

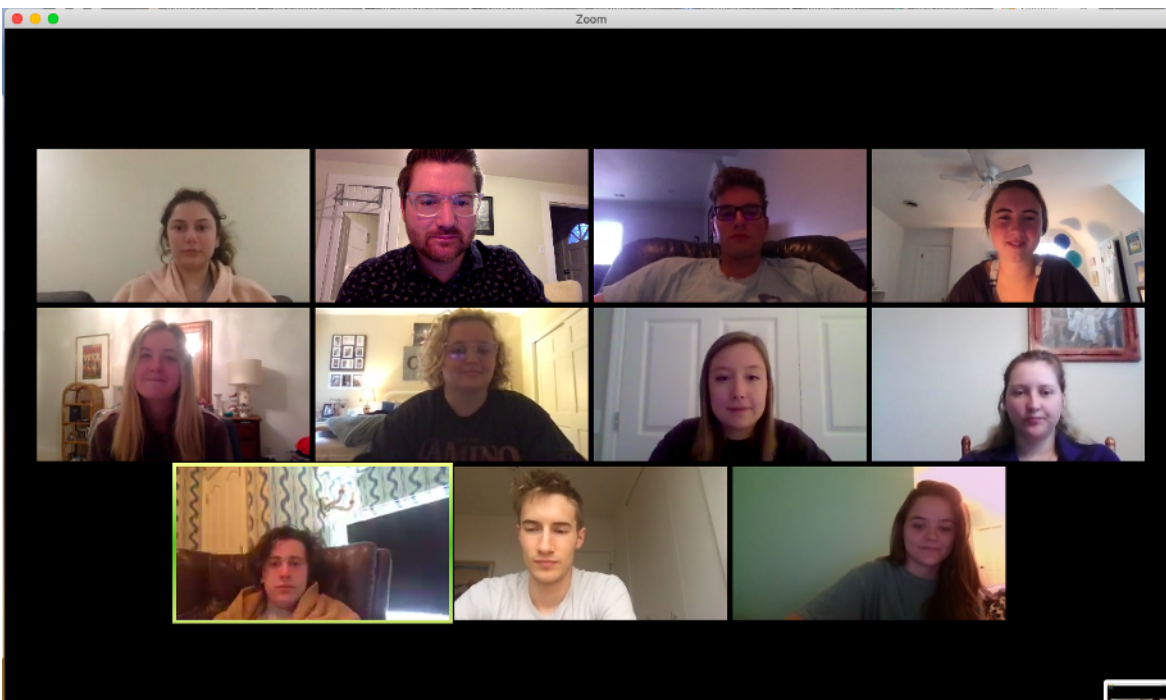


# The Craft

A Publication of the Center for Teaching at the University of the South

## SEWANEEMOVES TO REMOTE TEACHING

The announcement came on March 14: we would offer remote instruction for the remainder of the term due to the Covid19 pandemic. Classes were cancelled for the week following Spring Break as faculty took on the massive effort to move courses online. How to handle science labs? Studio art? Would students really engage in discussions as deeply in a Zoom meeting? What about student



presentations and projects at the end of the term? And don't forget comps exams!

Entering into that official week of retooling our courses following spring break, faculty were met by the capable IT staff who were prepared with

workshops on Zoom and Blackboard. The CFT held open office hours to discuss pedagogical issues of remote instruction such as assessment. Our fearless Associate Dean of Inclusion and Faculty Development, Betsy Sandlin, fielded questions day and night and offered resources gathered from institutions nation-wide. And all that was only the instructional side of Sewanee's response to the pandemic.

We learned a lot in very short order. We threw it into practice. We adjusted as needed. Instruction continued. Maybe not perfectly, maybe kinks to work out. But we managed! The saddest part of this huge effort on the part of so many is that we are not yet able to join together in person to acknowledge this work as Sewanee traditionally would—it would have been quite a celebration.

# STORIES FROM REMOTELAND

In case you missed it from our email on Monday, the Center for Teaching is capturing "stories from Remoteland." The stories are all true, mostly humorous, and sometimes just a little embarrassing.

Our first installment comes from Mark Hopwood, a member of the Center for Teaching Advisory Board. He writes:

"When I set up the online discussion boards for my classes after spring break, I started out with a "test thread" in which I asked students to tell me about their pets. Needless to say, this produced a lively discussion in which untold numbers of dogs, cats, rabbits, fish, and other animals were introduced to the rest of the class. During the first week of classes, I was holding "open office hours" on Zoom with a small group of students when I noticed one person looking down at a small furry being that kept appearing right at the bottom of their screen. Assuming that this was one of the pets I had heard about on the test thread, I said: "Oh, that's sweet: is that one of your cats?" The student in question looked initially confused and then mildly embarrassed as the small furry being rose up and revealed itself to be... the top of her mother's head. Trying desperately but unsuccessfully to be unobtrusive, the mother grabbed whatever she had come into the room to retrieve and scuttled over to the door in the far corner, still bent double. I've had a lot of new experiences over the past few weeks, but this is the first time I've ever mistaken a student's parent for a cat."

## TEACHING MAY NEVER BE THE SAME, AGAIN! SEWANEE'S HIGHER EDUCATION POST COVID-19

**By Romulus Stefanut (CFT Advisory Board Member)**

As the novel Coronavirus is running its disruptive course through our campus, country, and the larger world we all know that some things may never be the same! A comparison with the sweeping changes that we experienced in aviation transportation after 9/11 might be an understatement. Some public health experts suggest that we may not see in-person College classes until a new vaccine is available. Others see a return to a "new normalcy" by the end of this Summer. Yet, the possibility of a Fall outbreak is not to be taken lightly, according to Dr. Fauci. Given these unprecedented times and uncharted circumstances what shall the educator in us do?

Although nobody knows the extent of these changes, we can all do our humble share for the common good of higher education. There are at least three particular areas of preparedness that we can all take into account and contribute to: (1) redundancy of teaching methods and formats, (2)

# TEACHING MAY NEVER BE THE SAME, AGAIN! (CONTINUED)

resourcefulness in pedagogical and instructional content, and (3) strategic (re)thinking of our own teaching philosophy. By the end of this semester most if not all of our Sewanee teaching faculty would qualify for a certificate in e-teaching, no doubt about that! We all learned in record time how to “ZOOM-ify” our classes in order to provide effective synchronous and asynchronous online teaching. Some of us discovered that there are indeed virtues in teaching online—beyond the obvious cost, convenience, and flexibility—such as new opportunities for interaction using breakout rooms, new possibilities for assignments, instant access to e-resources, the option to record our classes, just to name a few. (See these resources: [here](#) and [here](#))



At the same time, we lament the lost virtues of the residential education model with its rich and rewarding personal interaction and are truly longing for the day when we can go back to it. Yet, we cannot let the lessons learned in this crisis go to waste. And we may need to be ready for some kind of hybrid teaching model during the next academic year. Thus, besides the official course evaluation, I would like to encourage each of us to conduct our own “redundant” teaching evaluation and assess what went well versus what did not go so well, in order to improve the teaching experience for our students. (Try [some of these self-assessment tools](#).) Charitable listening is always a good pedagogical practice regardless of circumstances. Certainly, there are many other tools, synchronous and asynchronous, that we can employ to enhance our teaching next year. Using a flipped classroom model with pre-recorded lectures on Panopto or SWIVL or utilizing case studies and multimedia content are just a few ideas. (Many Sewanee classrooms are equipped with [Panopto](#), and our Library checks out [SWIVL robot cameras](#).)

Armed with resources on self-assessment and best [online teaching practice articles](#), we could use the Summer months to gather additional pedagogical resources, which leads me to the second point about resourcefulness. It is unfortunate that we switched gears from residential to online instruction in no

# TEACHING MAY NEVER BE THE SAME, AGAIN! (CONTINUED)

time, right in the middle of the semester. Here the librarian in me wants to promote all the wonderful library databases and e-resources that we currently subscribe to. You might be well served to know that numerous library vendors provided us with [a free trial access to additional resources](#) that otherwise we would not have acquired. Please familiarize yourself with these curated library offerings and make good use of them before browsing the public domain of the Internet. Being proactive means that we may need to adapt and adopt a hybrid approach to instruction during the next academic year or until a vaccine is available.

I also anticipate that over the coming months there will be plenty of opportunities for strategic thinking and planning across the University with respect to our current instruction processes. Our own Center for Teaching will happily be involved in this process, but besides this community effort we can all think proactively and plan strategically for our own classes and workshops. Learning new tools and resources, looking at peers from other institutions, listening to our students, and gathering feedback are simple ways in which we can all participate in pre-strategic planning. In addition, it might even be a good time to revisit our teaching philosophy statement to see where we are now *versus* where we used to be *versus* where we may want to be in a PC-19 world. Teaching may never be the same again because life may never be the same, for good or ill!

Finally, I would like to use this opportunity to express gratefulness to our first responders in education: Library Information and Technology Services (LITS) staff and the Center for Teaching (CfT) staff. They led the way in equipping every one of us to make a successful transition to online instruction. They provided not only the much needed equipment, from laptops to headsets, but also (re)taught us how to use Blackboard and ZOOM in record speed. They also selected and curated multiple pedagogical and subject specific e-resources for our classes. And this is not the end of the path, but an ongoing process in assisting us through the Circulation Desk with library print resources and via Helpdesk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with IT resources. For all of these and more, we raise our hat to them.

*Chapeau bas*, dear friends!

Romulus D. Stefanut

# MID-SEMESTER GROUP ANALYSIS COMES TO SEWANEE

After a successful pilot program during the fall semester, this spring members of the Center for Teaching were excited to offer our second iteration of the Mid-Semester Group Analysis (MSGA) mid-semester feedback program. Both CFT Co-Directors Jordan Troisi and Emily Puckette, as well as three members of the CFT Advisory Board (Kate Cammack, Kati Curts, and Romulus Stefanut) served as “consultants” for professors interested in gathering student feedback at the mid-semester point.

Here’s how it works: after a short introduction to the process, students work in groups to figure out what they and their course is doing to impact their learning, they write all this information on the board, and then a trained teacher (the “consultant”) helps guide them through a clarifying conversation to flesh out additional details. Afterwards, the consultant interprets the information and draws out the major themes, then talks with the professor of the course about that feedback, and they make a plan for how to discuss this feedback and any alterations to the course with their students.

The MSGA process—known elsewhere primarily as [Small Group Instructional Diagnosis](#)—is an evidence-based approach for providing feedback to college instructors. It’s a way to check-in at the midpoint of the semester. It can also be a springboard to generate and discuss new teaching approaches. And for those who are curious, it is also associated with better end of the semester course evaluations.

Though circumstances this semester required the move to remote teaching, before doing so, the team of 5 MSGA consultants conducted almost a dozen sessions in classrooms this spring. Feedback about the process, like from the fall semester, was overwhelmingly positive. See sample feedback in the box on the right.

Interested in having a MSGA done in one of your courses in the fall? Stay tuned! The call will go out in August or September.

## Responses to the question "Would you recommend that other faculty have a MSGA consultation?"

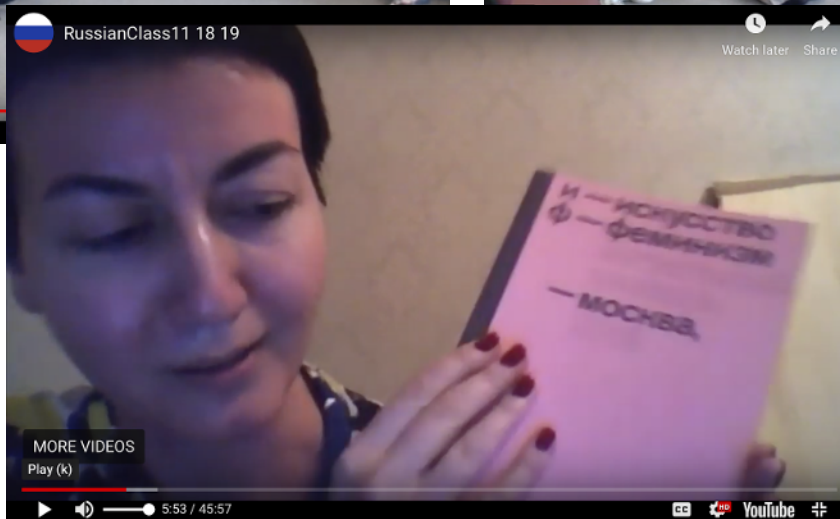
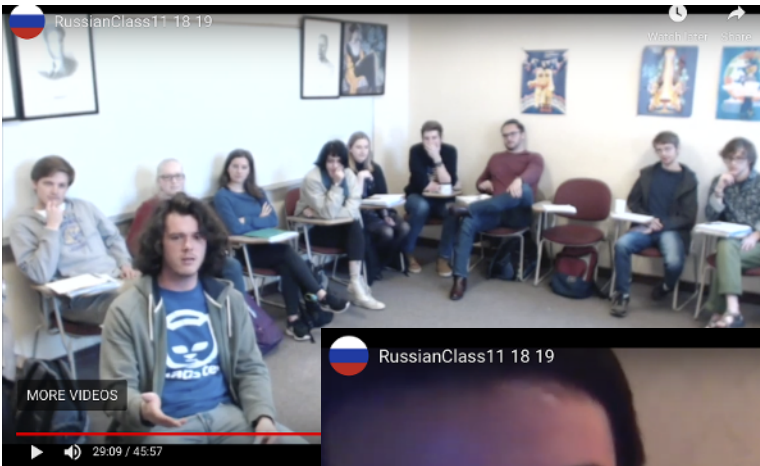
"The MSGA was very helpful in working through course-specific issues in a positive and supportive environment. My consultants recognized certain structural issues inherent in the class, and helped me to work through realistic and actionable solutions. I would strongly encourage others to participate, no matter their level of experience. I honestly think that this program can have a beneficial impact on our teaching across the college."

"...any feedback is good feedback and this kind of direct feedback... well, it's the best kind of actionable feedback. Even if you have an inkling of what you need to do in your course, it's good to have that feeling corroborated by an external resource."

"The Mid-Semester Group Analysis consultation helped me identify issues in the classroom that I was not aware were issues. My consultant provided a neutral group for students to talk about what worked (and what didn't), which led to more honest feedback than if I had asked for my students' input directly."

# PHOTOS FROM MINI-GRANT RECIPIENTS

Recent Center for Teaching Mini-Grant recipients, Susanna Weygandt and Elyzabeth Wilder were pleased to share photos of their grant projects. Weygandt invited a Russian artist Ilmira Bolotyana to speak with her class via Zoom and Wilder used funds to defray travel costs for theatre students from her Contemporary African-American Playwrights course to attend plays in New York.



# CARE TEAM PANEL DISCUSSION

At the request of Sewanee faculty, on January 28, three members of Sewanee’s CARE Team—Rachel Champagne, Matt Brown, and Alex Bruce—gathered in the Center for Teaching for a panel discussion about the nature of their work with Sewanee students. For those who were not already familiar, the CARE Team meets once a week to discuss and assist students with concerns of all kinds.

Many of these concerns are submitted by faculty, and faculty were curious to know “what happens after I submit a concern?” The CARE Team collects all these concerns, and at their meetings, determine the



best way to reach out to the students. Sometimes these concerns are most appropriately handled by the Title IX office, or the office of Residential Life, for example.

The members of the CARE Team who made up the panel were clear that all reports of concerns about students are taken into consideration, even if faculty do not receive a follow-up message from the Team. One reason for this is that some of the interactions with students are confidential ones. It’s also true that some students might not opt to work with the CARE Team.

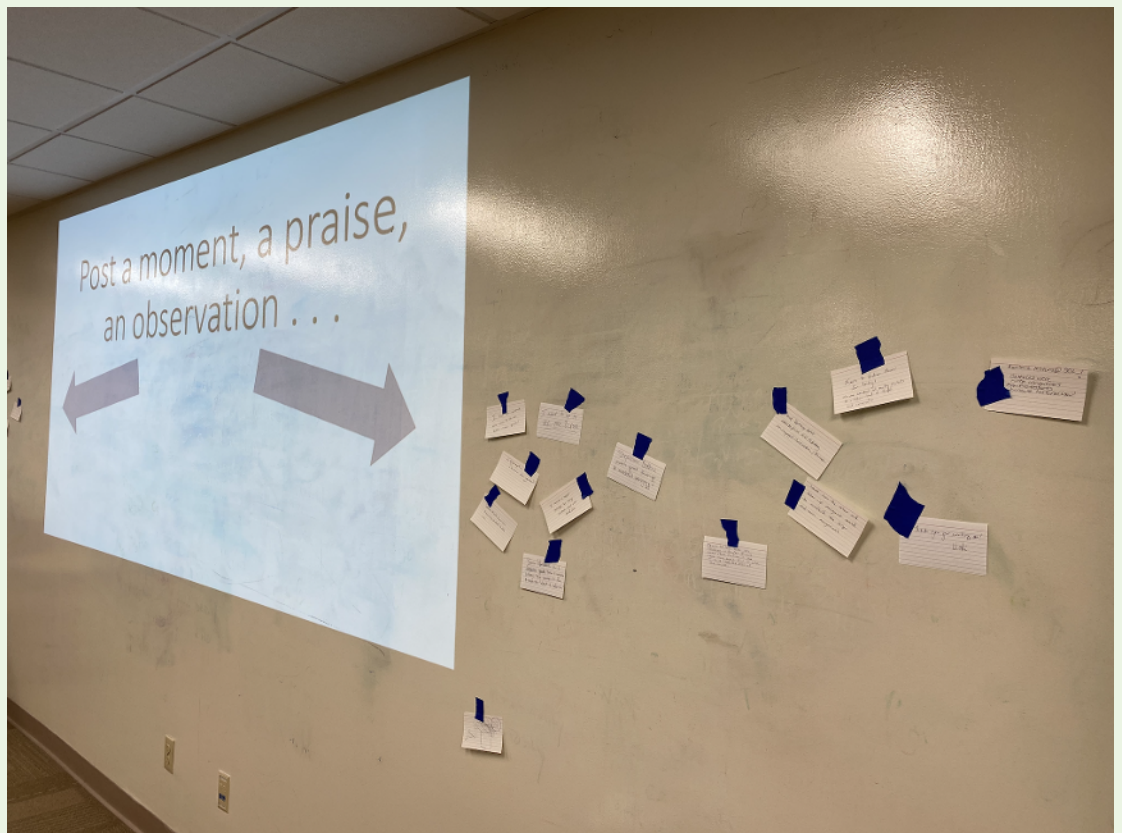
For those in the room, and for those who are reading this newsletter now, the CARE Team wanted to urge faculty who encounter a concerning circumstance involving students to provide a short report of that concern. [Concerns can be reported here.](#)

# 2ND ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF TEACHING A SUCCESS

The 2nd Annual Celebration of Teaching was held February 3-6 with 30 classes opened for visitors and 82 faculty and staff signed up to attend! Classes ranged from Physical Geology to Modern American Poetry to Current Events in the Middle East—there was something for everyone. The first goal was to remind ourselves, especially in the foggy rainy depths of winter, that great teaching is happening here every day, and we can be inspirational to each other in how we work with students.

Our second goal was to give faculty a chance to engage in conversation about their teaching and to encourage that exchange, a celebratory Happy Hour was held in the CfT. Notecards festooned the walls where faculty offered their impressions of the class visits, including the following comments: One host professor organizing breakout groups for class discussion was delighted to see the faculty and staff visitors create their own group to tackle Kant. One visitor learned “an awesome new way to do an exam review session!” Examples of guiding students to take risks, inviting them to reflect at the end of class, and bringing students to a higher level of thought were all on display across the disciplines.

Our deepest thanks go out to all the generous faculty hosts and to the enthusiastic visitors!





# TEACH & TELLS WITH SUSANNA WEYGANDT & KATE CAMMACK

On February 14, Susanna Weygandt (Russian) gave our first Teach & Tell of the spring semester on “Digital Humanities Tools in the Liberal Arts Classroom” to a crowd of faculty, and a few students as well.

During the presentation Weygandt highlighted the grant-related work she completed while at Princeton collecting and chronicling images in Soviet children’s books from the early 20th century ([click here to explore the images](#)).

She now uses this groundwork in assignments for her courses, including both translation and culture courses. These assignments close the loop on the educational process for students: they engage in work in the classroom, then the work takes on new forms online, where others can follow up on and annotate their work.



On March 6, Kate Cammack (Psychology and Neuroscience) provided our second Teach & Tell of the spring semester on “Making Connections Outside the Classroom.” Her presentation included course design and assessment details of how she has implemented a civic engagement component into her “Drugs and Behavior” Psychology course.

Drawing from both core competencies in the sciences and civic engagement pedagogy, Kate detailed the procedures for her course, which entailed collecting and analyzing data from schools in Grundy County. As Cammack reported, it can be hard to get out of the lab mindset and think about community outcomes.

But her students certainly did so by the end of the semester. In addition to completing an in-class grant proposal assignment, they also constructed informational deliverables for their community partners. The many faculty in the audience were impressed with both the course design and the “outcomes” students evidenced. It was hard to stop their discussion, even when Cammack had to depart for her next appointment.



# "SMALL TEACHING" DISCUSSION ROUNDTABLE

This past fall, Alison Miller led a CFT-sponsored Faculty Learning Community group focused on reading and discussing the book *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Teaching* by James Lang. Based in research on learning, the text presents small activities that can be used in a class to promote student understanding, while keeping preparation and grading to a minimum.

While Lang's book was a popular choice, it was challenging to find a time when all interested faculty could meet for the FLC. So on February 10, some members of this FLC offered a panel discussion of their experience so many members of the campus could join in.

Alison, Eric Keen, Jason Rosenberg, and Keri Watson shared their impressions of the suggested incremental modifications that Lang describes. The text has three sections: Knowledge, Understanding, and Inspiration, and the first section seemed to offer some of the most easily applicable strategies. Our discussion centered on these brief class activities as participants considered how to use them in their own

courses.

Eric created and shared a 2-page summary of his main take-aways from the book chapters, and we have included this [here](#). For more details, please contact duPont library to access *Small Teaching*.



## LEADERSHIP OF THE CENTER FOR TEACHING

For the next school year, the Center for Teaching will have some new leaders, but not so new faces. Or, perhaps it is more accurate to say that the Center for Teaching will have people in newly selected leadership roles.

**Emily Puckette** has been selected as the next Co-Director of the Center for Teaching. She was serving as Interim Co-Director for this year, but her service made her invaluable as a long-term leader of the CFT.

**Kate Cammack** was serving a 1-year term as an interim member of the Center for Teaching Advisory Board. But her contributions to our work were invaluable to the functioning of the CFT.

We are so pleased to have these two continue in their leadership posts!



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KATI CURTS



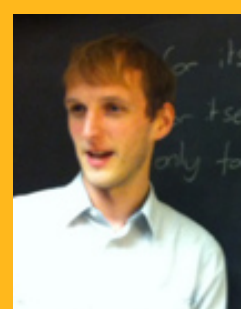
KATE  
CAMMACK



CHRIS  
VAN DE VEN



COURTNEY  
THOMPSON



MARK  
HOPWOOD



### JORDAN TROISI

Co-Director, CFT  
Associate Professor, Psychology  
jdtroisi@sewanee.edu



### EMILY PUCKETTE

Co-Director, CFT  
Professor, Mathematics  
epuckett@sewanee.edu

## OUR WEBSITE AND CALENDAR

