TEACHING AND LEARNING SPOTLIGHT

Newsletter of Eastern's Center for Teaching, Learning, & Assessment
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Welcome back! I hope the summer provided time for some relaxation and rejuvenation. Summer at the CTLA was spent processing feedback from our first year offerings, adding new web and Sharepoint resources, meeting with the first cohort of Teaching Scholars, designing orientation for new full-time and part-time faculty, and planning fall faculty development opportunities. We're looking forward to a new year!

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Propose a Teaching and Learning Conversation

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. Last year, there were TLCs on creating AI-based assignments, discussing controversial topics, using collaborative grading techniques, implementing project-based learning, utilizing eportfolios, and engaging students in real-world problems.

Learn more or submit a proposal by visiting the CTLA website. The deadline to submit is 9/3 at 5 pm.

Coming Soon: New Faculty Learning Communities

The CTLA is sponsoring three faculty learning communities this year. As originally conceived by Milton Cox (2004), faculty learning communities are designed for small, interdisciplinary groups of faculty to come together on a regular basis over a sustained period of time, with a focus on investigating and implementing new teaching and learning approaches. Faculty who participate in these communities often report a number of benefits, including developing lasting relationships with faculty in other departments, thinking deeply about their own pedagogical approaches, and developing new expertise.

This year's communities will address the following topics:

- **AI-Assisted Learning: A New Paradigm** *(Facilitated by Wayne Buck, Business Administration, meeting virtually every other Wednesday from 3 to 4:30 pm)*
- **Instructional Equity and Institutional Rigor** *(Facilitated by Reginald Flood, Communication, Film & Theatre, meeting in person the first and third Wednesdays at 9 am)*
- **Teaching in the Age of Distraction** *(Facilitated by Racheal Pesta, SACSW, meeting in person every three weeks on Wednesdays from 3 to 4:30 pm)*

Watch your email for information on how to apply to participate in one of these ongoing discussions. In addition, you can access the deliverables developed by last year's learning communities from the CTLA website.

Upcoming Faculty Development

Information Session on Developing New ELAC Courses

Wednesday, September 4, 3 – 4 pm (virtual)
Led by Josh Idjadi, Disciplinary Perspectives Coordinator, and David Pellegrini, Seminar Coordinator

The first phase of Implementation of ELAC is underway and looks to be successful, thanks to the many faculty members and departments that have proposed new and revised courses for the program. Our work is not done yet, as we will need many more Disciplinary Perspectives courses and especially 200 and 400 level Seminars to be approved soon—before the October call for Fall 2024 department schedules.

In this virtual session, the two ELAC coordinators will provide information about developing ELAC courses. The session will cover curricular development resources, clarification of Learning Objectives and AAC&U Value Rubrics, submission processes, and the development of cross-disciplinary thematic clusters, as well as any concerns faculty may have.

Register for this virtual session now.

Tech Tip (A periodic column from CIT)

Maximize Your Efficiency with Blackboard's Announcements Tool!

Contributed by Mauricio Calpa, Instructional Design Coordinator

Are you tediously creating an email contact list for each of your student rosters? Try using Blackboard's (Bb) Announcement tool! Stay ahead and ensure your students never miss a beat. You can utilize announcements to keep your course on track and your students informed.

- **Stay on Schedule:** Post due dates for assignments and projects.
- **Keep Everyone Updated:** Communicate any changes to your syllabus effortlessly.
- **Ensure Clarity:** Provide corrections and clarifications on course materials.
- **Plan Ahead:** Share exam schedules in advance.

The Announcements page makes it easy for you to add, edit, and delete updates as needed. Plus, with just one click, you can also send your announcement as an email. This ensures that every student receives your important updates, even if they haven't logged into the course.

Say goodbye to email contact lists and save time using Bb's Announcements tool by keeping your course running smoothly and your students informed and engaged!

- Step 1: Watch a 54-second video to learn how to create announcements.
- Step 2: Read our guide to add the announcements tool link to Blackboard course menu. This will ensure students can easily see announcements (as they don't have access to the Control Panel menu)

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Bb's Announcements tool, please contact **CIT@easternct.edu**. We will be happy to assist!

Access Matters (A periodic column from OAS)

How to Respond to Letters of Accommodations

Contributed by Sandra Flores-Gonzales, Assistant Director of OAS

Welcome back! The Office of AccessAbility Services (OAS) is looking forward to another great fall semester. We want to remind faculty of the systems we have in place that support successful implementation of accommodations for students registered with the OAS.

As we approach the beginning of this semester, you may receive emails with Letters of Accommodations (LOAs) for students in your classes. Please take a moment to review the accommodations. Some approved accommodations are self-explanatory, and others, like Extended Time for Timed Tests/Timed Quizzes, may need some additional communication and coordination with the student directly. Students are responsible for initiating conversations, but a simple and direct acknowledgement or confirmation of an LOA from you may help ease any first day jitters.

Referring to the information on our Faculty Rights and Responsibilities page may be a helpful reminder as an overview of your rights as faculty members. The OAS proactively supports both students and faculty to secure clear expectations from all parties involved (faculty, student, and OAS).

For more specific information regarding the implementation of certain accommodations, like Disability Related Absence or Early Dismissal/Late Arrival Due to a Disability, it might be helpful to refer to our Facilitating Accommodations page. Some accommodations require professional and reasonable judgement that call for specific communication regarding parameters and expectations for students with certain disabilities. The OAS has created a guide to help facilitate these conversations for successful implementation. The OAS is available to assist in these conversations as needed.

We are very excited to help support faculty and students in any way we can to ensure a positive and successful academic semester! In our experience, proactive communication is best for smooth beginnings, middle, and end.

Don't hesitate to reach out to the OAS if you need clarification or have questions. You may drop by yourself or with your class to meet our staff or simply to explore our space. The OAS has many other support programs, like our ESSP Coaches and Digital Accessibility Lab, that also benefit all students!

## Student Mental Health Workshops

In May, the CTLA hosted the workshop "Hope in the Time of Monsters: Supporting Faculty and Student Mental Health." The session included a 90-minute presentation by Sarah Rose Cavanagh, Senior Associate Director for Teaching & Learning at Simmons University. Drawing from her 2023 book *Mind Over Monsters: Supporting Youth Mental Health with Compassionate Challenge,* Cavanagh discussed how faculty can support and encourage student mental health—through pedagogies of care—without adding to their own burnout.

HOPE IN A TIME OF MONSTERS
Supporting Student and Faculty Mental Health

You can now view a recording of Cavanagh's presentation and download her slides and other materials from the CTLA's Sharepoint site (requires an Eastern login). The site also includes slides from a presentation on "Supporting Student Mental Health" delivered by Victoria DeVeau from Counseling and Psychological Services in February 2023.
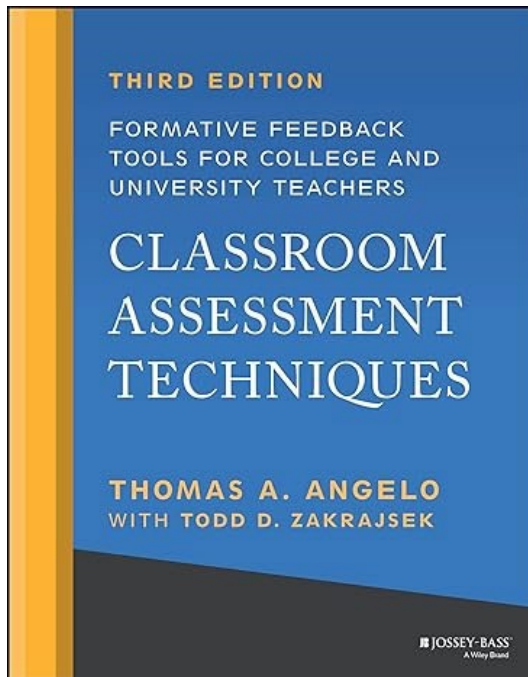
Spotlight on a Book in the CTLA Lending Library

Classroom Assessment Techniques: Formative Feedback Tools for College and University Teachers (3rd edition)

By Thomas A. Angelo with Todd D. Zakrajsek
© 2024 by John Wiley & Sons (see publisher's description)

Now in its 3rd edition, this book introduces faculty to the purpose of assessment, steps for designing formative assessment, and guidelines for utilizing assessment data to improve student learning. The book includes over 50 hands-on, classroom assessment techniques (CATs) that assess a variety of student capacities, including their recall and understanding, ability to apply new knowledge, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and learning and study skills.

Each CAT includes a description, steps for implementation, dos and don'ts, and references. The book includes multiple indexes of CATs (by discipline, by Learning Outcomes Inventory, by Bloom's Taxonomy, etc.). The book also includes the Teaching Goals Inventory from earlier editions, as well as a new Course Learning Outcomes Inventory—a self-assessment tool that helps faculty prioritize the most relevant learning outcomes to assess.

To borrow this book, stop by the CTLA Lending Library in room 425 of the Eugene Smith Library, or fill out a request to have the book sent to you via interoffice mail (enter **book #160** under question 1).

Assessment Update from the Assessment Coordinator

ELAC Assessment Beginning This Fall

We're excited to share that this semester we will be launching the assessment process for our new ELAC. Assessment will occur on a 3-year cycle, with different learning outcomes assessed each year. For the coming academic year, we will be assessing Critical Thinking. All faculty teaching ELAC courses with Critical Thinking as a primary learning outcome will be contacted shortly regarding the process for assessment.

The assessment process is designed to measure the curriculum as a whole and will not provide meaningful information about any individual faculty member or course. Student artifacts will be anonymized and then evaluated by trained faculty.

Please don't hesitate to contact Suki Grandhi, Assessment Coordinator, with any questions.

External Faculty Development Opportunities

Free (or very low cost) opportunities

- September 12, 1-2 pm: **Generative AI in Higher Education: A Crash Course**. This free online session by Stony Brook University is designed for faculty members seeking to enhance their teaching methods and assessment strategies, foster student engagement, and navigate the evolving landscape of AI tools.
- September 19 – 20: **Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Summit**. Hosted by Kennesaw State University, this virtual conference features over 150 presentations and posters and a keynote session by Sarah Bunnell on "Humanizing Teaching and Learning through Pedagogical Partnership." Registration is $60.
- September 25, 2-3 pm: **Learning in Action: Navigating and Responding**. The 9th webinar in a free series on Universal Design for Learning will explore practical strategies for applying the UDL Guideline "Physical Action" to any modality.
- September 26, 2-3:15 pm: **Crafting Assessments that Matter in an AI World**. This free hybrid workshop offered by Eastern Kentucky University will delve into the critical role of GenAI in reshaping teaching practices. Participants will learn practical applications of AI to enhance student engagement, foster a culture of curiosity, and navigate student use of AI. Presenters will discuss strategies for designing assessments that are both AI-resilient and AI-embracing.

Other opportunities

- September 27: Goodwin University is hosting its third annual **UDL (Universal Design for Learning) Conference** in East Hartford, CT. This year's theme is "No Labels, No Limits: Exploring the Power of UDL!" Registration is $90.
- October 2 – 4: The **International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association Conference** will be held at Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha, South Africa. The theme for

this year's conference is "Universities as change agents in society: Imagining social innovation for sustainable futures."

- October 27 – 29: Indiana University Indianapolis is hosting **The Assessment Institute**, an annual conference in Indianapolis focused on assessing and improving higher education.
- November 14 – 16: The **Fall Red Rock Great Teaching Retreat** will be held in Bryce Canyon, UT. In this annual retreat, faculty participants are considered to be the "experts" and engage in interactive discussions, share successful teaching strategies and innovations, seek solutions with peers for their own persistent teaching problems, and explore what it means to be a great teacher.
- November 21-23: Miami University is hosting the **Original Lilly Conference on College Teaching** in Oxford, OH. This year's theme is "Evidence-Based Teaching and Learning."

Opportunities to Share Your Teaching and Learning Expertise

- Due August 31: The **Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy** (CHEP) is currently accepting proposals for their annual conference, to be held February 12-14, 2025, at The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center in Blacksburg, Virginia. This year's theme is "Embracing the Future of Learning." Proposals are sought for sessions focused on embracing the future of learning.
- Due October 7: The **Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Symposium** is currently accepting proposals for their 12th annual virtual symposium, to be held January 24-25, 2025. This year's theme is "Navigating the Challenges of Assessment: Tales from the Field."
- Due November 1: The **SOTL Commons Conference** is currently accepting proposals for their annual conference, to be held February 26-28, 2025, in Savannah, GA. The conference draws presenters and participants from around the world to discuss the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).

A Note of Thanks from the Director

As I look back on the CTLA's first year of operation, I want to express my gratitude to everyone who contributed to our work and success. Thanks to the 20 faculty members who led or contributed to workshops, Teaching & Learning Conversations, and Faculty Learning Communities, including Sarah Baires, Courtney Broscious, Wayne Buck, Caitlin Carenen, Miriam Chirico, Garrett Dancik, Christine Garcia, Anthony Girasoli, Suki Grandhi, Megan Heenehan, Jennifer Leszczyński, Barbara Liu, Martín Mendoza-Botelho, Kristen Morgan, Bryan Oakley, David Pellegrini, Kristi Salters-Pedneault, David Stoloff, Patty Szczys, and Caitlin Vasquez-O'Brien. Because of your efforts, 97 unique faculty (including 45% of full-time faculty) participated in at least one CTLA offering between January and May.

Thanks also to Anik Vasington, Sandra Flores-Gonzales, and Brooks Scavone for their contributions to the newsletter. Lastly, thanks to everyone who offered thoughts, ideas, advice, and feedback related to teaching and learning and/or the development of the CTLA by agreeing to meet with me, allowing me to attend your department or committee meeting/retreat, sending me ideas through email, responding to a survey, or completing a feedback form. I am grateful for your willingness to offer your thoughts, and I continue to incorporate your ideas and feedback.

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