Happy Friday, summer faculty!

NEW CANVAS COURSE FOR TEACHING ONLINE LEARNING
Anyone interested in supporting, teaching, or developing online courses is welcome to join a Canvas course for full-time or adjunct faculty opening July 2: The Ins and Outs of Online Courses. It will be a step-by-step pedagogical and procedural guide to online teaching and course construction. It will also give Canvas tips and explore technology tools and best practices.

It will utilize a national online and hybrid course standard, the Quality Matters Rubric, as a guide. As you work through the units, you will learn how to comply on each standard so that your course is accessible, student-centered, and efficient.

The course is “open enrollment” so you can begin whenever you like and drop in as much as you like. Those teaching in the fall can finish in mid August and be ready to tackle the semester! The course will stay open through December 10. Just e-mail or give me a call and I will add you to the roster.

FIRST PLACE WINNER IN ALAN ALDA’S CONTENT FOR SCIENCE VIDEOS
At 11, Alan Alda asked what a flame was. He never got a perfect answer, until now. He offered an “explain a flame” competition, to which scientists all over the world submitted entries. A doctoral student won with an entertaining explanation grounded in science, but easy enough for an 11-year old to understand (in fact, 11 year-olds were the judges in the competition).

Even though it runs over seven minutes, it holds viewer attention and offers scientific terms and explanations for deep understanding. Take a look, just in case an 11-year old ever asks you what a flame is. Now I know to just point him to this video!

WORDLE USED AS ANALYSIS TOOL?
I read an article by Robert Townsend about a study of adjunct faculty, Underpaid and Underappreciated: A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members. Of course, it contains bleak data and a strong call to action. The plight of part-time faculty across the nation is a pressing factor in discussions about higher education.

But the cover page of the study (full study here) caught my attention: researchers used Wordle to represent survey results.

These data are striking, but there’s even more emotional impact contained in the Wordle text cloud used as visual at the front of the report (and in this post). It depicts the responses to an open question about the biggest challenges they face as contingent faculty. Not surprisingly, “job,” “security,” and “time” all stand out. But the most important word here is “lack”—as it’s the absence of so many of these things that looms large. The dominance of the word “faculty” points to one of the largest recurring concerns from respondents, the perceived lack of collegiality and respect from many of their colleagues. (Townsend, para. 11)
Wordle has long been used as a tool to portray words in an organized graphic, with the frequency of each word determining its size. Seen mostly as a “recreational” application (playing with words), Wordle has established itself as a way to visualize language. On the home page, it explains itself as “a toy for generating ‘word clouds’ from text.” However, more recently, it has moved into educational uses far beyond creating an interesting graphic.

Paste in text and Wordle will eliminate articles and prepositions and present every word sized according to frequency. Put in an essay, poem, paragraph, story, or even numbers and addresses. Analyze text or a document to “reveal” the main issues at a glance. Use it for online discussion posts, your syllabus, course learning outcomes, a student’s assignment?

Not at all what Wordle envisioned when they began the application, I wouldn’t think!

**NEED A NEW QUIZ FORMAT? TRY THREE COLORS!**

**Three-color group quiz** — Students prepare for a quiz on a specified topic. Groups of four or five students assemble in class and take the short-answer quiz individually. They write their answers in black with their books closed.

Then the group collaborates by discussing questions they haven’t answered or answers about which they have doubts or need more details. After that discussion they may revise what they have written, only that information is written in green ink.

Finally, the group is allowed to access textbooks, notes taken in class, and other resources. That material is added to their responses in blue ink.

This approach allows students to gauge the level of their knowledge against the knowledge of others in their group and the content contained in course materials. The teacher can comment on these proportions when providing feedback on the quiz.

Students reported an overwhelming preference for this approach over the traditional quiz. Most noted that they never looked up material they did not know after taking a traditional quiz. This strategy is designed so that they must.

Quoted from Maryellen Weimer, PhD in Educational Assessment

*Faculty Focus: Students as Formative Assessment Partners.*

**NEW PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL: SYLLABUS**

How many have you read? How many have you created? How much thought have you given to all those syllabi that must be prepared correctly and which serve as contracts between instructor and students? In all that time, did you ever consider a syllabus an art form, a genre of writing, a worthy topic for research and analysis?

Now, *Syllabus*, an online journal investigates that time-honored document as a “real” subject for review and research, “a legitimate form of scholarship.” Check out the articles in its first volume and/or answer its call for reviewers and authors. I especially like the article, “The Many Purposes of Course Syllabi: Which are Essential and Useful?”
Some alarming numbers are presented on an infographic about the brain in this digital age:

- The average computer user switches programs about 36 times an hour!
- People with e-mail open on the computer switch screens about 37 times an hour!
- People who were “cut off” from e-mail developed more normal heart patterns, but it took five days!
- Your brain may be “rewired” to always want to switch to the next thing and forget how to concentrate on the current thing!

The compilation of studies shows us what we are doing to brain functions and patterns when we constantly multitask. In the light of what we know about the brain, the document explores the affects of this lifestyle and gives some suggestions to better manage demands while keeping our brains healthy.

Until next time!

Dabareh

Links:

https://www.qmprogram.org/higher-education-program  Quality Matters Higher Ed Program

http://www.openculture.com/2012/06/iwhat_is_a_flamei_the_first_prize-winner_at_alan_aldas_science_video_competition.html  What is a Flame?


http://www.academicworkforce.org/CAW_portrait_2012.pdf  Study: A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members

http://www.wordle.net/  Wordle

http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/educational-assessment/students-as-formative-assessment-partners/  Faculty Focus, Three-Color Quiz

http://www.syllabusjournal.org/index  Syllabus