

TEACHING TUESDAYS



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BELLISARIO BULLETIN



– By [Denise Bortec](#)

Welcome to Teaching Tuesdays! We had a fantastic session yesterday at TTIRL talking about engaging students in large lectures, small classes, and online classes. Thanks for the robust conversation and great suggestions from attendees. *Attached are the PPT and handout from the Schreyer Institute presenters.* In this issue, Kevin Hagopian shares some insight on student engagement in the form of classroom (and out-of-classroom) participation. He offers thoughtful questions that instructors can use to help guide their thinking and planning for student engagement. Good stuff. And, Danielle Harris shares information on the recently launched tool Anthology Ally that allows students to receive Canvas content in an alternative format, and it allows faculty to check the accessibility of their content and format. Lots of great information in this issue. Enjoy!

Important Items of Note

- **SEEQ Replaces SRTE Beginning Fall 2023** | Please see the [September 28, 2023 announcement](#) for more information.
- **Thanksgiving Holiday for Students** | November 20 - 24 | No classes

Careers/Internships

- **November 14** | 6 - 7 pm | Resume and Cover Letter Workshop | Presented by Bob Martin | 062 Willard

Upcoming Events

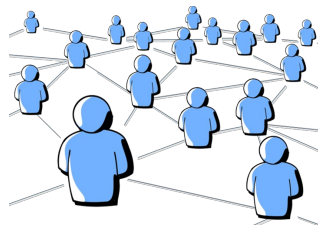
- **November 14** | Staying Real: The War on Truth and How to Win It | 5:00 - 6:30 pm | 110 Business Building | Free [public session](#) featuring Jonathan Rauch, contributing writer at The Atlantic and a Brookings Senior Fellow.
- **November 28** | [Canvas: Optimizing Courses for Accessibility](#) | 9:00 - 11:30 am | An overview of best practices to make your Canvas courses accessible for all users.

TEACHING TIP



Class Participation as a Life Skill

– By [Kevin Hagopian](#) | Media Studies Teaching Professor



Class participation. If students are puzzled by that concept, they should try being teachers. We're as frustrated as they are.

The classical model of class participation is built on recitation; that is, a student's ability to either verbally perform course knowledge, and the capacity to ask meaningful, second-level questions about course material that forward the group's knowledge. As we move toward strategies of active learning, in which to some extent knowledge is made in the classroom, not just consumed there, what should be an exciting, democratic learning space often seems to yield worse results than a highly structured prompt-and-response approach.

Anyone who's taught college classes in the last 20 years knows that it's difficult even to get to a point of departure that will allow students to articulate their own positions on course material, and for many of us, that leaves us feeling frustrated at our students ("Why don't they prepare, even when I've given them framing questions, and why aren't they more interested, given that they've chosen this field?") or mortified at our own inability to generate a compelling classroom environment ("What's wrong with my approach?").

Active learning opens the classroom space to a wide variety of types of engagements with course ideas. A wider space for integrating course ideas with lived experiences means that the teacher

becomes a moderator, a coach, even a therapist, as she shapes and molds discussion, determining when to take a tangent offered by a student, and how to bring the conversation back to a point of meaningful closure. When it works, in-class verbal participation is essential to transforming teaching into learning.

[Annemarie Vaccaro](#), of the University of Rhode Island, is among the nation's leading researchers in classroom climate, and she is dedicated to describing the pernicious effects of previous marginalization on student classroom behavior. In her work on LGBTQ, women, and students of color, she has analyzed student silence in the classroom and found that, while there are significant barriers to participation among those from historically marginalized populations, the single most daunting barrier is social class. Anxieties about social class can arise from a feeling of estrangement in an occupational or social setting which seems natural for others, as the estranged one looks on from the margins. This student sees difficulty in 'saying the right thing' - the classroom is not, for her, a place to perform knowledge so much as it is a place to perform social rituals which she hasn't been fully instructed in. As Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb first wrote in *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, in the struggle for self-legitimation, there are very few opportunities to shape-shift matters of class; that is, to engage in activities which allow a person to practice and perfect more subtle and yes, more intellectually advanced ways of dealing with the world. Your classroom can be such a rare place. The experience (coached and mentored) of learning to speak in a personal and educated voice is itself one of the most transformative outcomes of college, regardless of the subject material.

Vaccaro is among many educationists who urge a variety of ways in which a student can "participate," including online settings, which may generate fewer anxieties among students. These forms of participation include software that puts students in conversation with one another and allows affinity groups to form outside the classroom. These are very useful in establishing a student's confidence - but I believe that we must value students learning to speak in person, and speak extemporaneously, in matters of professional knowledge. To put it simply, "Communications" is on the wall of our building.

In-person participation does more than justify a synchronous, in-person approach to teaching and learning, and foregrounding the role of an experienced and professional teacher in leading discussion. It does more than create value in attending class - particularly if you can find ways to make material surfaced by students in discussion part of longer student work, or exams.

Most important, in-person participation creates a miniature and intentional community, based around respectful mutual consideration of ideas. Back in the day, there were numerous spaces for making these types of miniature communities: recreational sports leagues, union meetings, fraternal organizations, neighborhood associations, local politics, service and volunteer groups, even church congregations...

Robert Putnam, in [Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community](#) has documented both the decay of these overlapping little democracies, and the psychological toll their disappearance has taken on individuals. The classroom is now one of a dwindling number of spaces in which individuals can work out the terms of their group relationship through a body of knowledge. Students have never been more anxious talking in a group of strangers, and they've never needed the experience more. If self-presentation is as important as we say it is in our communications research, the college classroom is now an exceptional place not only to study it, but to practice it.

Here are a few questions as you consider what class participation means for you and your students:

What purpose will participation serve in students' learning experience?
Do I want students to be able to articulate outlines of techniques and concepts which they read before class? Do I want students to demonstrate professional critique skills? Don't let received notions of what participation looks like determine your choices.
What is the form that class participation should take not only to achieve learning goals, but to embody them?
Do I want to scatter class participation across a variety of platforms, online and in-person, synchronous and asynchronous, written, and verbalized? Where in the class session do I want to place participation?
How do I grade participation?
How do I incentivize risk-taking, question-asking, and critical interrogation?
How does participation evolve across the semester?
If you're creating a gradually tightening community, the purposes and terms of participation will (and should) change across the semester. Greater authority in determining the agenda of a given class session can be given to students nearer the end of the semester.

Here are a few suggestions from current research:

1. Help students to think of participation as collaboration, a group engaged in knowledge production, not individuals engaged in a competitive performance of cultural competence.
2. Emphasize out-of-class preparation for in-class verbal participation. Help students to present their personal engagement (including personal narratives) with the course topic through the knowledge base of the course, not as casual reaction.
3. Utilize forms of participation which are both intellectual and novel, to avoid ingenious interpretations taking precedence over exploratory thinking.
4. Create space for reconsideration: "Does anyone feel differently after hearing the ideas expressed today?"
5. Respect listening, and train students in it, but insist on speaking. Corral the big mouths and nurture the small mouths.

And one from me:

- Remember that conflict can be much healthier than students imagine, when it is not associated with simple binary thought, vapid generalizations, and evidence-less argument. As students get to know each other, let them enjoy each other's quirks and strengths and unique life stories, within the framework of the course subject.

CANVAS CUE



Anthology Ally is Awesome

— By [Danielle Harris](#) | Instructional Design



[Anthology Ally](#) was successfully piloted in the spring of 2023 and is now integrated into all Canvas courses, making it automatically available. Faculty and staff with the Bellisario College of Communications recognize that we all learn and process information differently and we take seriously our responsibility to provide course materials in various formats to fit students' needs. Anthology Ally has simplified that process for both instructor and student, and it will only take a moment to enable it in your spring 2024 course(s) and begin using this tool as you prepare content for students.

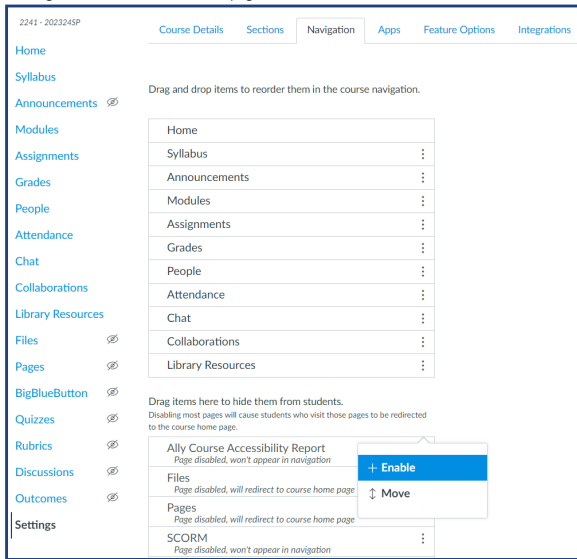
Ally works in assignments and for other digital content included in a Canvas course. When an alternative format is available, students can make a selection by clicking on Ally's 'alternative formats' icon and then choosing from available options:



Enable Anthology Ally

You can quickly enable Ally by:

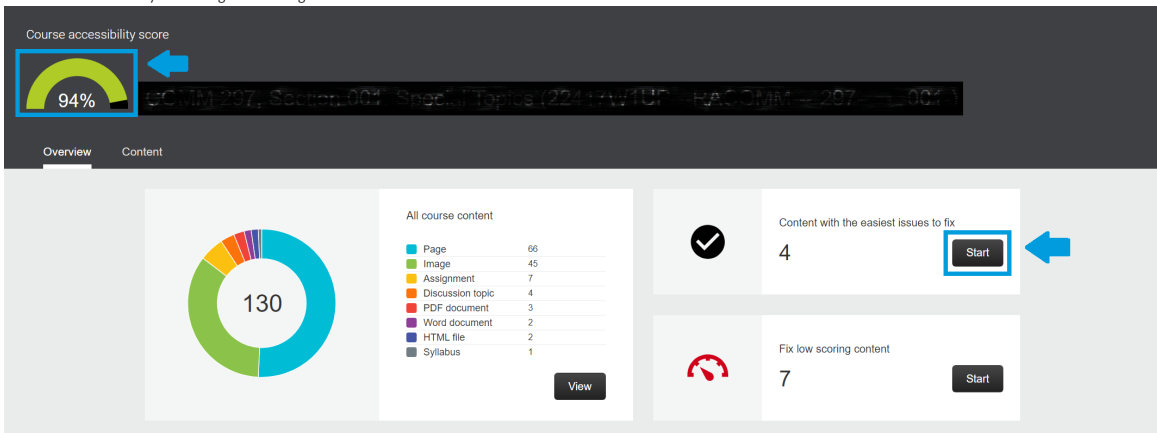
- Visiting course 'Settings'
- Selecting the 'Navigation' tab
- Locating the item titled 'Ally Course Accessibility Report'
- Opting to enable
- Clicking 'Save' at the bottom of the page when finished



Apply Anthology Ally

Once you have Ally enabled, you will see it in your main course navigation menu. If you click on it, you can begin using this awesome tool right away. On this page, you will find:

- The current course accessibility score.
- A 'Start' button where you can begin correcting content with the easiest issues to fix.



From there, simply click on each item and follow the recommendations for fixing accessibility issues.

It is **so easy** to use and if you run into questions about fixing issues in files such as PowerPoints or PDFs, please reach out to the [Bellisario College instructional designer](#) to get those corrected and reuploaded to your course.

SHARE A TEACHING STRATEGY



Share something fabulous that you have been doing in your classroom! Do you have a teaching technology or strategy that you've seen succeed and would like to share it in the *Teaching Tuesdays* newsletter? If so, please [share your idea](#) for an upcoming issue.