



Issue #1

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# WELCOME!



## They Gathered Sticks, Kindled a Fire, and Left It Burning.

by Dr. [Ellen Skilton](#)

What an amazing first month for the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Mentoring at Arcadia University! Thank you for joining us in such engaging and robust discussions and actions around our core academic practices and renewed calls for anti-racist pedagogies as we prepare for All Modes and beyond. As some of you know, I'm a fan of metaphors, and I have been using a metaphor for the Center's early work of finding small fires of dynamic teaching, learning and mentoring across campus and working creatively with the campus



community to give them the oxygen they need to become something more visible, vital and interconnected. In the middle of the summer, more heat may feel like the last thing we want, but we could perhaps all embrace the benefit of metaphorical, virtual campfires for roasting marshmallows and singing camp songs (and perhaps the Arcadia alma mater!) from Landman Library, to Taylor, Boyer, Spruance, Murphy, the castle and beyond. (I can almost see the fireflies, smell the smoke, and hear the laughter of your voices.)

As I was writing this, I was trying to recall a quote that hung above the mantle of the fireplace in the dining hall where I went to college that had to do with building a fire and keeping it burning, but I couldn't quite remember it. After much googling and a text to one of my college friends, I was able to find photos of it online: "They gathered sticks, kindled a fire and left it burning." I hadn't been consciously thinking of this quote when I first imagined the creative ways that each of you and your immediate colleagues are tending fires of teaching, learning, and mentoring, but it adds to the metaphor, I think. There is always a "we" in this firemaking, and it always takes some work to get it burning, but we seek enduring teaching, learning and mentoring fires that students, faculty and staff build together that will stay lit long after the alma mater is sung at graduation.

But the fire we need is not just one that connects our work of teaching, learning, and mentoring at Arcadia; it is a fire that also pushes this predominantly white institution to walk bravely, in spite of any discomfort, into the work we need to do to combat anti-black racism in all that we do. This perspective on fire is present in one of the books the CTLM is forming book groups around for the summer. ([Check out our Canvas Collaborative Community to find out more.](#)) In *Not Light, But Fire*, a local high school teacher named Matthew Kay (who has also been an adjunct professor at Arcadia) uses these words from Frederick Douglass in the introduction of his book to invite us to meaningful race conversations:

**"It is not light that is needed, but fire"** (Douglass 1852). Douglass knew what many of us are noticing now: that we never seem to graduate to the next conversation. The hard one. That we hide our stasis beneath puffed-up punditry and circular debate. He called for us to infuse our conversations with *fire* --to seek out and value historical context, to be driven by authentic inquiry, and above all, to be honest -- both with ourselves and with those with whom we share a racial dialogue. Just as fire rarely passes through an environment without acting upon it, so too should our world be impacted by our...race conversations.

To paraphrase that last sentence for our purposes: "so too should Arcadia be impacted by our race conversations." Indeed we must be.



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**your own curiosity and  
engagement is the real  
payoff and the fostering  
of community is the  
ultimate outcome**

”

## Learning How to Dig

by **Daniel Pieczkolon**

At this point, nearly four months into a global pandemic that shows no sign of letting up, it seems silly to remark upon the ways in which COVID-19 has changed our lives. Our work lives, our home lives, and our civic lives have all been altered. What hasn't changed though, at least in any foundational way, is the core struggle of teachers invested in student-centered approaches to learning. Sure, the modality may be shifting, but that ultimate goal of engaging students--of finding ways for them to communicate with each other, the course content, and the instructor--remains the same now as it did when we were all sitting too close to each other on crowded subways and freely breathing on entire shelves of produce before selecting the tomato we wanted.

As we all search for ways to accomplish this, many instructors are turning to YellowDig--a conversation platform that combines elements of social media communication (including the “gamification” of likes and quantified responses) and principles of cognitive psychology. Dr. Marianne Miserandino, Chair of the Psychology Department, recently participated in a training for the new(ish) technology and found herself pleasantly surprised with its potential for engaging students. Coming into the training, she was, admittedly, “skeptical, bordering on hateful” of the concept, owing, in part, to her lack of success with discussion boards in previous courses and her general unease with our collective need to “gamify” our



lives. But then, as she puts it, “something happened”! As she was participating in mock exercises, trying to meet the parameters of the training’s prompts while also meaningfully responding to the other participants, she found that the artifice of the former created the space and momentum necessary to achieve the latter. In other words, “the requirements and the structure really succeeded at getting discussants into the activity and then your own curiosity and engagement is the real payoff and the fostering of community is the ultimate outcome.”

YellowDig isn’t the cure for the Coronavirus--at least I didn’t see that claim anywhere on their extremely thorough and useful [Help Page](#)--but it may be a key tool in helping us reimagine productive interactions with our students in whatever new teaching spaces we’ll be occupying in the fall. Or, as Dr. Miserandino suggests, “I’m convinced that the key to making a good class and a good learning experience for me as well as for the students is going to be getting the class engaged and feeling like a community, something which happens naturally in face-to-face classes but which we’ll have to work harder to achieve online. From what I’ve seen so far, I think YellowDig may be our best shot at this.”

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## Teaching an Old Dog New Tricks



by Daniel Pieczkolon

For many, this summer has been an inundation of innovation. We are constantly bombarded--in emails from administrators, *Chronicle* articles, Facebook posts from colleagues, fever dreams resulting from Zoom fatigue--with new resources to help us prepare for the fall. JamBoard, FlipGrid, HyperSmash, YellowDig, FunkText--the list can feel endless. (If you're looking for a good barometer of how well you've been keeping up with these new technologies, then try to pick out the two from that list that I made up. Hint: they aren't even the two with the most aleatory names!)

While the possibilities of these new technologies can be appealing--and you will continue to receive frequent email updates from the Center regarding them!--some professors on campus are finding ways to reimagine some of our older tools. Dr. Rachel Collins, Director of First-Year Writing and the First-Year Experience, has taken the Canvas Discussion Board--which for so long has served as the bedrock of asynchronous instruction--and found a way to breathe new life into it. Tasked with trying to conduct a three-hour, discussion-based seminar remotely, Dr. Collins decided to break the class period into distinct segments, asking students to engage in live, synchronous conversations on the Canvas Discussion Board for the first half of class (in response to discussion prompts that had been posted 24 hours prior) and then moving into Zoom discussion (which grew out of the Canvas conversations) for the second half of class. Initially, this was a strategy designed to mitigate Zoom fatigue, but Dr. Collins soon found it a useful way to engage students in a different kind of writing and thinking. She noted that because students "could count on being responded to by their peers within a matter of minutes, discussions gained momentum that asynchronous discussion boards often don't" and that this practice "made space for students who are typically quiet in class discussion to make their voices heard in something that felt very much like class discussion," which resulted in "moments when the ideas authored by those quiet students became central in our subsequent oral class discussions on Zoom."

On its surface, this idea feels simple, but the results seem profound. Which makes sense. In a way, this practice approximates types of writing that our students may be more comfortable with--from posting in the comments section of social media posts to engaging in heated text message exchanges (and without those anxiety-inducing ellipses!). As we all struggle with which bells & whistles we want to adorn our All Modes courses with, this feels like an important reminder that Learning Outcomes should inform our technology choices (and not the other way around).





# Where Does The College Student Fit Into This Global Pandemic?

by Desmond Daniels



Photo by Donovan Carter

Never in my nanoscopic twenty years of living did I expect a national lockdown that would vanish me and other students from their college campuses around the world. Never did I expect everyone to suddenly hunker down in a national emergency with toilet paper and to hear about stimulus checks but not receive one because I was a college student. Never did I expect to see everyone wearing masks and the psychological effects it would have to not see the smiles of total strangers. Never did I expect to watch the creative, extraordinary, and socially distant ways educational institutions developed to celebrate graduating



students and seniors. But now, after turning twenty-one in the middle of a global pandemic, I expect that the dystopian world we live in can change at any moment and time.

Personally, it has been hard to identify myself as a college student during this present time. Sure, we had to be virtual for the remainder of our semesters, our professors assigned us busy work to substitute the time we were missing in class, but there are national crises that are way bigger than that. In addition to the worry and anxiety of the health of our loved ones and ourselves, black Americans have been faced with the *trauma* of too many innocent black people being murdered. Not only are we living in a global pandemic, but also a racial pandemic. White Americans have ignored a crookedly founded country whose roots of greed, discrimination, and inequality for self-interest run down deep into a racial fissure. My mother has always advised me not to expect long-term goodness if you start something wrong. This wise statement sounds familiar to the life America has lived and to the turmoil we see today.

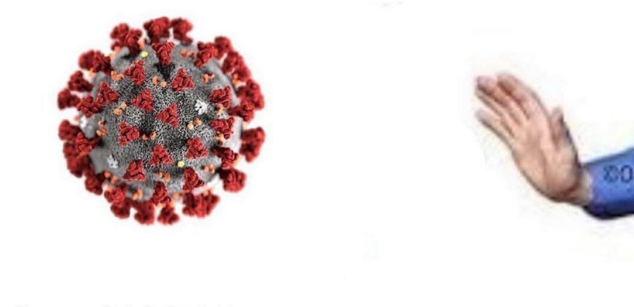
Where do college students fit into this? I have been amazed to see college students of all colors across the world who have participated in movements such as Black Lives Matter and Defund the Police. Even though all college students are faced with uncertainty and are left in the darkness of universities across the world for next year, they have presently chosen to lead as social activists and changemakers. Black college students have long participated in these movements. However now, white college students are actively participating in these movements, too. As a result, I have learned that we are truly stronger together. Within these few months, much has changed. Although, it will certainly take longer to undo over 400 years of wrongness. But as a black male American college student, I am starting to wonder if I am also living in the transformation of a dystopian to a utopian world? Will this grimness of a virus one day reap beauty just like how worms transform to colorful butterflies?

Only time will tell. Furthermore, I leave you with this charge white college students: Continue to be **willing** to *truly* learn how you can be an ally. Continue to **actively** *talk* about the cynical racial views in your families and be **determined** to *fight* and *change* them. Lastly, continue to **understand** the term *white privilege* and the power it holds to *inhibit* change but also to *invigorate* positive change. You must recognize, admit, and overturn the mistakes of your ancestors. It is time to stand up for what is right and fight for what is good. No longer is it about you, but about holistic human inclusion and belonging.

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**Getting infected?  
Just say no.**



**Coronavirus cannot legally  
enter your body without your consent**

## HyFlex Teaching (With a Slight Nod to Dr. Seuss)

by **Jennifer Riggan**

I could teach with shielded face.

I could teach in a large space.

I could meet you if you ask.

I could teach you in a mask.

I could be behind plexiglass.

I will teach you so you pass!

I could be awash in purell.

I will teach to keep us well!

I could teach you if we clean

(Germ free rooms seem like a dream.)

I might not teach you face to face.





I might not teach you while in place.  
I might not teach you in a room.  
But I will teach you using Zoom.  
Teach you! Teach you! Through this storm!  
I will teach you in your dorm!  
And I will teach you in your home!  
And I can teach you while we roam!  
I will teach you near or far.  
I might teach you from my car.  
I will teach you sick or well  
Until we're done with COVID hell.  
I will definitely teach on Canvas,  
I might even be in Kansas.  
I will teach you all at one time.  
If you can't make it, that is fine.  
I will teach Wednesdays at four.  
And I will teach you so much more.  
I will teach you every day  
I will teach you if away.  
I will teach you while I sleep.  
The learning curve may be steep.  
You'll read and write and chat with peers.  
It will not fall upon deaf ears.  
Follow directions and do your biz.  
Submit your work and take the quiz.



Step by step it is the rule

To unlock the next module.

I have so much fun in store.

We might even play Jam Board!

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## Making Change-Makers

by Daniel Pieczkolon

I'm incredibly grateful to have the opportunity to work and teach at [a university that understands social justice as central to its mission](#). I often struggle though with how to move from abstract examination and virtue signalling of social justice values to concrete implementations of them. How do we take the lessons of the French Revolution or the



Black Arts Movement and help our students manifest them in their daily lives? Thankfully, Arcadia has created an office that aims to do just that: The Office of Social Impact & Innovation, whose founding Director is Dr. Alison LaLond Wyant.

For just under a year, Dr. LaLond Wyant has worked to build programs that directly engage and support the communities that Arcadia inhabits. Her latest venture, The Haywood Academy, looks to connect high school students with Arcadia community members and local politicians, namely state senator Art Haywood. The Academy is comprised of self-guided exercises for high school students and monthly opportunities for real-time connections--both between students of the Academy and with faculty, staff, and students from Arcadia. In May, Associate Professor and Chair of the Visual & Performing Arts, Carole Loeffler led a workshop on “craftivism,” and in June, rising Arcadia junior Daijah Patton helped to lead a discussion of poetry as a vessel for social change (and performed her piece [“Until We Meet Again”](#)).

Daijah was initially interested in the event because it aimed to fill a void that she had experienced firsthand: “I know a lot of students that come to college and they don’t feel like their high school and their teachers prepared them for it because they hadn’t been introduced to difficult discussion.” By creating a space for these difficult discussions outside of the traditional classroom, Dr. Lalond Wyant has made actual the pursuit of social justice & racial harmony; the high school students aren’t there for a grade or some contrived incentive, and the college students, like Daijah, are empowered to lead. As an education major, one of Daijah’s primary goals is to become “an educator that can guide a classroom with meaning, with passion, and with respect despite any differences.” Her afternoon with the Haywood Academy is a clear example that she’s well on her way to achieving that goal.

This program empowers young people well beyond the confines of the Arcadia community as well. When I asked her about her favorite experiences in the program so far, Dr. Lalond Wyant noted an “exchange between the [high school] students and Senator Haywood at a question and answer session we held via Zoom.” The children were grateful for the opportunity to get some facetime with an elected leader and what they chose to do with it has stuck with Dr. Lalond Wyant: “When *adults* interact with legislators, we typically make suggestions or demands. These *kids* wanted to know how they could contribute. I’m so grateful for their leadership.”

Sincerely,

**The Center for Teaching, Learning, and Mentoring**



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