



# ACURIT 2023

The Augustana Conference on Undergraduate Research and Innovative Teaching

***TRADITIONS RE-IMAGINED:  
LEARNING, UNLEARNING, AND RELEARNING TEACHING***  
**ABSTRACTS**

May 4 & 5, 2023

Virtual (May 4<sup>th</sup> for everyone)

In-person/virtual at Augustana Campus of U of A, Camrose, AB (May 5<sup>th</sup>)

We will be in a room that is adapted to hybrid to maximize the ability to have interactive experience for participants!

## Thursday, May 4 – VIRTUAL

**Opening Keynote** Jointly with the University of Alberta's 2023 Festival of Teaching and Learning

*AI and Education Keynote Conversation\**

This 75-minute session will involve a 20-minute keynote address from Dr. Aimée Morrison (University of Waterloo), followed by a 30-minute panel discussion with AI and digital pedagogical scholars from across the University of Alberta, with time for open Q+A and discussion at the end (c. 25 minutes).

12:30 — 1:45

- Aimée Morrison (University of Waterloo)
- Panelists: Ali Shiri (Vice Dean, FGSR & Professor, School of Library and Information Studies), Carlos Cruz Noguez (Vice Chair & Associate Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering), Bishoi Aziz (GSA VP Academic and PhD Candidate in FoMD), and Mandy Penney (CTL Lead Educational Developer, Digital Pedagogies and Access)

\*Separate registration link required for this session, register [here](#)

1:45 — 2:00

**Break**

2:00- 2:15

Post-keynote Welcome to the ACURIT conference, Anne McIntosh, Chair of ACURIT Committee

**Kitchen Table Conversations (Online for Everyone)**

**(These will be split into two 30 minute slots where presenters will engage in conversation with participants in Zoom Break-out rooms)**

- ***To Read or Not to Read: Questions about Assigned Readings.* Kalyani Thurairajah, MacEwan University, Edmonton, Alberta**

The readings we assign to students are typically driven by one of three intentions: 1) the readings provide evidence for the claims we make in our lectures; 2) the readings expand on the content we discussed in class, providing more nuance and context; and 3) the readings provide supplemental information beyond what we cover in class.

Any and all of these reasons can be justified. But how (and whether) they are assessed will differ. If we are using readings for the first reason, then technically students might not have to complete the readings as they will be getting the information from the lectures, and might not care to read the original scholarship. If it is the second or third, then there must be an attached assessment or students will not likely complete the readings and will, therefore, not gain this additional knowledge.

2:15 — 3:15

Over the past year, I have been working with different reading assignments in my courses (first, third- and fourth-year classes) and have consistently come across feedback from students that they do not like being assessed on readings—irrespective of the ways in which I am assessing them. Interestingly, they might enjoy completing the reading itself, but it is the assessment they dislike. However, if we know that a lack of assessment leads to less motivation to complete the work, then how do we incorporate readings into our courses so that they are meaningful for learning and valuable for teaching? In this kitchen table session, I hope to discuss how faculty are incorporating readings (and assessments of readings) beyond exams in meaningful ways, and to (re)consider the role of readings beyond what we have traditionally done.

- ***Encouraging Independence: (Lack of?) Basic Skills in a Blended Classroom.* Paula Marentette, Jessica Andreas, Anjolaoluwa Babalola, AJ Fadayomi, Ava Lang, Teniola Subair, University of Alberta (Augustana), Camrose, Alberta**

In this kitchen table we invite empathetic discussion of the disconnect between student and faculty expectations in the classroom.

Augustana's Applied Statistics course is offered to social science majors in a blended format. Students are provided online resources to support concept learning and two hours of weekly lab sessions for practice and application. The weekly lab sessions are led by senior student mentors. This year we (students, mentors and instructor alike) experienced multiple challenges with expectations around basic

skills, for example following printed instructions and computing skills such as "download this file." Student mentors have the unique perspective of i) being a student themselves, ii) working with students in the classroom, and iii) observing their instructor's frustrations as the "best-laid plans" go awry.

**Friday, May 5 – In Person Roger Epp Room (F2-004) 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Forum or VIRTUAL**

**8:30-9:00**

**Registration for in person attendees (coffee/tea provided)**

**Choose your own presentation**

- ***Breaking With Old Habits: How the Pandemic Changed my In-person Classroom.* Constanza Pacher, MacEwan University, Edmonton, Alberta**

The question: "How can I engage my students?" has kept me awake at night throughout my teaching career, but it wasn't until the pandemic that I started being more intentional about my efforts to re-energize my classroom.

Undoubtedly, we all struggled with aspects of the pandemic, but I did find cause for optimism, as virtual learning offered me: the opportunity to break with old habits; the space to ask my students more candidly about what they need; the excuse to extend the life of my 4-hour class into an ongoing virtual classroom; and the (personal) permission to relax constraints in assignments and outcomes.

Using surveys to gauge students' needs; encouraging student interaction in active ways; creating a space for community building; adding external incentives in the form of guests and clients; and relaxing constraints while offering choice in assignment design are among the approaches that have proven successful.

In this session, I will shed light on how these practical approaches align with students' need for autonomy and connection, and how this leads to increased attendance, participation, performance, and overall engagement.

**9:00 – 10:00**

**10:00 — 10:15**

**Break (refreshments provided for in-person attendees)**

## Panel 1

- ***Learning-By-Doing: Teaching Students to Become Student Teachers.* Elizabeth McGinitie, James Kariuki, Brian Rempel, David King, University of Alberta (Augustana), Camrose, Alberta**

At the University of Alberta Augustana Campus we have historically relied on faculty and staff to instruct lab-based introductory courses and supervise undergraduate students working in a laboratory environment. In recent years, faculty and staff in the Chemical and Physical Sciences program have adopted a “learning-by-doing” approach, in which senior undergraduate students enrolled in a Senior Mentorship Experience course, are responsible for the supervision of junior students enrolled in our general chemistry labs. The objectives of the Senior Mentorship Experience include introducing students to good teaching, communication and professionalism strategies, allowing the students to practice these strategies directly in the teaching of junior students and, most importantly, encouraging students to reflect on their experiences. By introducing this course into the Chemical and Physical Sciences program, we are aiming to improve soft skill development in our senior students and ensure their success after graduation. In this presentation, we will discuss the course organization and student recruitment, senior student training, the successes and challenges encountered in the course, and the transferable skills acquired by the senior students.

10:15 – 11:45

This presentation aligns with the theme of ACURIT 2023 as it involves reimagining how we, in science, run our introductory lab courses and how we can better help our students develop the soft skills that are required for success beyond our institution. It also challenges instructors to imagine ways in which students can enhance their own learning and also enhance the learning experiences of others.

- ***Lessons From Nature: the Benefits of Experiential (re)-Learning in the Rainforest - From our Tiny Turtle Teachers to the Birds in the Tree Canopies.* Jinxuan Cui, Anne McIntosh, Amelia Murray, Ivy Schoepf, Lucille Wang, University of Alberta (Augustana), Camrose, Alberta**

Experiential learning is an integral component of undergraduate education; learning both in and outside of the classroom can help to motivate and facilitate student engagement. In our class, “Field Studies in Tropical Ecology and Conservation” students get hands-on experience in the tropical rainforests of Costa Rica. These first-hand experiences with wildlife and nature provide an ideal venue for high impact learning, especially when they take place in an inquiry-based context. Drawing from our experience in this team-taught field studies course, we will illustrate how field-based studies working with trees, birds, and sea turtles present remarkable opportunities for undergraduate students to acquire natural history knowledge and research skills while exploring the scope, key concepts and methods of conservation biology in a

reflective manner. We will also highlight strategies that helped in enhancing the learning outcomes for the students and in improving the quality of their research. As a result of this experiential learning, not only have students gained an appreciation for the biodiversity and structural complexity of the tropical rain forest biota of Costa Rica, their collective work is contributing substantial knowledge about the flora and fauna that can benefit conservation initiatives at our field research station, Piro Biological Station, in the OSA Peninsula of southwestern Costa Rica.

From the student perspective - we prepared for 11 weeks in the fall for our "Field Studies in Tropical Ecology and Conservation" in Costa Rica that we participated in in January 2023. This course allowed us to get involved in wildlife conservation and design our independent research under the guidance of our professors. We had three groups do independent studies, focusing on olive ridley turtles, bird community, and Ajo trees. During the data collection, we not only did our experiments but also participated in the data collection of the other two groups. It allowed us to master a variety of research methods and strengthen team cohesion. It was incredible and exciting to contribute our experimental data to OSA conservation, which has the chance to help them with more conservation projects in the future. Our half-month in Costa Rica was unforgettable. The life of OSA conservation was a valuable achievement for all of us, especially after the heat and humidity.

This presentation aligns with the conference theme as it explores learning to teach this course in a new but also old way after COVID and with a new instructor to the course.

- ***Finding Value in a 'Failed' Project.* Lynne Honey, Crystal Pavlis, MacEwan University, Edmonton, Alberta**

This is the story of a research project where so many things went wrong. From technical glitches and inconvenient policies, to human error and perhaps some overconfidence. What was supposed to be a smooth replication study turned into a pretty big headache. I experienced a range of emotions (none positive) as my small team of undergraduate research students encountered multiple barriers and difficulties. In particular, I mourned the loss of a project that students could be proud of. It wasn't until I read their reflections about their experiences that I started to see any value in the work that we had done. The words of my students reminded me of the value in doing, and the transferable skills that arise from the practice of research.

What lessons can be learned from a project that does not go as planned? From a pedagogical perspective, experiential learning does not require that students experience success or seamless processes. Experiential learning includes learning from frustration, mistakes, and disappointment. Those lessons have value, and there are other aspects of the work that remain useful despite the outcomes. Further, encouraging students to reflect upon their experience and describe the skills that they practiced can provide them with an opportunity to feel satisfaction even about events or processes that were not uniformly or obviously positive. Whether your motivation is curiosity, empathy, or schadenfreude, please join me as I describe a terrible project, and the wonderful learning outcomes that emerged from it.

11:45 — 12:45

Lunch (included in registration fee for in-person attendees)  
– Learning Commons (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Forum)

**Panel 2**

- ***Pivoting from Hybrid to Blended: Reflection on Teaching a Senior Business Course During and After Pandemic.* Tetyana Khramova, The King’s University, Edmonton, Alberta**

This presentation will outline the experience of teaching Statistics for Business Advanced course on the year the COVID19 pandemic hit, during and after the pandemic. The specifics related to delivering a course to senior students will be discussed. It was found by the author that in the winter of 2020, when all face-to-face courses were moved online in the middle of semester and course delivery has to be adjusted, course grades’ distribution became binomial compared to usual normal distribution. This finding led to many changes made in the course supporting materials to accommodate those students who haven’t adjusted well to online learning. During the pandemic the same course was delivered as a hybrid when students had a choice to be in the classroom or online and the flexibility to switch between these two. The encounters and rewards of this delivery type will be presented together with the changes in course grades’ distribution. On the top of that definitions and differences between “hybrid” and “blended” learning will be discussed as well as the reasons of why the blended one has been chosen for after pandemic time. The speaker will help the cross-disciplinary audience in addressing issues related to engaging the senior students in the learning process and the more general issues such as accommodation and accessibility in post-secondary education.

12:45 –2:15

- ***Relearning Learning in a Shared Classroom.* Jessica Andreas, Anjolaoluwa Babalola, AJ Fadayomi, Ava Lang, Teniola Subair, University of Alberta (Augustana), Camrose, Alberta**

In this talk, student mentors will reflect on the learning that arises from holding a liminal position in the classroom: not the instructor, not a student. Student mentors explore how this experience altered their understanding of the learning process, and their own experience as students in other classes.

Augustana's Applied Introductory Statistics course is a blended course led by an instructor and a group of student mentors. The student mentors have taken an introductory stats course themselves, take a 3-credit immersive preparatory course (in a 3 week format) and a 3-credit community service learning practicum course oriented around the mentoring of statistics students ( N ~ 160 students).

- ***Two-Stage Exams: An Exercise in Collaborative Learning.* Elizabeth McGinitie, James Kariuki, Brian Rempel, Magrieta Snyman, David King, University of Alberta (Augustana), Camrose, Alberta**

Two-stage exams have recently emerged as an attractive new tool for collaborative student learning and student assessment. As its name implies, a two-stage exam consists of two parts; an individual portion and a collaborative group portion. This allows for a traditional assessment of student knowledge, understanding and learning, while also providing students the opportunity to actively engage in and discuss course/exam material with their peers. This presentation will focus on our efforts to integrate two-stage exams into the Chemical and Physical Sciences program at the University of Alberta Augustana Campus. Topics to be discussed include methods of implementation, student-reported benefits and drawbacks of two-stage testing, instructor reception, strategies for improvement and future studies.

This presentation aligns with the theme of ACURIT 2023 as it involves reimagining the traditional teaching practice of individual student testing to assess student learning.

2:15-2:30

### **Break (refreshments provided for in-person attendees)**

#### **Kitchen Table Conversations**

- *Challenges of the Game Assignment for First-Year Students*. Tetyana Khramova, The King's University, Edmonton, Alberta

The presenter will lead an intense conversation on how to shape, manage, and assess the game assignment for sophomores. Experience of running the Practice Marketing Game in the form of an individual and a team assignment will be presented together with the pros and cons of both approaches. The open discussion will contribute to finding the best solution for engaging the first-year students in a fun but challenging learning activity as well as for understanding their roles as learners at the early stages.

2:30-3:30

- *Rethinking the "Sage on the Stage:" Reinventing our Pedagogy by Learning, Unlearning and Relearning In a Good Way (IAGW)*. Everett Igobwa, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta

When decentering power relationships in the classroom, we demystify especially the traditional perspective of the "sage on the stage" by intentionally nurturing the "guide on the side" paradigms. This is a calculated effort to embrace the much sort after pedagogy of engagement collaboratively with our learners in our classrooms. To this end, critical pedagogy and EDI may be alternatives that we may explore in order to negotiate power relations by disseminating knowledge in a good way (IAGW). While theoretically drawing from Pedagogy of the Oppressed, by Paulo Freire, this "kitchen table session" will glean pedagogical attributes from participants so as to deconstruct our teaching with learning, unlearning and relearning in mind as we together, IAGW, endeavour to democratize learning in our face-to-face or virtual classrooms.

3:30 — 3:45

### **Conference closing discussion**