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Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning May 2024 Newsletter

From Our Director

Greetings, Friends,

If [MarPril](#) is sometimes a place of chaos, [May](#) often gives us a chance to step back, take a deep breath, and find some clarity.

At Stearns Center, we've been thinking about how "The more things change, the more things...[change](#)." It's not just a new university logo, or a one-time pandemic emergency--it's the new reality of higher education. The pace and the scope of changes that affect teaching and learning continue to increase, often without a full acknowledgment of what individual faculty need to do to keep up.

Even when you're making changes at 2am, though, we [see](#) you, and we are grateful for your work! We've seen you adapting to change all year long: we've worked with over 500 of you on one kind of change or another this year, and we know we're seeing just the tip of the iceberg. You have been

- adapting courses to make them more **inclusive** for [all of](#) our students
- changing how you **support** students who are still experiencing the effects of pandemic education
- creating assignments and policies to adjust to **Generative-AI** tools
- redesigning assignments and courses to meet new **Mason Core** and Writing Intensive expectations
- participating in research and **assessment** projects to help improve student learning
- **sharing** those changes at ITL, in learning communities, and with working groups

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CECIL

In the upcoming months we will continue to partner with you on these changes as well as on your migration to the [Canvas LMS](#). And whatever changes lie further ahead for higher education, we hope you'll find us a resource and an advocate for what you need to support your students.

Finally, just a few reminders about other opportunities coming up this summer and early fall:

- Check out our [May and June workshops](#), bootcamps, and academies on inclusive teaching, Generative AI, Mason Core courses, and active learning
- Watch for invitations in August to register for the [Innovations in Teaching and Learning](#) conference (September 19 and 20)
- Connect with Stearns Center opportunities at the expanded [Adjunct Faculty Success Workshop](#) August 17 (all adjunct faculty invited!)

See more details and registration links below or on [our Events Calendar](#).

Along with our partners (including the Office of the Provost, Faculty Affairs and Development, Writing Across the Curriculum, Mason Impact, OSCAR, [CECIL](#), Mason Core, Graduate Education, [GradLife](#), University Libraries, Classroom and Lab Technologies, and Information Technology Services), we hope you make time over the summer months to

- reflect on and celebrate the achievements and changes from the past year
- connect or reconnect with people or projects that energize you
- name and recommit to what you enjoy most about growing your teaching
- and give yourself permission to be distracted, unscheduled, nomadic, idiosyncratic, mellow, and/or just plain silly if it brings you peace and joy.

Our newsletter will be on hiatus, but we'll look forward to seeing you in summer workshops and we will be back in your inbox in August!

Shelley

E Shelley Reid, Ph.D.

Executive Director of Engaged Teaching

Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning

Associate Professor, English Department

Events & Deadlines

Register by May 14th for the Introduction to Artificial Intelligence Inspired Pedagogies workshop!

May 20 – May 24, 2024 | 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. | Zoom | CPD Level 2 | Facilitator: Laina Lockett

By now you've probably heard of ChatGPT or one of the other various new large language models (LLMs) that have taken the world by storm. But do you know how to deal with the ever-evolving artificial intelligence technology as it relates to your teaching? In this mini course you will be exposed to the basics of redesigning your course as it relates to learning outcomes and instructional activities. We will also explore how to get feedback from students regarding the changes that you make. (This is the same program as the program offered January 24-February 21.) **Please register by May 14th here.**

Last Call for Applications for SoTL Microgrants – Due May 15!

The goal of the [Stearns Center Scholarship of Teaching and Learning \(SoTL\) Microgrants Program](#) is to foster a culture of evidence-based research designed to contribute new knowledge related to teaching and learning at Mason. The microgrant program supports faculty examining classroom practice in a scholarly way, researching teaching and learning across programs or student populations, and sharing work through publication. Proposed projects can include activities at any stage of data collection, analysis, and dissemination, including but not limited to the following:

- initiating data collection for a new project
- continuing data collection for a research project-in-progress
- extending a previous project to another course, intervention, or research question
- conducting data analysis
- writing in preparation for submitting a presentation, publication, or book proposal

Need help planning a project? Contact Breana Bayraktar at bbayrakt@gmu.edu.

Ready to apply? [Find the application form here.](#) Applications **due** May 15.

Summer Stearns Center -Canvas- Learning Opportunities

The Stearns Center is excited to partner with ITS to offer several opportunities for you to engage with Canvas faculty mentors and with peers to share strategies for teaching in Canvas. These opportunities are designed to build on the live and on-demand training available from Canvas through the [Canvas Training Portal](#) and the [Growing with Canvas course](#) – instructors should expect to complete the [basic Canvas training sequence](#) first to be able to take full advantage of the brown bag discussions and one-on-one consultations.

Visit <https://lms.gmu.edu/getting-started-faculty> to register to receive the Zoom link for the Wednesday brown bags (Wednesdays, 12-1pm, May 22 through August 14) or to sign up for a one-on-one consultation.

Wednesday Canvas “Brown Bag” Sessions

Canvas Faculty Mentors, Stearns Center, and ITS will offer weekly drop-in brown bag sessions over the summer – on Wednesdays, 12-1pm – open to all instructors and staff. These sessions are designed to be a space for follow-up questions and discussion about teaching in Canvas after you have completed initial training on Canvas.

[Register here](#) to receive the Zoom link for all of the Brown Bag sessions.

Digital Learning

Summer 2024 Online Teaching at Mason!

Know where to find help and resources for online teaching: Whether you're new to online or an experienced online instructor at Mason, here's a list of resources to get your Summer 2024 online course off to a great start!



CANVAS
BY INSTRUCTURE

Plan for Mason's LMS Transition

For Spring and Summer 2024, Canvas has been selected to replace Blackboard as George Mason University's new Learning Management System (LMS).

For Summer 2024, courses will continue to use Blackboard.

View the transition timeline and read a list of frequently asked questions at [the Canvas LMS Transition website](#).

Faculty Development Workshops

May

Workshop: Accelerated CPD Level 1 for Mason Core: Part 1

May 14 | 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | CPD Level 1 Required and DEA | Zoom | Facilitator: Crystal Anderson

Are you teaching an exploratory course in Mason Core? Would you like to participate in

professional development that allows you to document your growth as an instructor? Whether you are new to college teaching or an experienced instructor, we invite you to take advantage of Part 1 of this accelerated opportunity to earn a Level 1 Teaching Essentials Credential as part of the Stearns Center's Continuing Professional Development program. Part 1 features two workshops: Fundamentals of Effective Teaching and Relate to the Real World: How to Make Your Assignments Relevant. If you complete Part 1 and Part 2 of Accelerated CPD Level 1, you will earn the CPD Level 1 Teaching Essentials Credential in two days. [Register here.](#)

Workshop: Writing Across the Curriculum Primer – Writing-enriched

May 15 & 17 | 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | CPD Level 2 | Zoom | Facilitator: Tim Lilley

[See our Partner: WAC below for details!](#)

Workshop: Accelerated CPD Level 1 for Mason Core: Part 2

May 16 | 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | CPD Level 1 Design and Assess | Zoom | Facilitator: Crystal Anderson

Are you teaching an exploratory course in Mason Core? Would you like to participate in professional development that allows you to document your growth as an instructor? Whether you are new to college teaching or an experienced instructor, we invite you to take advantage of **Part 2** of this accelerated opportunity to earn a **Level 1 Teaching Essentials Credential** as part of the Stearns Center's Continuing Professional Development program. Part 2 features two workshops: **Make Room for the Good Stuff: How to Avoid the Tyranny of Content and Teaching and Reduce Your Workload: How to Grade Efficiently**. If you complete Part 1 and Part 2 of Accelerated CPD Level 1, you will earn the CPD Level 1 Teaching Essentials Credential in two days. [Register here.](#)

Workshop: Successfully (Re-)Designing and Proposing a Mason Core Course

May 17 | 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. | Zoom | Facilitators: Rachel Yoho, Shelley Reid, and Laura Poms

*Formerly known as Course Proposal Workshop

Mason Core Committee is seeking course proposals for courses in the revised **Global Contexts** category and the new **Just Societies** flag. The course approval process for both categories will continue in Fall 2024, and it's not too early to start planning! Faculty interested in proposing a course for QEP-Community Engaged Learning status are also welcome!

Join us for a review of the new learning outcomes, a guide to the proposal process, and the opportunity to compose a first draft of your proposal and get some early feedback. Come on your own or bring colleagues who will help design or teach the course. And watch for announcements about upcoming course design and student engagement workshops, especially to support JS courses. [Register here.](#)

See more about Mason Core courses or contact Mason Core for more information (masoncor@gmu.edu).

Workshop: Introduction to Artificial Intelligence Inspired Pedagogies

May 20 – May 24, 2024 | 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. | Zoom | CPD Level 2 | Facilitator: Laina Lockett

By now you've probably heard of ChatGPT or one of the other various new large language models (LLMs) that have taken the world by storm. But do you know how to deal with the ever-evolving artificial intelligence technology as it relates to your teaching? In this mini course you will be exposed to the basics of redesigning your course as it relates to learning outcomes and instructional activities. We will also explore how to get feedback from students regarding the changes that you make. (This is the same program as the program offered January 24-February 21.) **Please register by May 14th here.**

Mason Core Inclusive Excellence Two-Day Academy

May 21 and May 22, 2024 | ~9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. | Hybrid | Facilitators: Laura Poms, Shelley Reid, and Rachel Yoho

*Formerly known as Mason Core Just Societies/Global Contexts Two-Day Academy, Inclusive Excellence in Teaching Academy, and Mason Core ARIT Academy

In May, the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning in collaboration with The Mason Core will be hosting a **special two-day Mason Core Inclusive Excellence Academy designed specifically to support faculty who are revising courses to meet new Mason Core outcomes**—with particular focus on supporting faculty who are developing a course for the Just Societies flag. Helping students in Core courses explore questions of belonging and opportunity, identify structural needs and seek more just outcomes in each field and discipline, and converse with peers about difficult topics all pose challenges in both the design and implementation of a curriculum. This Academy will also support the Global Contexts Mason Core designation.

The workshop will have options to participate on-campus (strongly recommended) or live-remote via Zoom; like our Proposal Workshop, each day's activities will include a blend of information, guided individual work time, and collaboration and feedback from peers. A stipend may be available for faculty (any status) who complete the two-day workshop. Coffee, snacks, and lunch will be provided for all on-campus participants. **Seats are limited, so please register early to reserve your space! [Register here.](#)**

Workshop: Fostering Engagement and Belonging with Inclusive Classroom Techniques

May 23 | 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | Zoom | CPD Level 1 Engage| Facilitator: Rachel Yoho

*Formerly known as Anti-Racism and Inclusive Teaching: An Introduction to Developing More Inclusive Educational Spaces

Are you ready to integrate inclusive teaching throughout your instructional spaces? Would you like to explore techniques and build tangible plans for your classes? This is where that journey begins. In this workshop, we will explore some of the definitions and terms often found in conversations about creating more inclusive classrooms. We will work together to advance our individual abilities in broadly inclusive teaching and learning to support all students. At the end of the workshop, we will have developed familiarity with concepts and terminology, explored deliberately inclusive classroom activities, and set one or two manageable goals for our classes. **Register here.**

Workshop: Preparing Your Course and Yourself for Difficult Classroom

Discussions and Situations

May 23 | 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. | Zoom | Facilitator: Rachel Yoho

Do you have strategies to prepare yourself and your students to handle difficult conversations? This could be when you are having difficult conversations about topics like race, sexuality, religion, politics, or similar. These situations also could result from a discussion comment that makes a student or group uncomfortable or might even be about grades. In this workshop, we will discuss how to design (or redesign) your course and prepare yourself to facilitate important or “hot topic” conversations in the classroom. Background information on how to design the course and prepare for facilitating important conversations in the classroom will be provided. This workshop is applicable to instructors across all disciplines for facilitating important conversations, whether or not their designed course topics include socially pressing issues. This workshop is part of a two-part series for Mason faculty to engage in anti-racist and inclusive education across all disciplines. [Register here](#).

Workshop: (Re-)Designing Syllabi for Inclusive Classrooms that Support Learners & Instructors

May 24 | 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | Zoom | CPD Level 1 Design | Facilitator: Rachel Yoho

*Formerly known as Syllabi That Support Learners and Instructors: Designing and Redesigning Syllabi for Inclusive Classrooms

Are you ready to align your courses with university commitments to inclusive teaching? Or are you developing a new course or submitting an existing one for the new university-wide tags (like Mason Core)? In this workshop, we will work to advance our understanding of inclusive course design and how to improve syllabi to be more inclusive for everyone in the space (including instructors!). During the session, we will have specific discussion time to focus on connecting these ideas with your course and your discipline. At the end of the workshop, participants will leave with a greater understanding of the potential considerations for designing and redesigning inclusive course syllabi and aligning with broader institutional initiatives and expectations.

[Register here](#).

Workshop: How to Handle Difficult Classroom Discussions and Situations in the Moment

May 24 | 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. | Zoom | Facilitator: Rachel Yoho

*Formerly known as Important Conversations in the Classroom: Handling Situations in the Moment

Are you prepared to handle difficult discussions and charged situations in the classroom in the moment? Do you usually think of things later that you wish you would have said or done? In this workshop, we will prepare and practice how to handle important and potentially tense classroom conversations in the moment. Our focus will be on how to support everyone in the classroom – including yourself – during tense times. We will discuss and practice several teaching approaches. This workshop is applicable to instructors across all disciplines for facilitating important conversations, whether or not their designed course topics include socially pressing issues (like race, gender, religion, politics). Please note, this is the second in a two-part workshop series on important conversations. However, participants are welcome and encouraged to attend this session even if they were not able to attend part one. [Register here](#).

Workshop: Supporting Student Learning through Self-Awareness and Reflection to Navigate a Complex, Global Society

May 29 | 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | Zoom | Facilitator: Rachel Yoho

*Formerly known as Exploring Positionality and Intersectionality in the Mason Core Context

Are you interested in incorporating techniques to help students develop their own self-awareness and navigate a complex, global society in your field, discipline, and course? Or are you (re-)developing a course for one of the new Mason Core designations of Just Societies or Global Contexts? This workshop is designed to support your teaching around helping students develop their self-awareness, particularly related to your discipline. This workshop includes the concepts of positionality and intersectionality broadly, but particularly for the new Core areas. At the end of the workshop, we will have explored the concepts and applied them to potential activities and assignments in our courses. [Register here](#).

Workshop: Surviving to Thriving: Incorporating Trauma-Informed Instructional Practices

May 29 | 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. | Zoom | Facilitator: Rachel Yoho

Whether individual or collective, trauma can have a significant impact on lives and how students (and instructors) show up and are able to engage in the classroom. In this workshop, we will explore the concept of trauma and how it applies to the classroom, recognize a few common trauma responses, investigate several educational best practices, expand our thinking with resilient pedagogy, and begin to apply these concepts to our own teaching. Together we will move beyond minimum legal requirements or accommodations to design and implement evidence-based instructional strategies in university education. [Register here](#).

Workshop: Helping Students Learn in Difficult Classroom Conversations and Situations

May 30 | 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. | Zoom | Facilitator: Rachel Yoho

Are you ready to take your next steps in engaging successfully in difficult classroom conversations and situations? In this leveled-up workshop, we will explore the elements of free speech in an educational context, investigate types of disruptions and situationally appropriate teaching responses, and analyze scenarios with colleagues. This workshop is applicable to instructors across all disciplines for facilitating important conversations, whether or not their designed course topics include socially pressing issues (like race, gender, religion, politics). Please note, this is the third in a four-part workshop series on important conversations. Participants are encouraged – but not required – to engage with parts 1 and 2 before joining this session. [Register here](#).

Workshop: Teaching Through Difficult Conversations Using the Perspectives Framework

May 31 | 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. | Zoom | Facilitator: Rachel Yoho

Do you wish there were tools ready to implement in the classroom to help students discuss difficult topics? In this workshop, we will explore the elements of teaching through conflict, controversy, and around difficult topics. We will provide an overview of the instructional tool, Perspectives, from CDI, and how you might apply this in your classes. This workshop is applicable to instructors across all disciplines for facilitating important conversations, whether or not their designed course topics include socially pressing issues (like race, gender, religion, politics). Please note, this is the fourth in a four-part workshop series on important conversations. However, participants are welcome and encouraged to attend this session even if they were not able to attend the other three yet. [Register here](#).

June

Workshop: Active Learning Bootcamp

June 6-16 | Active Learning Bootcamp | Hybrid | CPD Level 2 | Facilitator: Crystal Anderson | [Register here](#)

Would you like to incorporate active learning strategies into any classroom? Join us for this intense, short-term faculty development opportunity that includes a face-to-face session, several asynchronous online modules and a Zoom workshoping session. By the end of the bootcamp, you will have an activity plan for a week of instruction ready to implement in your course and earn the CPD Level 2 Teaching Competencies Credential. Click the register link to see the bootcamp schedule.

Looking Ahead...

Mini-Course: Introduction to Artificial Intelligence Inspired Pedagogies

August 05 – August 08, 2024 | 9:00-11:45 a.m. | Zoom | Introduction to Artificial Intelligence Inspired Pedagogies | CPD Level 2 | Facilitator: Laina Lockett

By now you've probably heard of ChatGPT or one of the other various new large language models (LLMs) that have taken the world by storm. But do you know how to deal with the ever-evolving artificial intelligence technology as it relates to your teaching? In this mini course you will be exposed to the basics of redesigning your course as it relates to learning outcomes and instructional activities. We will also explore how to get feedback from students regarding the changes that you make. (This is the same program as the program offered January 24-February 21 & May 20-24, 2024.) [Register here](#).

Mini Course: Intermediate Artificial Intelligence Inspired Pedagogies

August 12 – Friday, August 16, 2024 | 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. | Zoom | CPD Level 2 | Facilitator: Laina Lockett

If you have completed the Introduction to Artificial Intelligence Inspired Pedagogies mini-course and are interested in exploring additional topics as you redesign your course, this is the session for you! In this second seminar you will continue to build on the material covered in the introductory course. Topics will include policies surrounding academic integrity, universal design, anti-racist teaching as they relate to

access and use of artificial intelligence. Additionally, assessment, ways to use AI as a teaching tool and how to turn your course redesign into scholarship will be covered. [Register here](#).

**Please note that it is strongly recommended that participants successfully complete the introductory mini-course before enrolling in this program*

Writing Across the Curriculum

Writing Across the Curriculum Primer – Writing-enriched

May 15 & 17 | 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | CPD Level 2 | Zoom | Facilitator: Tim Lilley

Are you new to teaching the Writing-intensive course or looking for new ways to strengthen the writing assignments in your writing-enriched course? The WAC Primer is a 4-session series designed to help faculty learn foundational approaches for teaching with writing and align learning tasks with their course's communications focused learning outcomes, such as the new Writing-intensive course outcomes. The Primer is an excellent opportunity to reflect on your writing course design, meet and exchange ideas with colleagues across campus, and prepare materials for an upcoming semester or the [WI Enhancements process](#).

The Primer begins with an introduction to teaching with writing across disciplines and writing course design. The following sessions focus on the WI learning outcomes, supporting intentional writing-learning, and preparing course materials. By the end of the Primer, participants will have a scaffolded sequence of writing tasks to support the learning outcomes chosen for their course and a draft of WI course materials. [Register here](#).

From Our Partners

Office of Faculty Affairs & Development

Register for the Adjunct Faculty Success Workshop

The Office of Faculty Affairs & Development invites all adjuncts to participate in the day-long success workshop on Saturday, August 17th, 2024. The workshop is designed to meet the unique needs and challenges that adjunct faculty face, to support transition to campus, and to develop practical strategies for success with students. The day's session will include a broad overview of working at Mason, introductions to important policies, Canvas sessions and sessions to enhance teaching skills for online and in-person classes. [Register now](#)

Opportunity to Join an Affinity Group

As part of Mason's commitment to inclusive excellence, the Office of Faculty Affairs and Development supports several affinity groups. These groups provide our diverse faculty, doctoral students, and staff with a sense of community, inclusion, and belonging. The groups also serve as safe spaces for discussion of issues that impact the success and well-being of Black,

Indigenous, Latine, Multiracial, Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islanders, as well as faculty/staff with disabilities and historically underserved doctoral students. Finally, the affinity groups facilitate connections and professional partnerships and champion strategic efforts to support the success of their members. The affinity groups are open to all faculty (tenured, tenure-track, term, adjunct, administrative, and professional), doctoral students, and staff. [Learn more about Affinity Groups here.](#)

AAPI—Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander Faculty

BLIM—Black, Latine, Indigenous, Multiracial Faculty

SPARK—Scholars Promoting Access, Representation, and Knowledge

Juntos—Mason Hispanic/Latine Alliance

Disability & Neurodivergence Alliance (DNA)

To learn more about these groups, please contact [Ms. Amy Ayres](#) or [Dr. Millie Rivera](#) and we will send you the links for the meetings and add you to the listserv (if you so desire).

OSCAR

Undergraduate Research Scholars Program

URSP supports undergraduate students collaborating on a research, creative, or scholarly project with a faculty mentor. **Fall 2024 applications are due May 19th!** For more information [visit the OSCAR website.](#)

Research Assistant Positions

OSCAR is expanding opportunities for students to learn research, creative, or scholarly methods in their field and giving faculty free support on their projects at the same time. [Learn how you can hire a research assistant.](#)

Undergraduate Student Travel Fund

The Undergraduate Student Travel Fund (USTF) supports research and scholarly related travel for undergraduates who are presenting their projects via poster, talk, screening, round table, performance, etc. USTF can support costs associated with presentations at virtual conferences. Students must apply 30 days before the start of the event. [Learn more here.](#)

CECIL



Community Engagement & Civic Learning

colaboratory[®]

Track • Report • Connect • Plan

Collaboratory: Launch of a university-wide tracking database

The Office of Community Engagement and Civic Learning (cecil.gmu.edu) is excited to announce the upcoming launch of a university-wide tracking database that will provide a portrait of George Mason's footprint in the community.

With this new tool, faculty and staff will be able to share the details of their community engagement and public service activities, highlight their community-engaged teaching and research, effectively share research and services with potential donors, funders, and partners, and explore what other units and centers are doing across campus. We anticipate this tool to help leverage relationships with community partners that are already established on campus to assist with coordination, communication, and building trust with community. Collaboratory allows us to take a systematic approach to highlighting academic and co-curricular service with community organizations and support the institutional mission of inclusive excellence. To find more information about Collaboratory, please visit <https://cecollaboratory.com/>. If you are interested in being part of the pilot and including your community engagement and public service projects in the database, please contact Shanelle Highsmith, Program Manager for Outreach and Partnerships, at shighsm2@gmu.edu.

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