

2026 UCCS Teaching & Learning Conference

ABSTRACTS

Session 1 – Tuesday, 10:00-10:45

(re)Designing Around Student Agency

Classroom Methods and Management

Scott McLeod

Room 109

One of the primary factors that feeds human motivation is autonomy, yet our classes often are low-autonomy learning spaces for students. As the 'expert' instructors, we decide what our students are going to do and how, and then penalize them if they don't comply and complain that they're 'checked out.' In this freewheeling discussion, we will talk about some ways in which we might increase student agency, ownership, and engagement in our courses. Bring your strategies and techniques that foster student voice and choice; Scott will bring his too! Bring a computer and be prepared to work with others!

Experiments in Ungrading from the Student's Perspective

Classroom Methods and Management

DeLyn Winters

Room 132

If you're tired of taking on the burden of curriculum design, development, evaluation and grading, consider something new! We'll show you unconventional approaches that can freshen your mindset and encourage agency with your students. You'll see what it looks like, from both the professor and student perspectives, to scrap 35 years of "the grind" for a new approach that is student-driven, puts process over product, and rewards persistence rather than performance. You'll walk away with a fresh outlook on course design that takes the pressure off you and helps your students advocate for themselves.

Moral Injury in the Academy: Recognition, Resilience, and Repair

Campus: Mental Health and Resilience

Stephanie Gangemi and Laurel Bidwell

Room 133

This session introduces moral injury and examines its relevance in higher education. We consider how systemic pressures, role conflicts, and misaligned institutional values can erode ethical integrity and faculty well-being. Drawing on research and practical examples, presenters will map common academic stressors, differentiate moral distress from burnout, and surface hidden costs to teaching, mentorship, and community. Participants will explore strategies to cultivate moral courage, resilience, and collective efficacy, including values clarification, peer consultation, reparations, and leadership skills that protect voice and efficacy. Attendees will leave with reflective tools and actionable practices to strengthen ethical climates and sustain humane, mission-aligned work.

Learning That Sticks: Evidence-Based Multimedia for Modern Learners

Instructional Technology

Bradley Plesz

Room 233

While multimedia is central to teaching and learning, the challenge is crafting materials—video or otherwise—that truly enhance comprehension. Guided by Richard Mayer's multimedia learning principles and insights from the 2024 Panopto Student Survey, this session demonstrates how evidence-based design fosters clarity, engagement, and retention. Participants will learn practical strategies to apply principles like coherence, signaling, and segmenting across formats, creating content that aligns with how students learn best. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to transform course media into purposeful, visually engaging, and cognitively effective learning experiences.

Session 2 – Tuesday, 11:00-11:45

Learning Unplugged: Reconnecting Through Screen-Free Teaching Days

AI in Academics...or NOT!

Pat McGuire

Room 109

Do you ever wonder what your class would be like without 21st century technology? As a professor of instructional technology (and decidedly not anti tech), I have built a series of Unplugged Days (intentional screen free class sessions) into my campus based courses where laptops close, phones disappear, and conversation reemerges. By incorporating teaching strategies from the 1900s (ha!), Unplugged Days encourage deeper thinking, genuine interaction, and a stronger sense of classroom community. This session is recommended for faculty teaching in person or hybrid courses who want to increase student participation and rediscover the human side of learning.

Unleashing Student Potential: Transform Learning Through UDL Action and Expression!

Accessibility for ALL Learners

Angie Dodson, Lauren Nelson, and Zean Dunbar

Room 132

This session explores how the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principle—options in action and expression—can dramatically transform student engagement and success! Presenters will share powerful, practical examples from STEM and social science courses focused on student choice, self-analysis, and reflection. Get ready to leave energized, inspired, and equipped with actionable strategies to amplify student agency, deepen learning, and create more inclusive, impactful educational experiences in any discipline!

Bringing Your Students Into the Pedagogy: Methods for Student Co-Creation

Classroom Methods and Management

Tae Park, Chris Creighton, Mike Larkin, Sara Friedman, and Gabriela Martinez-Mercier

Room 133

Co-creation is a collaborative method where students work with faculty to “create components of the curricula and/or pedagogical approaches” (Bovill et al., 2016). In challenging traditional roles in the classroom, co-creation offers a transformational opportunity for students leading to increased enjoyment, more risk-taking, higher achievement, and even retention (Lubicz-Nawrocka & Bovill, 2021). Join members of the Community of Practice on Humanizing Education and Reimagining Grading as we share methods and experiences of co-created pedagogical moments. Our goals are for you to understand the pedagogy of co-creation and to discuss how it reimagines our classroom relationships.

Navigating Interdisciplinarity and Application

Classroom Methods and Management

Jared Benson

Room 233

It might seem to many an observer that modern post-structural, technocratic society is performing a “speed run” to what at one point, might have been called an Idiocracy (thanks, Mike Judge). Among the most observable contributors to the host of social, economic, political, and somehow-already-forgotten-ecological issues exacerbating our troubling trajectory is a severe lack of High Order Thinking. And while there’s no simple solution to the devolution of our collective cognition, there are still a few things we can do in Higher Education to help students and thus, future decision-makers, stakeholders, voters, employees, etc. to learn critical skills, engage diverse content, consider varied lenses, “combine facts and ideas in order to synthesize, generalize, explain, hypothesize, or arrive at some conclusion or interpretation [that] allows students to solve problems and discover new meanings and understandings” (Newmann and Wehlage, 1993). Weaving together cross-disciplinary content and methodology through co-teaching that emphasizes application offers a place to start.

Keynote Address – Tuesday, 12:00-1:30

Teaching for Meaning-Making

Classroom Methods and Management

Scott McLeod

Room 180

Our students often struggle to find meaning in the learning tasks that we put before them. In his keynote, Scott will focus on what we know about powerful learning and how we might start designing in ways that get beyond point-counting and hoop-jumping. Our instructional choices can help students find sense, purpose, and engagement in our course material. Be prepared to interact with your neighbors!

Calling All AI Contrarians

AI in Academics...or NOT!

Bob Cook

Room 109

As generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools become increasingly embedded in academic practice, a subset of faculty remain hesitant or resistant to adopt them. This discussion will explore the “AI Contrarians,” defined as higher education faculty who consciously reject or minimize engagement with generative AI not from lack of awareness or skill, but as a principled stance. Our goal is not to challenge, convince, or coerce faculty into using these tools, but to describe and analyze: to better understand, articulate, and legitimize the reasons behind the lack of adoption and engagement with these technologies. All interested in AI are welcome.

Designing Learning Experiences to Facilitate Peer Connections

Classroom Methods and Management

Patty Witkowsky

Room 132

The in-person classroom may be the only structured environment on campus where students (particularly commuter and/or post-traditional) engage with peers. Building in intentional peer interactions into the course experience can contribute to students’ ability to create social connections and networks that contribute to their sense of belonging and provide peer academic support. This session will introduce ways to engage students with each other around course content. Attendees will have time in the session to brainstorm how to bring the new concepts of peer interaction into their courses regardless of the discipline.

Teaching With Presence: Restoring Connection and Courage in the Classroom

Campus: Mental Health and Resilience

Paul Yankey

Room 133

In a time of rapid change, technological distraction, and increasing emotional distance, students crave something simple and essential...real human connection. This session invites faculty and staff to rediscover the power of presence as the foundation of effective teaching. Drawing from thirty years of experience in business leadership and higher education, the presenter shares practical tools for transforming the classroom from a transactional environment into a relational one. Through storytelling and interactive reflection, participants will explore how presence restores safety, curiosity, and courage, creating the conditions where both faculty and students thrive. Key takeaways:

- Three practical ways to bring presence into daily teaching
- How to rebuild trust when fear has entered the classroom
- Viewing teaching as a human act rather than a performance
- Insights from neuroscience on why attention and eye contact still matter

Scaffolding Learning in the Age of AI: Applying Universal Design for Learning Principles to Foster Authentic Student Engagement

Classroom Methods and Management

Madeline Kurcz

Room 233

How can instructors leverage AI in course design while guiding students to rely less on it, deepen their own reasoning, and strengthen peer connections and community? This session showcases a UDL-informed, semester-long scaffolded project developed by Professor Madeline Kurcz using generative AI as a design tool, not a student tool. The project positions ACCT 2020 (Introduction to Managerial Accounting) students as contractors responding to a real-world Request for Proposal issued by Summit Youth Adventures to construct modular bunkhouses. As teams navigate unique cost structures and constraints, they progressively apply managerial accounting concepts to develop competitive bids. Grounded in Universal Design for Learning principles, the project emphasizes autonomy, collaborative sense-making, and iterative feedback. Through intentionally small, cumulative in-class groupwork, students move away from reliance on generative AI and instead build competency through collective reasoning, decision-making, and reflective practice. Participants will learn how Teaching Professor Kurcz’s scaffolded, UDL-

aligned approach integrates AI in course design while simultaneously reducing student dependence on AI to foster deeper learning. The session concludes with practical strategies for adapting this model to other disciplines.

Session 4 –Tuesday, 2:45-3:30

15 Ways to Use YouTube for Online Content and Interaction

Regular and Substantive Interaction in Online Courses

Hayley Blackburn

Room 109

This dynamic 45-minute session explores 15 creative ways faculty can leverage YouTube (or any video platform) to enhance online teaching and foster authentic student engagement. Discover practical examples of short-form videos for updates, announcements, and group feedback, as well as longer videos for assignment explanations and lectures. Attendees will receive a step-by-step guide to setting up YouTube accounts, creating and sharing content, and inspiration for diverse video formats. The workshop includes actionable tips for each video type, plus equipment suggestions, to confidently integrate video into their online courses and enrich digital learning experiences.

Immersive Field Experiences: From Field Trips to Expeditions (Part 1)

Teaching and Learning Outside of the Classroom

Christine Biermann, Eric Billmeyer, David Havlick, Jennifer McLeod, and Brandon Vogt

Room 132

In two consecutive sessions, we consider how instruction outside the classroom can contribute in important ways to student learning, making connections across diverse contexts, increase student engagement, and challenge students and faculty alike to encounter new perspectives and situations in productive ways. Immersive field experiences can range from just a few hours to several months and may take place locally or via extended excursions. By presenting case studies of immersive experiences taught in different settings, we highlight the value of providing structured learning opportunities beyond the walls of the traditional classroom.

Transitioning to Competency Based Education (CBE): Challenges and Lessons Learned

Classroom Methods and Management

Lindsey Nelson and Lori Holt

Room 133

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing has required all nursing programs to transition to competency-based education (CBE). CBE emphasizes outcomes, student engagement, and self-paced learning. The purpose of our presentation is to share the early challenges and lessons learned as we transition to CBE, focusing on classroom methods and management. Discussion will focus on balancing learning activities with evaluation methods, how to offer self-paced learning within a standard semester course system, and how to focus on outcomes while maintaining the human connection. The presentation will encourage audience participation and discussion.

Embracing Diverse Learning Styles of Engagement and Bolstering Critical Thinking Skills Using Bloom's Taxonomy

Classroom Methods and Management

Kylie Rogalla

Room 233

This presentation introduces a combination of two intentional approaches for classroom facilitation and course assignment design. Attendees will understand how to employ a series of exercises to engage students of various personal styles of learning and classroom engagement. Methods of enhancing participation in small and large group discussions will be presented, and concepts of random membership and personal choice in group projects will be introduced as well. Additionally, the Bloom's Taxonomy model is explored in relation to crafting a scaffold of low-to-high stake assignments which build from levels of remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating skills throughout the semester.

Session 5 –Tuesday, 3:45-4:30

AI in Academic Libraries as a Tool: Transforming Discovery, Instruction, and Research Support

AI in Academics...or NOT!

Jungmin Byun

Room 109

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming academic libraries, offering powerful tools for research discovery and learning support while presenting significant ethical challenges. This presentation explores current AI adoption trends in libraries and examines practical implementations of tools like Primo AI and ScienceDirect AI that enhance user discovery and research workflows. We will address critical concerns including privacy protection, algorithmic bias, data governance, and intellectual freedom. Through institutional frameworks and best practices for responsible AI implementation, librarians can position themselves as informed leaders in campus AI initiatives. Participants will gain actionable strategies for supporting faculty and student AI literacy while maintaining core library values of equity, access, and intellectual integrity.

Immersive Field Experiences: From Field Trips to Expeditions (Part 2)

Teaching and Learning Outside of the Classroom

Christine Biermann, Eric Billmeyer, David Havlick, Jennifer McLeod, and Brandon Vogt

Room 132

In two consecutive sessions, we consider how instruction outside the classroom can contribute in important ways to student learning, making connections across diverse contexts, increase student engagement, and challenge students and faculty alike to encounter new perspectives and situations in productive ways. Immersive field experiences can range from just a few hours to several months and may take place locally or via extended excursions. By presenting case studies of immersive experiences taught in different settings, we highlight the value of providing structured learning opportunities beyond the walls of the traditional classroom.

Starting With a Step... Values as a Guide Towards Humanizing Education

Classroom Methods and Management

Chris Creighton, Tae Park, Sara Friedman, and Gabriela Martinez-Mercier

Room 133

It is often hardest to take that first step through a shifting landscape of pedagogical practices. We ask, “following your values, where does your pedagogy go?” In this discussion, members of the Community of Practice on Humanizing Education and Reimagining Grading will guide you through both personal and professional value-aligned pedagogical paths you can take towards humanizing education. We will provide examples of pedagogical practices and policies to help you reflect and implement something new guided by your values.

High Stakes Testing Goes to College: Solutions for Burnout and Text Avoidance

Classroom Methods and Management

Nikki Myers

Room 233

This presentation shares research on the recent emergence on social media for a phenomenon of *gifted student burnout* and *former gifted kid* among high achieving 18 to 26 year olds students, combined with anxiety and underachievement cycles. The implications for college students will be explored for the impacts of K12 high stakes testing combined with K12 reading practices that have modified students’ exposure and persistence for various types of text. Participants will discuss potential university course adjustments that provide both support and academic rigor within these contexts.

Session 6 – Wednesday, 9:15-10:45

Adapting Oral Communication to Your Class - A Workshop for Student Success for Any Department

Classroom Methods and Management

Jolena Hausman

Room 109

Many faculty are adding oral communication assignments but aren’t always sure how to do it. With a focus on the eight competencies of communication and the general education requirements on campus, we will workshop a variety of tips, tricks and tools to help bring your oral presentation assignments to life for students. This will include how to design assignments, give effective feedback on public speaking and how to prepare and coach your students for success. There will also be the opportunity to talk about the technology involved and how to adapt it to your personal needs for your class.

Designing Collaborative Writing Assignments Across Disciplines

Classroom Methods and Management

Catherine Grandorff

Room 109

This session offers instructors practical, adaptable strategies for creating effective collaborative writing assignments in any discipline. Participants will explore models of co-authoring and iterative drafting along with tools that support version control and productive teamwork. The presentation highlights clear assignment structures, role definition, and balanced assessment practices that promote both accountability and authentic learning. Faculty will also consider common challenges such as uneven workload, communication issues, technological barriers to examine workable solutions like team contracts and scaffolded check-ins. Attendees will leave with guiding principles and templates for intentional, transparent, and engaging collaborative writing projects.

Giving Feedback without Losing your Mind (or your Weekend)

Classroom Methods and Management

Kacey Ross

Room 133

Writing Intensive classes generate a lot of work—for students and for faculty! We know feedback is important for students, but how do we give that feedback without losing our minds? This session will present strategies you can use for responding to student writing in meaningful ways with an eye toward both effectiveness and efficiency.

Session 7 – Wednesday, 11:00-12:30

Beyond the Classroom - Inviting Students to Explore Sustainability in Their Professional Lives

Teaching and Learning Outside of the Classroom

Niki Juhl

Room 132

Sustainability is a buzz word, it is a theme in large-scale issues, projects, vision statements—but when do we teach students how to self-reflect on their role in sustainability in their professional lives? This session will be a brainstorming workshop and discussion on how to develop lessons or assignments to engage students with determining how they, as a professional, could have an influence on sustainability in their daily practice, profession, life. Sustainability is in every professional field—please come join the conversation to help enrich our students education.

Beyond the Classroom: Expanding Undergraduate Research Opportunities

Teaching and Learning Outside of the Classroom

Kelly McNear

Room 132

Undergraduate research is a high-impact practice that transforms student learning, with benefits extending far beyond the confines of the classroom. This interactive session explores how faculty can foster meaningful research experiences through mentorship, independent projects, and community-engaged scholarship. Participants will understand the positive impact these opportunities have on student success, faculty scholarship, and they will discover practical strategies for incorporating research mentorship outside traditional course structures. Through discussion and collaborative planning, attendees will leave with actionable ideas to integrate research into their advising, departmental culture, and co-curricular initiatives, and empower students to co-create knowledge rather than simply consuming it.

Curating and Authoring Opensource, Truly Randomized, Online Homework and Practice Sets in MyOpenMath (It's Not Just for Math!)

Instructional Technology

Katherine Cliff

Room 133

MyOpenMath is an online, open source LMS that is not just for math courses! Workshop participants will select from a learning menu which includes topics such as: how to set up a course, how to integrate homework sets with Canvas, how to search for homework questions in MyOpenMath's extensive library, how to adapt or author their own questions, and how to check accessibility requirements.

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