

JULIE MCCARROLL: Hello, and welcome to my online classroom. My name is Julie McCarroll. And I'm an instructor in the School of Linguistics and Language Studies at Carleton. Specifically, I teach ESLA, which stands for English as a Second Language for Academic purposes. I volunteered to be part of the Brightspace pilot for the winter 2021 semester, which means that my course this semester was housed entirely in Brightspace. I'm happy to be the first instructor participating in the pilot to share my online classroom with you.

Like many of you, the fall 2020 semester was my first experience teaching entirely online. Given that ESLA is a full credit one-semester class with six hours of instruction weekly, I opted for a blended delivery. In preparing for the fall 2020, I felt pretty confident with my content. I was a heavy user of cuLearn and the various tools in cuLearn.

And so I felt pretty good about migrating my course content onto the online platform in a way which engaged my learners. But according to the mid-course feedback that I received, some of my students were not happy with the design of cuLearn. They reported feeling overwhelmed by the amount of content and a little confused as to where to find things. They weren't as happy with the layout as I had hoped for.

So guided by this student feedback and after seeking help from TLS, I made a number of changes at the reading week for the remainder of the fall 2020 term, which were positively received by most students. But still, I felt like the content wasn't delivered in a way that would best suit students. I still felt that it was overpopulated. But I was uncertain how to solve this.

It was with this context that I came to Brightspace. In the fall of 2020, I started designing my course in Brightspace in November and December. Because of this semi-negative experience I had in cuLearn where the organization wasn't well-received by all students, and adding to that the pressure of learning an entirely new learning management system, I was really overwhelmed and indecisive when I first started to conceptualize my course in Brightspace.

I didn't know where to start. And I didn't know what Brightspace would allow me to do. And I imagine that many of you are feeling the same way right now. And you may feel that you've finally gotten a hold on cuLearn in this online teaching thing. And now suddenly, you're asked to change systems.

In hindsight, my advice to myself would have been slow down. Take a breath. Take it one step at a time and also not to be so hard on myself. I think in November and December when I was designing my course in Brightspace, I felt like I needed to take all of that expertise and knowledge I had in cuLearn and suddenly translate it into Brightspace. And that's just not realistic. We can't expect that years of using cuLearn and becoming comfortable with it will automatically translate into a new learning management system.

So given the fact that I'm the first Brightspace ambassador to present my online classroom, I thought it would make sense to start from the beginning. So for this reason, my Welcome to my online classroom session will focus on the beginning.

I'll share with you how the features of Brightspace allowed me to refine the approach that I had in cuLearn. I'll demonstrate how I set up my Brightspace course and how I took advantage of the design options that Brightspace offers to provide my course content in a way that was consistent and that was engaging for students and to my relief was more simple than cuLearn.

I'll also share with you the student voice. I've surveyed my current students. And I have gotten a number of important feedback from them about their impressions and their experience with Brightspace initially. They've also given me some good advice on how to improve my course next semester that hopefully you will find helpful as well.

I expect that this will take up the bulk of my presentation. But if I have time, I'd also like to talk with you about assignments and quizzes and grades in Brightspace. I would like to share what I like, what I don't like so much, and what I've learned through trial and error this semester.

Hopefully, I can provide you with some tips and strategies that might make your course design and your assignment design, quiz design, and grade book design more effective and efficient. So I hope that you'll join me as I welcome everyone

into my online classroom on March 30. See you then.