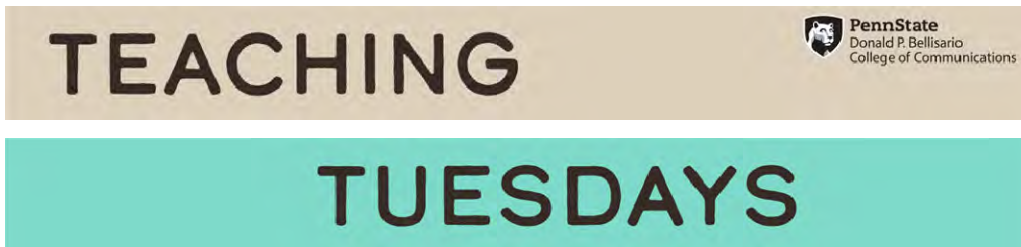


Bortree, Denise Sevick

From: Mailing list for information relevant to Bellisario College of Communications faculty. <L-COMM-FACULTY@lists.psu.edu> on behalf of Bortree, Denise Sevick <dsb177@PSU.EDU>
Sent: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 12:41 PM
To: L-COMM-FACULTY@LISTS.PSU.EDU
Subject: Teaching Tuesdays: Virtual Classrooms by Renea Nichols



Faculty – Hope your classes are off to a good start. I’m pleased to introduce a new series of weekly emails called Teaching Tuesdays to feature teaching strategies from some of the college’s many creative instructors. As you are delivering your classes in different modes, you may be trying new teaching strategies to deliver content and engage with students. What if we could hear from our fellow faculty members about ideas that they have put into practice? That’s the goal of this series. Not every strategy will work for every course delivery type or every faculty member. But, I hope you’ll find that these teaching tips keep you inspired. We will also use this space to celebrate teaching successes and share teaching resources. You’ll find information about innovative teaching practices webinars at the bottom of this email. Please send me any teaching/classroom-related announcements and resources that you think your fellow instructors would find helpful. Thanks.

Teaching Tip: Virtual Classrooms

At the risk of setting the bar too high, we’re kicking off this series with someone who has been featured in Penn State News for her creativity in the virtual classroom. **Renea Nichols is an assistant teaching professor in the Advertising/Public Relations department**, and she typically teaches both in-person and World Campus courses.



CREATING A VIRTUAL CLASSROOM WITH BITMOJI

By Renea Nichols, assistant teaching professor (rdn11@psu.edu)

What do teachers do when they can’t be in the classroom because of the pandemic? Go to the next best thing, of course: a replica of the classroom through an unlikely new teaching tool, Bitmoji. My sister, a dedicated elementary school teacher, and her K-12 teacher friends were all creating digital versions of themselves and inserting them into Google slides to create a virtual version of their classrooms. I just jumped on the bandwagon and adjusted it to my needs: a virtual PSU office.

I love teaching first-year students and have been teaching LEAP each summer for at least 8 years. I wanted a way to engage and interact with fresh-out-of-high-school students virtually as much as possible to make learning fun for them and me.

My dream office was the first virtual room I created – floor to ceiling window, exposed brick, exercise center. I then focused other rooms on the material we were learning in a COMM 100: Mass Media & Society course. The videos I would have normally shown in class, were simply LINKED in the virtual rooms. I encouraged students to visit the rooms before doing their readings, or whenever they had downtime, or whenever they got bored. One room, an AD/PR agency, linked all of the case studies they were assigned for the semester.

The Mindfulness space, the PSU Arboretum (a favorite location for LEAP students) was designed to help students understand their health and wellness is a daily habit. Links took them on a de-stress journey with activities, music, yoga and meditation. Your Bitmoji can dance using Snapchat. Use a green screen app to insert your “real” self in the rooms.

Finally, one of the favorite memories for summer LEAP students is taking their photo by the LION shrine. So, I asked each student to send me their Bitmoji. I was happy to see that they put a lot of thought and personality into their own Bitmoji for our virtual class photo.

I have now updated the rooms for my seniors. There is a COVID resource room, and their class photo is in front of the wall outside of Beaver Stadium. Their Bitmojis link to their course blog which will be read by their peers each week.

Someone suggested I hide items in the room (like a hunt) each week to encourage students to explore the rooms. These virtual rooms can be whatever you want/need them to be: showcase student work, photos, link your research, or research studies. Your Bitmoji can dance using Snapchat. Use Green Screen By Do Ink to insert your “real” self in the rooms talking, lecturing.

You can decide how you want to incorporate the virtual classrooms into your course to make remote learning more engaging and fun.

Feel free to reach out: rdn11@psu.edu if you have questions. And, share your space with me.

My
ROOMS: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1aHV_fFpwcJvFEiMGTwI5I3whw1XmJJW_I_8tWPtgY4E/edit?usp=sharing



I found these sites/apps most helpful in creating my rooms:

1. <https://www.helloteacherlady.com/blog/2020/4/how-to-create-a-virtual-bitmoji-scenein-google-slides-or-powerpoint>
2. This YOUTUBE video was super helpful: <https://youtu.be/Y3ZiClcIYJs>
3. Once you are finished “share” a “view only” link with students. They should view/click on “PRESENT” mode.
4. FACEBOOK groups: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2568655663438916/>
5. Website: remove bg. (Apps: Bitmoji, Green Screen By Do Ink)

Warning: it is addictive (in a good way).

Have you tried a new teaching strategy in the classroom?

If you’ve tried a new strategy in a course, I would love to hear about it. Maybe you developed a way to engage students in the classroom, online or in the community. Doesn’t have to be revolutionary; just something that worked well for you.

What teaching tips would you offer your fellow faculty members? I'm looking for future authors of Teaching Tuesday Tips, so please email me at dsb177@psu.edu.

Nominate an innovative teacher

While we're on the topic of innovative teaching ideas, be sure to check out Innovative Teaching at Penn State (ITAP) at www.itap.psu.edu/. You can nominate someone to give a presentation on their teaching ideas (or you can submit your own name, which is highly encouraged). The selected candidates will be part of a series of webinars this fall. You can also join their listserv: Keep up-to-date on announcements and receive reminders of future talks by subscribing to the ITAP Listserv. To be added, email L-ITAP-subscribe-request@lists.psu.edu with "Add me" in the subject line and a few characters in the e-mail.

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