



TEACHING  
COMMONS


Spark Joy in Teaching

Issue 2, Jan 2024



*Co-created by Jackie Shay and Microsoft Copilot*

Joyful Thinking and Learning:  
Mitigating the Harmful Effects of Stress



When humans experience a sense of threat or stress, their bodies flood with cortisol, or as Zaretta Hammond calls it an “amygdala hijack,” and higher-thinking shuts down. This can happen in our classrooms as a response to significant intellectual difficulty and/or to an environment that feels unwelcoming. What to do when that happens (or when you worry it might happen)? **Spark joy!**

**Joy creates the inverse of an amygdala hijack: the activation of neurotransmitters, like serotonin, associated with learning, attention, and memory.**

As teachers, we can use joy to release dopamine and rewire the “salience network” in our brains away from “red alert to green;” we can use joy to produce oxytocin to help us build community and reduce cortisol. In fact, we can activate joyful contagion that permeates the entire campus! From that place of openness and receptivity joyful students and teachers reclaim the promise of education as the practice of drawing out what is inherent in our shared humanity.

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Jeffrey Gaines (12 Feb 2021) What Is Emotional Contagion Theory? (Definition & Examples)

<https://positivepsychology.com/emotional-contagion/>

Hanson, Rick (2013) *Hardwiring Happiness*. Harmony (Penguin/Random House) Press. pp. 42-43

Zaretta Hammond (2014). *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*. Corwin Publishing.

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## Communities & Programs





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## Joy 'Jam Sessions'

**Virtual Discussion**

**First Friday of Every Month**

**Feb 2, March 1, April 5, May 3**

**12:00–1:00 PM**

These **monthly virtual drop-in sessions** are dedicated to exploring opportunities for joy in class and uplifting teaching and learning experiences.

[Register](#)



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## First-Year Flourishing

**KL 316**

**Third Friday of Every Month**

**2:00–3:00 PM**

Join this network of interdisciplinary instructors who teach first-year students and **develop a “shared language” of effective teaching practices that promote student success.**

[Register](#)



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## Writing in the Disciplines Community of Practice

These thoughtful conversations and hands-on practices cover 1) framing writing to enhance student engagement, 2) designing effective assignments, 3) scaffolding activities to foster learning, and 4) providing feedback.

Register

## Online Course Design Certificate

### 6 Week Program

This program led by our instructional design team helps instructors design effective online courses and support them through online course proposals. Join the next cohort!

Learn More

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## Information & Announcements



### Gradescope is Coming to CatCourses

Thanks to support from the School of Natural Sciences, OIT is leading a pilot of Gradescope during Spring 2024. An integration of Gradescope with your CatCourses sites can cut down on grading time in a number of ways:

- Recognizes and converts to handwritten writing to text
- Enables dynamic rubrics to allow for quick and consistent feedback
- Analyzes TA grading trends to improve consistency
- Grades bubble sheets without requiring specific Scantron software

If you are a faculty member interested in being part of the Gradescope pilot, please sign up via this link: <https://ucm.edu/GradescopePilotInterest> by **Sunday, 2/4**. OIT will connect with faculty who sign up as to the next steps.



## Create High-Quality Instructional Videos with Us

Instructional videos are a meaningful way to deliver complicated concepts and information to students. **OIT has a great studio available in the Teaching Commons for faculty that contains all the equipment for professional video production and editing.** Faculty can record using a green screen or Learning Glass which allows instructors to write lecture notes while maintaining face-to-face contact with students. Interested? Sign up for a consultation to see the studio and learn more:

VIDEO STUDIO CONSULTATION



## Get to Know Your Students with an Entry Survey



MODULE

[Entry Survey Materials](#)

Undergraduate

Adriana Signorini

**An entry survey is an essential measure for instructors to anticipate students' preparedness, lived experiences, career interests, and expectations for the class.**

The "Entry Survey Materials" module can be easily imported to your CatCourses site. It consists of a survey, responses, suggestions based on students' responses, and facilitation instructions. Search and download through [Canvas Commons](#).



## Canvas Updates You May Have Missed

Canvas has added some new features, including 1) [bulk publish and unpublish modules](#), 2) enhanced [custom filter presets](#) to create and apply to the Gradebook, 3) [display letter grade only](#), 4) [recurring events](#) can be created in the Calendar, 5) and event times can now be input manually or changed in 15-minute increments.



## Instructor Training Online Modules for DEIA

As part of a joint effort between UC Santa Barbara, UC Berkeley, and UC Irvine to develop online instructor training resources, we want to help them learn more about the experiences and needs of UC instructors who work directly with students in a teaching capacity. Learn more about the mission, vision, and goals of the Grant Project here: [UC Online Modules for DEIA](#).

CLICK FOR SURVEY

## Uplifting Faculty Stories

### Reshma Menon: Sparking Interest Early



Photo: Veronica Androver

Before introducing any new mathematical idea in class, Dr. Menon likes to start with a "*Why should we care about this?*" spiel. She believes that motivating students about the applications of the mathematics they are learning is more important in the beginning rather than tagging it on at the end.

***"It piques their interest from the get-go and gets them to buy into ideas they may not fully understand yet."***

During the majority of the class time, students work in small groups on scaffolded problems to build their knowledge of a new concept together, and then test their ideas on more challenging examples.

***"Though it can be frustrating at first, I find that the pay-off is much greater from the 'aha'***

To observe Reshma's course, please pre-register for the

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## Joyful Teaching Tips



### Cultivating Connection & Joy Humanizes Learning

Human connection is necessary for mental and physical health. Foster human connection in class through storytelling, creating art, playing games, and collaborating on meaningful projects ([Hendrix-Soto & LeeKeenan 2023](#)).



### Enjoy Diving Deeper During Class after AI Chat

Finding joy in teaching means spending quality time with students during class. Leverage the responsiveness and conversational engagement from generative chatbots for learning basic content ([Chen et al., 2022](#)), so you can spend more time going deeper in class together.

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## Articles that Spark Joy



Co-created by Jackie Shay and Microsoft Copilot

## Emotions are Contagious: Spread the Joy!

This article discusses how *emotional contagion*, where one person's emotions can lead to similar behaviors in others, might be positively channeled.

[Read article](#)



Co-created by Jackie Shay and Microsoft Copilot

## A Vision of AI for Joyful Education

This article explores the potential for AI to further joy in learning and review how to avert the dangers to maximize the benefits of this powerful tool.

[Read article](#)

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## We are here to help!

The Teaching Commons is a collective of pedagogy and technology specialists from the Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning (CETL) and Academic Emerging Technologies (AET). We are here to support you in your instructional needs.

[Book a Consultation!](#)



In joyful solidarity,

## The Teaching Commons Team



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TODAY  
I CHOOSE

JOY!

*Please visit us at  
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