seminars and theorize it a bit to connect those practices to principles. I'm not offering them as a shining example, but as an encouragement to trust yourself, take chances, and get the help you need so that you can create pedagogical spaces in which you and your students can connect and thrive.