

Since my first class instructing French vocabulary to kindergarteners over 20 years ago, I have taught in more than 15 different roles as part of more than eight institutions. The most comprehensive remit came as the acting module leader for nearly 450 students across three locations, and the most intricate during a one-on-one undergraduate tutorial at the University of Oxford. The experience manifested the need to develop novel methods (such as creating Escape Rooms) with which to engage students and thereby create a collaborative learning environment. Across this portfolio, I have learned that energizing, effective teaching is a mixture of “Courage and Comedy” – blending the best of preparation and improvisation. Achieving this balance elicits the maximum from my students and myself.

Each academic year, I set myself and my students a topic to orient our work together and delineate the parameters of success. AY2021-22’s theme is “Courage”. Based on Jim Detert’s (2021) *Choosing Courage* foundations, the current year focuses on reducing the fear associated with risk and developing a sense of power and an appreciation for the opportunity. This pedagogical approach is especially valuable in Negotiations courses because the vast majority of students who have not had formal instruction in negotiations conflate risk with fear, and fail to recognize how core values inform preferences – both theirs and those of their negotiation partner. I highlight that value systems transcend negotiations and more broadly, form the foundation of effective communication and successful relationship-building.

This emphasis on values is the foundation of all of my courses. Learning from colleagues across Kingston University’s community of educators, I now endeavor to apply Gloria Ladson-Billings’ (1995)¹ Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to help students develop critical perspectives on social structures. In addition to shepherding intellectual expansion, moral growth, and increased problem-solving capacity, this strategy involves balancing appreciation for one’s culture of origin in concert with developing “fluency” in one or more other cultures – both in the service of identifying and addressing “wicked problems”.

Applying this approach, I began by auditing my reading lists to improve our students’ representation in the material that supports my teaching. Then, during each course re-preparation, I introduce a broader range of scholar faces (literally, via a photo display), backgrounds, and ideas than management and economics typically presents, especially compared with sibling disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. Additionally, I now use texts in pairs – such as *Getting to Yes* (Fisher & Ury, 1981) with *Never Split the Difference*

¹ Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465-491.

(Voss & Raz, 2016), and *Negotiation Genius* (Malhotra & Bazerman, 2007) with *Difficult Conversations* (Stone, Patton, & Heen, 1999) – and then balance these with new works from women and non-white thinkers primarily, such as *You Have More Influence than You Think* (Bohns, 2021) with *The Trouble with Passion* (Cech, 2021). I know I have been successful when my students react to the current canon as anathema.

Indeed, our instructional library is changing – sometimes produced with our students. For example, in my recently re-designed core course on Organizational Behavior, students research and define the discussion about Diversity & Inclusion. This exercise culminates in providing feedback to an in-development teaching case about cultivating diversity in the organizational leadership pipeline. As a certified #IamRemarkable² Facilitator, I have studied the evolution of D&I scholarship; as a result, I have introduced to the classroom updated terminology such as “LGBTQIA2+”, “historically-excluded groups”, and “underserved cultural communities”. Among some students contending with the transition to higher education, especially those from backgrounds of limited cross-cultural exposure, this has caused friction and temporary disengagement. Nonetheless, this co-creation approach mitigates the threat through increasing resonance and, ultimately, acceptance.

I am sympathetic to the upheaval that such an awakening can present because I am grappling with the degree to which The Teaching Perspectives Inventory (Pratt & Collins, 2000-2020)³ dimension of Social Reform should be featured in my pedagogical approach. Specifically, although “I want to make apparent what people take for granted about society” and thereby “awaken students to values and ideologies that are embedded” in the core catalogue, my attempts to introduce critical pedagogy have resulted in students questioning my and colleagues’ research. An effective response requires rationality and emotional detachment, whereas otherwise my dominant dimensions of Transmission and Nurturing compel me to be emotionally expressive. To me as a female junior faculty member, this tension presents a double-bind because of the indirect consequences on career appraisals following equity-biased^{4,5} student reviews.

² <https://iamremarkable.withgoogle.com/>

³ The Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI; <http://www.teachingperspectives.com/tpi/>)

⁴ Kreitzer, R.J., Sweet-Cushman, J. (2021). Evaluating Student Evaluations of Teaching: a Review of Measurement and Equity Bias in SETs and Recommendations for Ethical Reform. *Journal of Academic Ethics*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-021-09400-w>

⁵ Friederike Mengel, Jan Sauermann, Ulf Zöllitz (2019). Gender Bias in Teaching Evaluations, *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 17(2), pp. 535–566. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvx057>

As a scholar of social evaluations, I am attuned to the myriad dimensions on which individuals are judged; moreover, although effective teaching has progressed beyond the “sage on the stage,” much of business education remains performative. To this end, I have trained in dance, drama, voice coaching, and posture physiotherapy. Despite this, I struggle to “hold the floor” and use humor to connect with my audience. To address these, I will train with Science Riot⁶ to design and deliver a stand-up comedy show featuring my research, and simultaneously share this skills development tool with my peers via the Academy of Management annual conference. This initiative requires the same emotional expression and vulnerability that I ask from my students, thereby encapsulating my authentic leadership. Achieving this will conclude a development program in response to the Cappfinity Strengths Profile⁷ – a self-reflective inventory measuring energy, performance, and practice introduced into the Organizational Behavior module to rehearse strengths-based interviewing. This tool delivered the highest student engagement, thereby substantiating to the senior leadership our efforts to embed into the curriculum the Careers & Employability Service “business readiness” training, via my courses.

Joining the faculty at Kingston Business School has provided a step-change in my development as a teacher. The primary challenge is the significantly higher proportion of students dealing with multiple, complex physical disabilities (such as cerebral palsy and cystic fibrosis); specific learning differences (including dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, and deafness); mental health challenges (many co-morbid, including PTSD overlapped by anxiety with panic attacks); and security threats (e.g., homelessness, economic insecurity, “digital poverty”). Among my classroom learners and personal tutees, it is common for a student to present more than one issue from each category and a total of more than four conditions, together requiring tailored support. These accommodations take many forms – varying from low friction adaptations (i.e., preparing lecture materials in accessible formats and providing them in advance of each session) to alternatives that address primary triggers (i.e., managing social phobia with a student on a module that includes group work as a summative assessment). Adapting my teaching to serve this student population requires replacing almost every previous example, exercise, and evaluation with more inclusive alternatives in order to realize those students’ full potential.

⁶ <https://www.scienceriort.org/>

⁷ <https://www.cappfinity.com/strengths-profile/>

That necessary update provided one of the most validating experiences of my teaching career. My primary research methodology is experimentation; in my teaching, this shows as play, and the success of these games depends on a rich rapport. In one instance, as part of the unit about Groups, Teams, and Decision-Making, I trialed the Darden School of Business (2019) “FlyZone” exercise, wherein groups of students build intricate paper planes without complete information. My student with Asperger’s Syndrome experiences group work situations as extremely uncomfortable and often threatening; I pre-advised him of the intended activity, and provided a personalized alternative that would circumvent the distress otherwise triggered. To my delight, he called up his courage in order to join the group and led his peers to success.

This experience has deepened my ambition to create instructional materials subsequently used by my peers. Creating teaching cases and classroom exercises is the pinnacle of applied scholarship. I aim to be asked to deliver pro-seminars and courses on teaching in a business school as much as I would be invited to present my research. This goal also drives the next phase of my growth as an educator, which will involve mentoring others’ teaching and supporting their professional development. Currently, I combine these through guiding doctoral students in their first positions as graduate teaching assistants; calibrating and upholding disciplinary standards as an External Examiner; and cultivating my private practice in executive coaching. In the short term, I aim to build my evidence portfolio towards certifying as both a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (now, AdvanceHE) and an Academic Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. In the medium-term, I will contribute to growing our executive education offering and support our Director of Teaching & Learning to nurture energizing, impactful teaching among our colleagues. Over the long-term, I would be proud to be recognized by my peers as a Distinguished Educator and even a Trailblazer⁸! Across all of these phases, I will endeavor to remain an impactful educator whose students always would nominate her for this European Award for Excellence, constructing a profile of “Courage and Comedy”.

⁸ See exemplars among <https://omt.aom.org/omt/awards/deaward> & <https://omt.aom.org/omt/awards/trailblazer-award>