

March Highlights

March 4

Registration Deadline for the Spring Institute

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March 9-13

CTLT's Spring Institute

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March 18

Teaching Excellence Series One:
"They Don't Make Students Like They Used To – Teaching & Learning With Millennials"

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March 19

Teaching Excellence Series Two:
"Teaching & Learning with Digital Natives"

March 2009 Issue

The Spring Institute is approaching fast, and online registration closes March 4th . . . [\(more\)](#)

Spotlight on Service: CTLT's Instructional Consultation Services can help improve your teaching . . . [\(more\)](#)

From the Director's Desk: Patrick O'Sullivan asks, "How good a teacher are you?". . . [\(more\)](#)

Ask the CTLT Staff: Mayuko Nakamura answers a question about using online resources when teaching a class . . . [\(more\)](#)

Check out the CTLT events calendar to find out what is happening in March . . . [\(more\)](#)

CTLT's Spring Institute Makes Spring Break Beneficial for Instructors

Don't miss your chance to participate in CTLT's Spring Institute, your Spring Break opportunity to polish Blackboard skills, sharpen teaching techniques, and earn stipends! **Online registration closes Wednesday, March 4 at noon.**

This year's Spring Institute will include thirteen workshops, each running from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., with lunch provided. Eligible faculty (tenured and tenure-line faculty, full time NTTs, and A/Ps with instructional duties) can earn \$100 stipends for attending up to three workshops. All workshops are held in the ITDC building, 301 S. Main St.

Did You Know?

CTLT's materials production can print full color images from 8.5" x 11" to poster sizes up to 4' x 6'.

For Information/Registration:
www.teachtech.ilstu.edu

Workshop Schedule

Room/Time	Mon 3/9	Tues 3/10	Wed 3/11	Thurs 3/12	Fri 3/13
Room 108 9am-3pm	Blackboard: Intro & Gradebook	Blackboard: Content & Organization	Blackboard: Assignments, Group Manager, Grading Forms	Blackboard: Communication Tools	Blackboard: Assessments
Room 103B 9am-3pm	Putting Course Content Online	Got Papers? How to Grade Student Writing and Still Have a Life	Synchronous Communication Tools	Effective Teaching with "Clickers"	Time Saving Strategies in Online Teaching
Instructional Resource Commons 9am-3pm	Avoiding "The Big Sleep" Effective Strategies for Teaching Class Sessions	Engaging Students in a Large Classroom	"Read 'em and Weep"? Making Sense of Student Evaluation of Teaching		

Monday, March 9

Blackboard: Intro & Gradebook

Whether you've used Blackboard or WebCT or you are new to course management systems, we strongly encourage you to register for this workshop before taking any others in the series. One faculty member said the workshop is a "very nice overview of Blackboard [and has] useful information." An associate professor who took the workshop last year suggested that participants come prepared by "bringing course materials with you so you can apply workshop activities to your instruction."

Putting Course Content Online

Creating well-designed, effective content for the Web can be difficult. This workshop will explore the best practices for media and multimedia use and provide instruction on how to create effective Web-based content.



"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."

-Albert Einstein

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Avoiding “The Big Sleep”: Effective Strategies for Teaching Extended Class Sessions

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“This workshop might be of special interest to faculty teaching summer session classes. The meeting times for those classes tend to be longer,” Claire Lamonica, workshop facilitator, explained. “Teaching longer class sessions can be a real challenge. Lecturing for three hours probably isn’t going to work too well, especially when you’re working with millennials, but fortunately there are a lot of options out there,” Lamonica said. “We’re pretty excited about helping interested faculty explore those options.”

Tuesday, March 10

Blackboard: Content & Organization

Blackboard allows you to organize your materials and activities in many different ways. We’ll show you how to set up learning modules, create folders, and create content links. We’ll discuss different options and help you choose the best way to present content. “Our Blackboard workshops allow the opportunity to develop expertise in particular tools,” workshop facilitator Charles Bristow said.

Got Papers? How to Grade Student Writing and Still Have a Life

“Responding to student writing can be one of the most important things we do as faculty members, but it can also be one of the most frustrating parts of the job,” workshop facilitator Claire Lamonica stated. “The trick is to figure out how to get the best return on the time you’re investing in the process. That’s what this workshop is about: using time wisely and responding to student writing in ways that actually help students grow as writers.” The workshop offers “many activity/learning strategies that make the day informative and productive,” a former workshop participant said. Got papers? Bring them!

Engaging Students in a Large Classroom

Large classes versus small: does it make a difference? Join us to explore pedagogical techniques and methods used by your peers and identified by the research as a means to successfully shrink the large classroom. “Having taught in numerous small and large classrooms over the years, I’m well aware of the differences and challenges of connecting with students in and managing large classes,” workshop facilitator Cyndy Ruszkowski said. “While I have many opinions about what works well from my experiences and reading, I still continue to learn from others every time I work with faculty on this topic.”

Wednesday, March 11

Blackboard: Assignments, Group Manager, Grading Forms

Blackboard’s Assignment Tool allows you to create and distribute course assignments to your students, including files such as photographs, spreadsheets, and articles. “It’s always a pleasure to see faculty get excited about potential uses as they become familiar with the various components of the [Blackboard] system,” Bristow said.



(Continued on next page)

Students can upload completed assignments, and grades are automatically posted to the Gradebook. We will also discuss the Group Manager tool and the Grading Form.

Synchronous Communication Tools

Having problems communicating with students? Synchronous communication tools like Skype may be a great way to add real time communication to your courses. Come learn how these tools can enhance your classroom experience.

Did You Know?

CTLT offers reading, writing, and portfolio circles for all ISU faculty, staff, and graduate students.

“Read ’em and Weep”? Making Sense of Student Evaluations of Teaching

Few topics generate more angst among college teachers than student evaluations. “This workshop should leave you better prepared and more optimistic about seeing your teaching evaluations, as well as more aware of ways to improve both your numbers and your teaching effectiveness,” workshop facilitator Patrick O’Sullivan reported.

Thursday, March 12

Blackboard: Communication Tools

Blackboard has many features that help enhance communication among students as well as between students and instructors. We will show you some of these tools, including announcements, discussion boards, e-mail, whiteboard, chat, and more. For online courses, these functions are essential for good learning experiences. One faculty member said the workshop is “informative, entertaining, and meaningful for my online course,” and another noted that the facilitators gave “great individual attention.”

Effective Teaching with “Clickers”

“How to implement clickers into the classroom was one of the best things I learned. The presenters were very enthusiastic and knowledgeable,” a faculty member said about this workshop. “This will help you if you are thinking about adding clickers to your classroom,” another previous attendee added. If you already have PowerPoint slides on a flash drive, bring them and you’ll leave with a new and/or improved clicker program.

Friday, March 13

Blackboard: Assessments

Blackboard contains fairly comprehensive quiz, self-test and survey capabilities that allow you to assess student progress or get feedback from students. Come learn how to create and manage the Question Database, quizzes, self-tests, and surveys. A past participant said the facilitators are “willing to customize for individual needs [and give] time to practice.”

Time Saving Strategies in Online Teaching

Are you spending too much time facilitating your online course? Join us in exploring strategies and tools you can use to spend less time on communication activities without diminishing the quality of your student interactions.

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Instructional Strategy Consultations

CTLT's Instructional Strategy Consultations provide one-on-one support for faculty members who need assistance in a variety of topics related to teaching and learning. CTLT consultants can answer questions about getting students to come to an early class, what to put in a course syllabus, adding online components to courses, and more.

"One of my favorite responsibilities in CTLT is the one-on-one consultations with faculty. We have staff available with expertise covering a wide variety of teaching-related topics, and if we don't have the latest information addressing a question, we'll find out," Cyndy Ruszkowski, CTLT coordinator, said. "I love my own continual learning motivated by our fantastic faculty seeking ongoing teaching effectiveness and excellence. We're happy to meet one-on-one for personal discussions and brainstorming at your convenience."

The first step of any Instructional Strategy Consultations is the **initial meeting**, during which the consultant will ask the instructor questions about the course, students, and teaching. This will help us develop a context for the process so we can best meet your needs. The initial meeting is followed by an **optional information gathering period** during which the consultant may collect additional information through classroom visits, material reviews, and/or relevant literature reviews. In the **feedback phase**, the CTLT consultant will meet with you and share applicable findings from the research. After our feedback, you will determine a **"plan of action"** for putting our findings to use in your courses.

Doug Schwalm, Economics, took advantage of the Instructional Strategy Consultation service. "I think feedback in most forms is helpful per se, but the personal interaction students can get with a CTLT representative [during the information gathering phase] is unique and offers possibly a new dimension to elicit reserved or [previously] unmentioned comments," he explained.

Dale Fitzgibbons, Management and Quantitative Methods, believed he benefitted from his consultation. "I would definitely recommend it," he said. "If you are at all interested in hearing what your students think about the course, content, and delivery this is an amazing opportunity. I would pay for it, if I had to."

Policies for Instructional Consultations are as follows:

Only instructors can request a consultation. CTLT is not in the business of evaluating teaching. Consultants provide information to be used to improve teaching & learning. No information we gather as a result of the consultation process will be shared with anyone else at the university or beyond without the instructor's express consent. Upon request, we will provide a letter documenting an instructor's efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in a specific course classroom, and instructors are welcome to use those letters in any way they deem appropriate. CTLT facilitators will work with interested faculty to determine appropriate timing for consultation.

For more information, visit teachtech.ilstu.edu/services/instConsult.php.

"One good teacher in a lifetime may sometimes change a delinquent into a solid citizen."

-Philip Wylie

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From the Director's Desk: Evaluating Your Teaching Methods



**Patrick
O'Sullivan,
CTLT Director**
*Click photo
for podcast*

I have a simple question: "How good a teacher are you?"

I suspect that you have a ready answer, perhaps one reflecting a degree of confidence tempered with a dash of humility. Something like, "I think I'm a pretty good teacher ... perhaps not great, but fairly solid." That certainly would be consistent with ISU's self-image as a university proud of the quality of instruction.

OK, then, here's another simple question: "How do you know?"

For this question, answers may not come as readily as they did for the first. Perhaps first a wary pause before a response such as, "Well ... I've been teaching for years, I know my stuff, my teaching evals are pretty good, and, umm, well"

Earlier in my teaching career, that would have been my response. If it is also a reasonably fair representation of how you might respond, well, you're not alone.

But notice what is lacking: specific evidence of exemplary teaching practices that foster enduring learning. Student evaluations have value, but even when well-designed and properly executed, they capture only one perspective on a limited set of questions and only after a course has ended. On the other hand, self-evaluations can be unreliable and subject to hidden biases from our self-interests.

I am of the opinion that not enough of us have embraced the importance of regularly and rigorously assessing what we do well and what we need to improve. Our university is full of good teachers who have knowledge, enthusiasm, and the best of intentions. But not enough of us sincerely and systematically seek fresh evidence about whether our teaching is as effective as we hope and intend. Not enough of us collect clear, comprehensive, and informed assessments of our teaching effectiveness that can guide efforts to make specific improvements.

My 20-plus years in higher education help me to understand some of the reasons why this is the case. Faculty culture in higher education tends to view classrooms as an instructor's private domain closed to outsiders. Rare is the instructor who invites colleagues or peers in to observe or to interview students for formative (developmental) feedback. Many of us simply may not have given it much thought because we haven't heard about anyone else doing it. And if we do hear about it, we might believe that such exercises are only for struggling teachers and so avoid initiating them for fear of signaling weakness to colleagues. Even if we get past that hurdle, we might hesitate because we realize that we may find out that we are not as effective as we thought we were (ouch!).

However, the best teachers have always relentlessly and systematically sought to understand their strengths and

Did You Know?

CTLT provides resources and suggestions for effectively teaching students with disabilities.

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weaknesses from many sources and multiple perspectives. Building on their strengths and tackling their weaknesses is exactly how they progressed from being good teachers to being excellent teachers. These practices are a mark of strength, confidence, and an ambition to grow and excel, not a sign of failure.

If we are to maintain ISU's reputation as a university that offers excellent teaching, we all need to be doing what the best teachers do. That's why one of my big pushes has been to expand CTLT's capacity to provide instructors with several different ways to help us know specifically and concretely what is working well and what needs attention. That's also why I am encouraging you to take advantage of what we call our "Instructional Consultation Services."

They are all confidential (no, your chair or DFSC will not see them unless you choose to share), they are customized to focus on your questions and priorities, they are formative (constructive feedback designed to help you improve) rather than evaluative, and they are informed by the scholarly literature that guides the process and is the basis for any suggestions you might receive.

Also, they are easier, less intimidating, and more rewarding than you might think. The most popular has been the Mid-Term Chats, which provide feedback from your students during the semester so you have a chance to adjust where it makes sense. Wouldn't it be nice to know before the end of the semester if you have some students disgruntled about some small issue that you could easily fix? Requests for "Chats" have been growing steadily, and feedback from instructors who have tried it has been quite positive. Many have been pleasantly surprised to hear positive feedback that they didn't expect, and many are relieved to learn about hidden problems that they can address rather easily.

Impromptu feedback from students has also been positive – in several instances after the chat was completed, students asked us to thank their instructor. Seems to me that showing students respect by giving them a voice about their learning can build goodwill, which may help explain why some research indicates that instructors who conduct mid-term chats earn better end-of-semester evaluations as well.

We have other options that provide you with perspectives on your teaching. You can get informed feedback from a CTLT staff member or a fellow educator ("Classroom Observations") or engage in an objective self-observation through a guided analysis of a video of your teaching ("Video Advantage").

I encourage you to just try one of these this semester. You may learn that you're doing better than you thought. You could also learn about some problems that you didn't know existed – and get suggestions for ways to fix them. So next time someone asks you "How good a teacher are you?" you can give a truthful and evidence-based response, "Pretty darn good – and getting better all the time!"

Patrick B. Sullivan

"A master can tell you what he expects of you. A teacher, though, awakens your own expectations."

-Patricia Neal

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www.teachtech.ilstu.edu



Tips for Utilizing Online Resources in Your Class



Question: I do a lot of group activities and projects in my class. Although I am very happy with what I do in the classroom, I would like to see what is available online. Can you recommend any tools I can use for collaboration?

Answer: According to studies on the characteristics of the millennials, the current generation is collaborative in nature and good at working with others in groups. You can observe this characteristic from how they get things done – from creating groups in Facebook to texting all of their friends to get an answer to a question. And of course, this generation is good at social networking tools, so why not take advantage of their strengths? There are a variety of social networking tools on the Internet. Some of these tools are well-suited for college teaching while others have little application in educational settings. Here are several tools that I would recommend for instructional purposes.

A wiki is a Web page that can be edited by multiple people. A prime example of a wiki is Wikipedia, where millions of people have been collaborating and compiling an online encyclopedia. A wiki can also be a private Web site that only your students can access. Once you set up a wiki, editing is almost as easy as using a word processing program. It is also easy to incorporate hyperlinks, video, and audio in your wiki. To use a wiki for a group activity, you could assign groups of students to different topics and have them compile encyclopedia, dictionary, book chapters, etc.

Delicious is a bookmarking tool that allows people to share their bookmarks. One of the biggest advantages of Delicious is that you can find links from other people who have interests similar to yours. To use Delicious for a group activity, you would assign students to different topics and have them find Web resources for the topic and then post those resources to Delicious, where their classmates can access them.

Google docs include word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation tools. They are similar to Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, but the biggest differences are that they stay online so you can access them from anywhere, and they can be shared by multiple people. Google docs make it easier for students to write a paper or create a presentation together by providing an online collaborative space.

Those are nice tools that many educators are currently interested in. However, please keep in mind that these are tools that help you and your students achieve learning objectives in your class. When you are planning an activity using these tools, think about the purpose of the activity and the assessment methods in relation to the learning objectives.

CTLT offers a workshop titled “Wiki & Online Collaboration Tools” in which we discuss the pedagogical implications and integration of these tools, providing step-by-step instructions. Please check the most current schedule at training.ilstu.edu. If you can’t make it to a workshop, please contact me (mnakamu@ilstu.edu, 8-2628). I am more than happy to walk you through these tools.

Did You Know?

CTLT offers many resources on Writing Across the Curriculum and provides suggestions on assignments, assessment rubrics, and more.

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www.teachtech.ilstu.edu



March at CTLT

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*"A teacher affects eternity;
he can never tell where his
influence stops."*

-Henry Adams

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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2 1:00pm-2:00pm CEC	3	4 9:00am-11:00am Dreamweaver:Level 1	5	6
9 9:00am-3:00pm Blackboard: Intro & Grade-book Putting Course Content Online Teaching Effectively in Compressed Schedule	10 9:00am-3:00pm Blackboard: Content & Organization Engaging Students in a Large Classroom How to Grade Student Writing and Still have a Life	11 9:00am-3:00pm Blackboard: Assignment, Group Manager, Grading Forms Reading Evaluations Synchronous Communication Tools	12 9:00am-3:00pm Blackboard: Communication Tools Effective Teaching with "Clickers"	13 9:00am-3:00pm Blackboard: Assignments Time Saving Strategies in Online Teaching
16 1:00pm-4:00pm Excel 2007: Level 1	17 9:00am-12:00pm Time Management Strategies for Online Teaching	18 9:00am-11:30am Word 2007: Level 1 12:00pm-1:30pm Teaching Excellence Series 2:00pm-3:00pm Early Career Faculty Circle 2:00pm-4:00pm Dreamweaver: Level 2	19 10:00am-11:30am PowerPoint: 2007 1:00pm-3:00pm Wiki & Online Collaboration Tools 2:00pm-3:00pm Early Career Faculty Circle 3:00pm-4:30pm Teaching Excellence Series 2	20 10:00am-12:00pm Intro to Podcasting
23 1:00pm-4:00pm Excel 2007: Level 2	24 1:00pm-4:00pm Access 2007: Level 1	25 9:00am-11:30am Word 2007: Level 2 10:00am-12:00pm Updated: Blended Course Workshop I	26 9:00am-12:00pm Blackboard CE6: Quiz, Survey & Self-Test	27 10:00am-12:00pm Creating Movies with I-Movie
30 3:00pm-4:30pm Intro to Blogs	31 9:00am-11:00am Blackboard CE6: Communication Tools 1:00pm-4:00pm Access 2007:Reports			