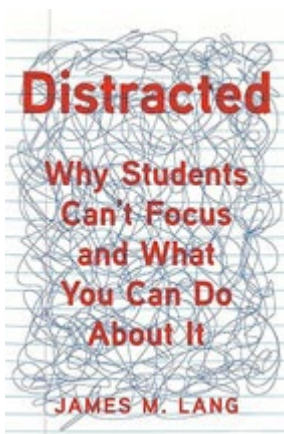


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## Update from a Faculty Learning Community

### Teaching in the Age of Distraction

This year, 21 faculty are participating in one of three [faculty learning communities](#), which meet every two or three weeks to investigate and implement new teaching and learning approaches. Racheal Pesta (Criminology), facilitator of the *Teaching in the Age of Distraction* learning community, recently shared an update on her group's discussions. The group is reading [Distracted: Why Students Can't Focus on What You Can Do About It](#) (2020) by James M. Lang. The book is divided into two sections: one on theories of distraction and one on practical strategies to help students practice attention.

The learning community recently discussed a chapter that focused on debates around banning technology from the classroom. The chapter describes four common approaches to managing devices in the classroom: 1) No policy (the "laissez-faire approach"), 2) Total ban, 3) Student-generated policies, and 4) Context-specific policies. Members of the group have decided that they will each try either approach #3 or #4 in their spring classes. They will then discuss any differences they have noticed in student device use compared to their previous approaches.

In addition, group members have been reflecting on the challenges they have faced in implementing and enforcing their own policies, and they have discussed the need for having periodic check-ins throughout the semester in their classes related to tech use. They have also talked about the importance of students developing the skills to manage device use in their lives—and the value in sharing with students some of the research on how devices affect attention, retention of knowledge, and overall performance.

Interested in reading the *Distracted* book? Stop by the CTLA Lending Library in room 425 of the J. Eugene Smith Library, or [fill out a request](#) to have the book sent to you via interoffice mail (enter #16 in response to question 1).

Future issues of the newsletter will feature updates from the other two faculty learning communities, and each community will be sharing their lessons learned at the end of the academic year.

## Winter Workshops

### Managing Disruption: Responding to New Trends in Classroom Behavior

**Tuesday, January 21, 9:30 am – 12 pm** (Johnson Room)

*Led by Eunice Matthews-Armstead (Social Work) and Courtney Broschious (Political Science)*

Faculty have been reporting higher incidents of disruptive behavior in class this semester, and that these behaviors are negatively affecting the learning environment for all students. Many faculty are finding that classroom management strategies they have used in the past are no longer working as well. In this working session, participants will discuss how student needs and behaviors have changed in recent years, approaches faculty can use to help prevent some classroom disruptions, and strategies for intervening when behavior escalates. Participants will also reflect on how to assess whether behavior is threatening.

*Sandwiches will be served at noon for faculty who wish to continue their conversations over lunch.*

[Register for this working session](#). **This session is open to both full-time and part-time faculty.**

### Part-Time Faculty Orientation

**Date TBD** (virtual)

*Led by Niti Pandey (Dean of the School of Education and Professional Studies), Emily Todd (Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences), and Julia DeLapp (Director of the CTLA)*

Join the deans and the CTLA for a one-hour lunchtime session to prepare for the coming semester.

Topics to be addressed include:

- Ensuring you have everything you need for the start of the semester
- Understanding institutional policies
- Preparing your syllabus
- Responding to letters of accommodation for students with disabilities
- Engaging students and being aware of common student concerns
- Knowing how to support students when they need academic or other types of help
- Accessing resources from the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

The date and registration information for this session will be sent by email to all part-time faculty and to department chairs soon. *This session will repeat information provided at the fall orientation session for new part-time faculty.*

### Maximizing Full Grade Center

**Monday, December 9, OR Wednesday, December 11** (virtual)

Two time options (both days): 10:10 – 10:40 am or 1:10 – 1:40 pm (stay after for Q&A)

*Led by Mauricio Calpa (Center for Instructional Technology)*

In this 30-minute workshop, you'll learn how to use and maximize Full Grade Center in Blackboard. You'll get guidance and tips for creating a grading system that works best for you and your students. The session will include the following topics:

- How to set up a Weighted Grade Column
- How to create smart views that streamline your workflow

- Tips on customizing your gradebook for efficiency
- Best practices for naming convention
- Best practices for providing meaningful feedback
- Adjusting your grading schema

Four different times are available for the sessions, and they will start 10 minutes after the hour to accommodate the final exam schedule. The presentation portion of the workshop will last 30 minutes. Faculty can stay online for an additional Q&A session if they so choose.

Register for one of the sessions: <https://forms.office.com/r/Kgiw2VgeCf>

### **Additional ELAC-Focused Workshops to be Announced Soon**

Check your email for additional workshops coming on designing LAC 200 and 400 seminars, designing critical thinking assignments, and more.

### **Propose a Teaching and Learning Conversation (TLC)**

Do you have an interesting teaching strategy that you'd like to share? Something you've tried in the classroom that has increased student engagement, improved learning, or fostered inclusion? Consider discussing your strategy over lunch at a Teaching and Learning Conversation (TLC)!

Each TLC session provides faculty with the opportunity to hear a brief presentation on a specific teaching strategy that has been successfully implemented by one or more of their peers at Eastern. Participants will then have time to reflect and engage in small group discussions about how the strategy might be adapted and utilized in their own discipline.

Learn more or submit a proposal by [visiting the CTLA website](#). The deadline to submit is **January 10**.

The first session of spring semester will be:

#### **Using Gamification to Promote Knowledge Retention**

Tuesday, February 4, 12:30 – 1:30 pm, Hurley Hall  
*Led by Ashley Cote (Health Sciences and Nursing)*

Gamification in the classroom involves incorporating game-like elements into the learning process to make education more engaging and motivating for students. The goal of gamification is not just to make learning more fun, but also to boost student motivation, engagement, and achievement, which support knowledge acquisition and retrieval practices. This session will include evidence regarding effectiveness of gamification and examples of gamification from the nursing classroom (e.g., Amazing Race themed Exam Review).

### **Tech Tip (A periodic column from CIT)**

#### **Increase Your Efficiency and Meet Best Practices Using Eastern's Blackboard Template**

*Contributed by Mauricio Calpa, Instructional Design Coordinator*

If you find designing your course in Blackboard time consuming, we have a template for you. It's efficient, consistent, and helps meet best practices in online course design.



### Benefits of using the template

- **Save Time:** The template is pre-built with recommended course menu options, weekly content, and rubrics.
- **Ensure Consistency:** Each weekly folder is structured to include an outline, the week's resources, and the week's assignments to keep the workflow clear and to the point for students.
- **Streamline Development:** The template provides a structured framework, reducing the chance of missing important details and requirements.

### Getting started

1. **Pick Your Template:** Pick one of three options—5 weeks, 8 weeks, or 15 weeks.
2. **Tailor It to Your Needs:** Customize the sections to fit your unique needs and teaching style.
3. **Reuse:** Use the course copy process for future iterations and update as needed.

Eliminate the pre-course design process and focus on your subject matter content. Choose your template using [our guide](#). Feel free to contact [CIT@easternct.edu](mailto:CIT@easternct.edu) with any questions, or [book a one-on-one remote session](#) with any CIT member.



### Seeking Volunteers for Blackboard Ultra Beta Testing

CIT would like to announce that Eastern will begin beta testing Blackboard Ultra for Summer 2025. This is a chance to get early access and help provide feedback. We're looking for 8-10 enthusiastic and committed testers to participate. If you are interested, please complete the [beta test participation survey](#) to let us know more about you.

The deadline to be considered is **02/28/2025, 11:59pm ET**.

## Books in the CTLA Lending Library

### Winter Reading, Anyone?

Rather than spotlight just one book, this month's newsletter brings you a list of ideas for winter break reading. Below are books that provide practical strategies to help you remember student names, engage students in fruitful discussions, or design collaborative learning assignments—as well as books that explore the science of learning and strategies for designing inclusive learning environments. Some were published in the last few months; others have been around for a couple of years but are worth revisiting.

See a full list of available books in the [CTLA Lending Library](#).

#### Practical Guides

- [Creating engaging discussions: Strategies for “avoiding crickets” in any size classroom and online](#) (2018) by Jennifer H. Herman and Linda B. Nilson, 174 pages, CTLA book #162
- [A teacher's guide to learning student names: Why you should, why it's hard, and how you can](#) (2024) by Michelle D. Miller, 113 pages, CTLA book #172
- [33 simple strategies for faculty: A week-by-week resource for teaching first-year and first-generation students](#) (2019) by Lisa M. Nunn, 144 pages, CTLA book #171
- [Teaching and learning STEM: A practical guide](#) (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (2024) by Richard M. Felder and Rebecca Brent, 338 pages, CTLA book #144

- [Collaborative learning techniques: A handbook for college faculty](#) (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (2014) by Elizabeth F. Barkley, Claire Howell Major, and K. Patricia Cross, 417 pages, CTLA book #6

#### ***Inclusive Instruction***

- [Rethinking writing instruction in the age of AI: A Universal Design for Learning approach](#) (2024) by Randy Laist, 226 pages, CTLA book #165
- [Inclusive teaching: Strategies for promoting equity in the college classroom](#) (2022) by Kelly A. Hogan and Viji Sathy, 254 pages, CTLA book #28
- [Delivering inclusive and impactful instruction: Universal design for learning in higher education](#) (2024) by Kevin L. Merry, 191 pages, CTLA book #168

#### ***Science of Learning***

- [Minding bodies: How physical space, sensation, and movement affect learning](#) (2021) by Susan Hrach, 204 pages, CTLA book #103
- [Powerful teaching: Unleash the science of learning](#) (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (2025) by Pooja K. Agarwal and Patrice M. Bain, 340 pages, CTLA book #173

To borrow any of these books, stop by the CTLA Lending Library in room 425 of the J. Eugene Smith Library, or [fill out a request](#) to have the book sent to you via interoffice mail.

## **Update from the Assessment Coordinator**

Thank you for your continued participation in the ELAC assessment process. All critical thinking assignment prompts that were submitted have been reviewed for alignment with the ELAC Critical Thinking rubric by faculty evaluators. Last week we reached out to faculty teaching an ELAC course with Critical Thinking as the primary learning outcome with instructions for submitting student artifacts. Those artifacts must be submitted by Monday, December 16. This gives us time to anonymize each artifact that will be scored and upload them to the software that faculty evaluators will use for scoring purposes over Wintersession. Once scores are in, data will be analyzed, and results will be shared with relevant Senate committees and the broader campus community.

### **Spring 2025 Assessment**

We will soon be reaching out to all faculty teaching a spring ELAC course with Critical Thinking as the primary learning outcome. Based on feedback this semester, there will be some minor changes to the process.

Please don't hesitate to contact Assessment Coordinator Suki Grandhi ([grandhis@esaternct.edu](mailto:grandhis@esaternct.edu)) with any questions, suggestions, or concerns.

## **Call for Applications: Teaching Scholars Program (2<sup>nd</sup> cohort)**

The CTLA invites applications from full-time faculty members interested in conducting research on their own teaching practices and sharing their new expertise with other faculty. The Davis Educational Foundation has awarded Eastern a grant to implement a **Teaching Scholars** program under the direction of Dr. Courtney Broschous. This program will be comprised of up to 5 faculty in the 2025-2026 academic year who will develop a classroom intervention, implement it in their courses, conduct research to examine effectiveness, and share what they have learned through a set of deliverables.

The deadline for applications is **March 3**.

Applicants are encouraged to read abstracts of projects from the first cohort of Teaching Scholars on the [CTLA website](#). In addition, an information session will be held on January 17 at 9 am for faculty interested in applying – please [register for this session in advance](#).

Please see the [call for applications](#) for detailed information about the program, eligibility criteria, participation benefits and expectations, and application instructions.

## External Faculty Development Opportunities

### Free (or very low cost) opportunities

- December 12, 11 am: [Fostering Student Engagement with Gen AI](#). This free webinar hosted by Harvard Business Publishing will share strategies for utilizing AI to enhance connections with students, facilitate active learning, and provide personalized feedback. All registrants will get access to the recording.
- December 12, 1 pm: [Inclusive Teaching and Learning: What I Have Learned From My Students](#). In this free webinar hosted by the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, Dr. Cynthia Bruce from Concordia University will describe how her research with disabled students has highlighted the importance of relationships in inclusive teaching.
- January 24 – 25: [12<sup>th</sup> annual Student Learning Outcomes \(SLO\) Symposium](#). This free, online conference is focused on approaches for assessing student learning. This year's theme is "Navigating the Challenges of Assessment: Tales from the Field." The keynote speaker will be Jillian Kinzie, Associate Director of the NSSE survey.
- Online resource: [Writing Effective Learning Outcomes](#). This free online course developed by University of California Riverside provides guidance on creating clear, measurable, and impactful learning objectives. Also available: [Curriculum Mapping online course](#).

### Other opportunities

- January 6-10: The University of Delaware is hosting its [Problem-Based Learning Workshop](#) in Newark, Delaware.
- February 20-22: The [Winter Red Rock Great Teaching Retreat](#) will be held in Bryce Canyon, Utah.

## Opportunities to Share Your Teaching and Learning Expertise

- Due December 15: Proposals are currently being accepted for presentations and digital posters for [Open Education Talks 2025](#), to be held online on Wednesdays in March from 2 to 3:30 EST. Each session will feature 5 speakers leading a 15-minute "lightning talk" about facets of open education, OER, and open pedagogy.
- Due January 6: Proposals are currently being accepted for the [Northeast OER Summit](#), to be held virtually March 3-4. This year's theme is "All Hands on Deck: Exploring Open Education Through Collaboration and Innovation." Eastern's Nicolas Simon is one of the summit organizers.
- Due January 17: The University of Central Florida is accepting proposals for the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual [Teaching & Learning with AI conference](#), to be held in Orlando May 28-30. The goal of the conference is to "discuss how to use AI tools effectively in instruction and support."



- Due January 17: The University of Tennessee Knoxville is accepting proposals for its [Innovative Teaching and Learning Conference](#), to be held virtually on March 26. The conference theme is “Cultivating Academic Success: The Synergy Between Fostering Authenticity and Transformation in Teaching and Learning.”
- Due February 2: Indiana University is accepting proposals for the [2025 Midwest SoTL Conference](#), to be held in South Bend, IN, on April 11. This year’s theme is “Care, Kindness, and Creativity.”
- Due February 14: Eastern Kentucky State University is accepting proposals for the [2025 Pedagogicon](#) conference, to be held virtually May 20. This year’s theme is “Teaching and Learning Durable Skills.”
- Due February 28: IUPUI is accepting proposals for the [2025 Assessment Institute](#), “the oldest and largest U.S. event focused on assessing and improving higher education.” The conference will be held October 26-28 in Indianapolis.

### Write for the Teaching and Learning Spotlight

Do you have a successful teaching strategy or quick tip you think other faculty might be interested in? Consider writing about it in an upcoming CTLA newsletter. Contact Julia DeLapp to discuss possibilities.



*First snow as seen from the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the library*



*Happy winter break, everyone!*