Engagement in the Online Classroom

00:08–00:30

Drew Coletti: Hello everyone. The topic for this episode of T in Teaching is engagement in the online classroom. The host for today's episode from the Fox School of Business Department of Online and Digital Learning are instructional designers Sarah Looney and Brendan Goggin. Our hosts interviewed two faculty members they work with from Temple University, Steve Sclarow and Nick Hakun to get their take on today's topic.

00:30–00:44

Drew Coletti: Steve spent 20 years working in architecture and construction before transitioning to higher education He joined Temple University in 2017 teaching courses on information systems in organizations and digital design and innovation to both graduate and undergraduate students.

00:45–00:51

Steve Sclarow: I donâ€™t care if you're in your bed, your pajamas or on the beach having a cocktail. I could tell you anything you want, but unless you engage with me, you're not going to learn anything.

00:51–01:09

Drew Coletti: Nick is an associate at Wilsons and Sonsini, Goodrich, and Rosati, where he works as part of their litigation department focusing on white collar crimes. I can join Temple University in 2021 as an adjunct professor during the coronavirus pandemic, teaching courses on white collar crime investigations and corporate compliance to legal studies undergraduate students.

01:09–01:15

Nick Hakun: I am terrified about breakout rooms. I have to relinquish control!

01:15–01:18

Drew Coletti: Thank you for listening and please enjoy the episode.

01:22–01:33

Sarah Looney: Thank you guys for joining us today. I'm Sarah Looney. I'm an instructional designer with the online digital learning department. I work mostly with undergrad faculty and thank you for joining us for the podcast today.

01:34–01:53

Brendan Goggin: Yes and I am Brendan Goggin. I'm an instructional designer with the ODL department here at Fox. We're very excited to have you both. So welcome to our first official podcast. The title obviously being engagement in the online classroom. So I welcome you both of you.

01:53–02:07

Sarah Looney: Introductions real quick, we have Nick Hakun from the Legal Studies Department and Steve Sclarow from the MIS Department. I guess we'll just go right in. Good question. To start with, how long have you guys been teaching online?

02:08–02:32

Nick Hakun: So I can go first. I was a pandemic addition to the Fox faculty, so I've been teaching since the spring of 2021. So I have two and a half semesters under my belt. And this is my second time teaching the class online. So having done online, in-person, and now back to online, it's giving me some good perspective on how things, what works and what doesn't translate.

Steve Sclarow: Alright. And for me, I started teaching online at Temple in 2018 and the DIM program, my experience so online really dates back to the MBA program where I was a student. So I was on the other side of the table for that. And as I was making notes and preparing for today, I was thinking, huh, when did this really start for me? And I was on the West Coast in 2003, opening up an office where we communicated online with a camera and drawings. I was an architect. We'll get into that in just a bit. But that online engagement started way back in 2003.

Sarah Looney: Did you teach in 2003?

Steve Sclarow: It wasn't teaching. It was still communicating over a camera with an audience across the country. And so when I look back, I was making notes for today. I thought, Oh, I should bring that up and talk about it.

Sarah Looney: Yeah. Yeah, that's a long timeline. I'm going to pull it back a little bit. When you guys first started teaching using Canvas or using WordPress. What were some of the difficulties you had like? Did you jump right in? Were you integrated? Did you have support like when you first started teaching online? What was it like?

Nick Hakun: Want me to go first? So I have the unique experience of not only for teaching my first time at Temple being online, but this is my first time teaching at the undergraduate level. I've taught high school before this. That was entirely the pencil and paper focus, no online anything. So coming into the canvas world, thank goodness I was familiar with the platform I was also inheriting an existing course. So someone dropped me a shell and handed me PowerPoints a month beforehand as I. Go

Brendan Goggin: That's very common.

Nick Hakun: And, you know, and it's inevitable. And so especially for me, I was very grateful for that. As a first-time undergraduate instructor, that was a huge lift kind of. I was following the syllabus as well as the students were. Right. We were just kind of plodding through it together. The biggest change this year was now that I felt comfortable with it.

Nick Hakun: I got to revitalize everything and really lean into the capabilities and limitations of canvas, which we can get into later on. Sarah and I have had quite a series of conversations about discussion boards, but I really enjoyed the idea of starting with a baseline and then getting to tweak from there. And something that's intimidating to me with something that sounds exciting is actually designing a course from scratch and doing it with the idea of online teaching in mind, where you design every facet of the course around the medium through what you're teaching. So that's something that's intriguing to me, but it hasn't really gotten farther than that because it seems like a lot of work.

Sarah Looney: Sure. So designing the teaching around the classroom rather than the classroom around the teaching.

05:17−05:18
Nick Hakun: I think so.

05:18−05:18
Sarah Looney: Or the?

05:19−05:21
Nick Hakun: I think that's what that is. Yeah.

05:22−05:24
Sarah Looney: Well, working, working with what you have, right? Yeah.

05:25−05:52
Brendan Goggin: And we often get faculty expressing new faculty. They're going to inherit a template usually. And I think as you mentioned, it's it's a big benefit to come here and having that teed up for you and ready to go. But then as you get more comfortable in your skin and, and the back end of campus or whatever technology you're using and you get better at it, you can individualize the course to your liking. And I imagine your department was welcoming that it didn't just stick you to that paradigm where you had to stay within that course completely. You could go and make it your own, right?

05:52−06:17
Nick Hakun: Absolutely. Especially because it's an upper level elective course. There was there's really no there was no rulebook for it. And I was working a lot with the department chair to make sure that everything was good. We were really quality, controlling each other, going back and forth with it. And that was really productive to get another set of ears and eyes, someone who's a veteran in the department chair, who's taught the course before to say, you know, let's go this way with it.

06:17−06:41
Nick Hakun: Let's spend a few weeks doing this. And as you know, the school was undergoing changes and changes in paradigms and change and changes in kind of like departmental goals. Getting to adapt the course in that way to to kind of stay ahead of that curve is it's exciting and it keeps it fresh for me, too, which I can only imagine the longer you do this, the more important that is. So it's it's been fun. Yeah.

06:42−06:44
Sarah Looney: Well, fresh for you and fresh the students certainly like.

06:44−06:44
Nick Hakun: Right.

06:44−06:48
Sarah Looney: They're going to hear from whoever took it last semester.

06:48−06:49
Nick Hakun: Oh, yeah.

06:49−06:56
Sarah Looney: What do I need? Do you have any exam questions? Hopefully or not, but realistically. So I'm going to toss over to you, Steve.

06:56−06:56
Steve Sclarow: Sure.

06:56–07:12

Sarah Looney: So as a course coordinator, when you're working with your faculty, do you have a template for the course? Like, do you let them know, like, this is where you can kind of add your individual, like your individual take on it? Like, how do you kind of approach your faculty when they just start?

07:12–07:45

Steve Sclarow: Sure. So well, first I have to I want to respond to that and report back. Second, because as Nick was talking, I was taking some notes here and two things that that enabled my success. Our department is supports everything that I do and gives me the resources. But also Brendan, an instructional design team knowing I mean, we've been working together since 2018 really since I started. So we built a friendship really over this. And so having that support enables me to be successful. And without that, I mean, I really I really couldn't I have to, to talk about that for a second. And then as far as the question like.

07:46–07:47

Nick Hakun: Sarah is my friend too!

07:47–08:10

Steve Sclarow: Yes. We've been, but it's been it's been it's been six years. Right. So it's six years. I've thought it it helps. Oh, I'm sorry. So when you asked the question was about building this out, what I do as a course coordinator is different than what I do. As I would say, building out the course for the graduate course that I teach specifically both online.

08:11–08:38

Steve Sclarow: I create a framework and a guide step, literally, step by step. I build out from an Excel spreadsheet where I write to start that start semester and I figure out where every class is going to be taught. With holidays, we have where there are breaks and can figure out each major component. Now, fortunately, the baton was passed by Mark Doyle to me with a course, and then together we re-engineered things in every few years we re-envision the classroom.

08:38–08:55

Steve Sclarow: We're getting ready for our next sort of re-envisioning. So the pivot between doing this and again, you give me some regret as I'm making notes on top of my notes here, you know, going from Blackboard to Canvas is excellent. This was a I want to say it's a legacy class in that it was a full in-person class. Yes.

08:55–09:08

Steve Sclarow: There were some online components, but as the class changed and we and we brought in a few years back, we brought in the coding content. We really had to reconfigure the whole class. And that coincided, I think, almost simultaneously with the implementation of canvas.

09:08–09:11

Sarah Looney: I was going to say was that the catalyst to go online? Was it the material?

09:11–09:41

Steve Sclarow: We were always online to WordPress. I mean, when I first started and was teaching this class and others, we were always using WordPress before canvas and I'm fairly pretty certain the department was using the WordPress site before Blackboard or maybe in conjunction with it So what we use that as an opportunity was to build both simultaneously. So I build a step by step process and I have a manual for the entire team that describes every course, all the changes that we make between semesters and over the summer when we have more holistic changes.

09:41–10:01

Steve Sclarow: So I can refer the back to the team and then even from a set up perspective, I'll create a PowerPoint that is step by step how to create the content. And so I'll build a mock are telling us does a mock a

template WordPress site and a template canvas site that I export out to the team. So their baseline is the same.

10:01–10:23

Steve Sclarow: And then if you have a depending on whether you have a Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Tuesday, Thursday or whatever your format of the class is, you can make those small tweaks to dates and deliverables, but the content is the same and everybody has that manual. And then on top of that, I hope I host three. I call them Lessons Learned meetings across the semester so that after each major milestone, basically we each have three exams.

10:23–10:31

Steve Sclarow: After each exam I get real time feedback from the faculty and then where I can make updates. Otherwise we take notes so that when we do the updates at the end of the semester, we can incorporate them.

10:32–10:33

Brendan Goggin: That's, that's good stuff.

10:33–10:57

Sarah Looney: So that was a question that I was going to ask at the end, but I'm just going to bring it up right now because I think it's really important after each semester when you guys get your student feedback forms, how important is how to like the students feedback to you? Like, do you take that into consideration the next time you're teaching the course? Do you take that into consideration when you're designing, of course is going to be taught by seven faculty do you guys meet at the end of the semester? I know there's a lot of questions.

10:57–11:17

Steve Sclarow: Sure. I'll jump in on that and pass the baton to Nick. Two things. Yes, the short answer is yes to all of that, since feedback forms are very important looking to understand where we can make changes. Now, one of the challenges with the student’s feedback forms is they come after the fact and they're not in real time with the content.

11:17–11:21

Steve Sclarow: And I'm sure we can have a whole sidebar that could be a whole other podcast to talk about.

11:21–11:21

Sarah Looney: We're getting ideas!

11:21–11:39

Steve Sclarow: What we want, but we do and I love to talk about this, but what we do also is one of our engagements online and in the in the in-person classes. We have in-class activities, and so our framework is typically and our course is built on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday schedule that we then tweak depending on the other frameworks.

11:39–12:01

Steve Sclarow: But typically it's three 50 minute sessions discussion not lecture, discussion in class, activity in class activities to support that discussion at the end of each in-class activity. There's an opportunity for the students to give us feedback. So throughout the semester we're getting feedback, especially on the online course. In the in-person course, what I've started doing is mid-semester, giving them an anonymous form to fill out.

12:02–12:30

Steve Sclarow: I haven't quite figured out how or if I'm going to do that online yet because the perception is if you give anyone something online, even a survey we talk about, obviously there's data collected. Is it really

anonymous? I haven't really figured out how to try that and convince students, and I'm not certain that I necessarily want to. So we do that slightly differently in-person, but that in-class activity feedback we'll review it and make and wherever we can make little tweaks, we absolutely do. How do you?

12:30–12:55

Nick Hakun: So for I'll take it with the end of semester and then what I do in the semester. So yeah, I it's like Christmas for me when I get the student feedback forms. I really do love it. And it's funny here on our questions we have, do you ever have students acting as crickets? And I always explained to my students that think of how much engagement we do week to week where we're actually talking about how we're enjoying the course, things like that.

12:55–13:23

Nick Hakun: And it's not that often, right? So I can only know how I'm doing this job really at the end. And that's how I went for the first to go around through the course and to kind of improve that scenario. I've started doing weekly check ins with my students for course engagement. So I listen to this other podcast or we let them drop other podcasts? "No Stupid Questions" with Professor Duckworth over at (University) Penn.

13:24–13:47

Nick Hakun: The lady who wrote Grit and her take was after every class she makes, her students fill out like a two sentence participation form. That's how they get credit for attendance. And I've adopted that into my course. And so I teach Tuesday nights. We're done at 9:00, I tell you. Right? Take the next 45 seconds and tell me how you participated today and something you liked or something you didn't like.

13:47–14:14

Nick Hakun: And it's been outstanding and I've really been able to lean into that, and I usually review it a few days later when I'm prepping for the next week, and I've gotten some of my best ideas from there. More poll questions, or I like this or I didn't like that. And so where possible, right? You can make little tweaks, but just getting those check in and sometimes you only get an answer like that from one or two students, sometimes more students.

14:14–14:30

Nick Hakun: Some students are more willing to tell you things they don't like. Others are complimentary but, you know, hopefully you hear the the data through the the signal, through the noise. And I found that has been very helpful for me. And it's a way to track attendance. So two birds, one stone I was.

14:30–14:34

Sarah Looney: I was going to say; this is a greeted assignment like they have to do this?

14:34–14:36

Nick Hakun: Yeah. That's how they get participation.

14:36–14:48

Sarah Looney: Okay. Did you ever not have a graded and just see who submitted stuff? Like when did you decide to make a graded make it required? Um, because I know with some students, requiring stuff almost has the opposite effect.

14:48–15:13

Nick Hakun: Right. I think it's been done. I've had it graded the whole well, this is the first semester, so I guess only this semester I did last semester, but I think it's cumulatively one point for each week. All 15 weeks are worth 5% of your grade. So it's, it's minimal but there's a little bit of accountability in there. And, you know, if a student doesn't respond, they don't respond.

15:13–15:33

Nick Hakun: But I've never had someone habitually not respond so that's been one thing that's huge. And one thing I like to add before I pass it over to Steve is that I don't require students to talk during class to get participation. But if they don't talk, then the expectation is it's what would you have said? That's what they have to put in the participation.

Nick Hakun: So if they did speak, they tell me what they talked about and why it added. And if they didn't speak it well, if you had, where did you want to jump in and where would you have what would you have said?

Drew Coletti: And I like that because some people more comfortable with it in an environment where they're speaking and other people might be a little more shy and you don't want to discourage that exactly how they engage with you. So I like that answer. Yeah.

Steve Sclarow: I think it's a it's a really great program that you got. So just a couple of questions for you. Is it oh boy, is it do you do it in through canvas specifically?

Nick Hakun: Yes. So it is a text entry assignment. I think I was actually hoping for a way where I could just have it pop up, like maybe I'll just give the hyperlink like in the chat or the kind of class something just trying to really make it as easy, reduce the barrier to entry for sure. Click it and fill it out. So yeah, it's in canvas.

Steve Sclarow: And you do it each class?

Nick Hakun: Each class.

Sarah Looney: At the end of each class.

Nick Hakun: Right. It's due in midnight the day we have class.

Brendan Goggin: 45 seconds?

Nick Hakun: 45 seconds!

Sarah Looney: We are still learning about it but polleverywhere(.com) is integrate into Canvas. Now that may be something that you'd be able to do because you could just pop the question up at the end of class. It'll take the student's name data and you'll have all the information afterwards.

Nick Hakun: Okay. And it links into Canvas?

Sarah Looney: It is integrated with Canvas.

Nick Hakun: That's the one thing when you were talking about having WordPress, like having to migrate data from one LMS to something else, I'm thinking that's why I love Canvas. I can just be on Speedgrader, I'm sitting on my laptop doing work, you know, plow through it, and then as I grade, it goes in and there's no second step.

16:59–17:06
Brendan Goggin: But in keeping up with third party softwares that are integrated with campus is a full time job.

17:06–17:07
Nick Hakun: And that's why you guys are.

17:07–17:18
Brendan Goggin: Right here right now, and that's why we encourage faculty to to reach out to the designers because they might not have thought about something that has come across our purview. But you guys are great examples of people that do so.

17:19–17:40
Steve Sclarow: Along the same line. So I'm taking lots of notes, a lot of things you're saying I think incorporating that after discussions makes a lot of sense. Now, what we do with our in-class activities is I typically don't announce them until the day they're going to happen. And so it's our way of sort of taking participation. And so we tell the students upfront, you can miss two without any penalty.

17:40–18:03
Steve Sclarow: So that that eliminates most of the any type of excuse from I got in a car accident, too. I just overslept and anything anything in between that that could happen. You also get the emails trickling in saying, hey, I missed it. And so that helps with attendance and we don't release the the access/ Well, they I'm sure they get the access read at the beginning of class, but they need an exit code at the end.

18:03–18:36
Steve Sclarow: So you might want to look at it as an opportunity if you're instead of just emailing out. That does work a little bit in canvas. But I'm going to go back and think about well, maybe I can make that you can only miss two classes across the whole semester and do with discussions because it would be nice to get some of the feedback after discussions. One of the things I do at the beginning of class is we'll go over a roadmap for the semester and I open up to any questions, comments, concerns, and then on the back end I tell them, Hey, this is a a continuation of a discussion just this class doesn't just end here, it goes into office hours, it goes into our next class.

18:36–18:51
Steve Sclarow: Any other final thoughts? Now I open it up the the top high performing students who are the most engaged will say something. I don't I haven't quite figured out the magic to get all the students engaged. So I like your idea of responding to the discussion. I'm going to like incorporate that. So thank you for that idea.

18:51–19:17
Sarah Looney: That's good course. That's a perfect segue into the next topic that we want to talk about. So this podcast is like engaging, like, how do you facilitate engagement in the online classroom? How do you get your students to answer questions? How do you avoid the crickets? So to kind of start that, what do you like? What is engagement to you in that online class? Is it responses? Is it thoughtful discussion post after class is a questions to What is engagement? Do you guys want to start with Nick?

19:18–19:48
Nick Hakun: Okay, so engagement in my classroom I think about it primarily during the 2 hours that I have the students. So teaching one night a week for 2 hours, it's a marathon and especially for the students so I have

been really intentional in dividing the class into two different halves. And so the first half of each week is kind of more the traditional lecture focused slash discussion and teaching a legal class for upper level students.

19:48–20:18
Nick Hakun: It gets deep quickly and inevitably and that is where I look for engagement and it's really a factor of having good questions. But when you have good questions, it can take on a life of its own pretty quickly. And a lot of that is when I have to have a lot of enthusiasm. I have to kind of be you have to turn the on the on switch on to 11 and then you can really start getting animated and start posing some kind of not spicy questions, but, you know, you want to make it somewhat engaging.

20:18–20:41
Nick Hakun: And once you hit that tipping point, the conversation can kind of take on a life of its own. I have had times where it hasn't and it's really caused me to go back and reflect in like am I did my reading is prepare the students to have the conversation that I wanted them to have. What was I assuming that maybe was an unfair assumption for the students, but that comes up just kind of through learning the black letter law.

20:41–21:15
Nick Hakun: And I teach white collar crime, so usually it's pretty easy to get people fired up on that subject. The latter half of the course most weeks is spent with a case study. So we have casebook with ten to 15 page chapters going through a specific white collar crime true stories, very digestible, written for undergraduate students, and the method that I've been going with for engagement in that section is I have between 30 and 50 pre-written questions and we essentially just go Jeopardy!

21:15–21:44
Nick Hakun: Style for reading comprehension and some of them are more discussion points to build off of it. But the idea is that the questions range from as easy as what industry are we talking about in this case? Are we talking about cars, make up, whatever? Two deep questions like what are the elements of wire fraud? But I by having the questions written out and this is all from feedback from the students, I know that most of them like this is having the questions be so numerous and so low stakes.

21:45–22:04
Nick Hakun: I can get students that normally wouldn't participate to at least raise their hand and say, We're talking about the automotive industry. Five words and you've participated, but what now? I'm giving away the secrets on the podcast. What they don't know is what I found is once you break the ice and get a student, participate, once they're more likely to come back and participate again later on.

22:04–22:27
Nick Hakun: So once you get them to turn the mic on, once I've found that you can kind of get going that. So I try and have two different forms of engagement where first half, it's really my extroverted students who like to talk kind of dominate the discussion. But in the second half I sometimes will just say, No, you can't answer this question. Wait, I will wait until someone else raises their hand. And that has worked pretty well.

22:27–22:34
Sarah Looney: Yeah, I've tried this saying "the stage on the stage versus the guide on the side". So you're doing both in your class.

22:35–22:38
Nick Hakun: Sage on the stage guide on the side. Okay.

22:38–22:38
Steve Sclarow: We are getting all this good stuff!

22:39–22:39

Nick Hakun: I know.

Steve Sclarow: I've got a lot of notes.

Nick Hakun: I'm flattered.

Brendan Goggin: And that beckons that the whole flip with flipped classroom approach where traditionally some of us learned was pure lecture; sage on the stage

Sarah Looney: Death by PowerPoint!

Brendan Goggin: Right, so the got the idea is to have faculty in that students maybe have those things that we use the video vault for those videos to learn the many lectures about what they're going to be doing in class and then use the professor's time or faculty time to get to really push the class toward solving problems and having your expertize come through in a moderated time way. That sounds like the way you're doing it there. So I think that's it's a novel approach.

Nick Hakun: Yeah, absolutely. I think the idea of trying to facilitate a healthy but a conversation that changes minds, right? Or expands thinking like that's of course the that's the dream. If we can have that every week, it would be amazing. And I think that's a big it's something I'm still working on. So I'd love to hear your answer to all this. I forget I forget the question of.

Sarah Looney: What is engagement to you specifically?

Nick Hakun: There we go!

Steve Sclarow: Go. So all right, ready, guys? I want to tell you, I like that. So I got to take it out. Take it out like this is what I do with the students. Okay? So I do that with the students. I tell them day one, guess what? This is my energy level. I'm bringing my A-game every single class. My this is my expectation.

Steve Sclarow: So I set the tone right from the get go that, yes, I'm having some coffee right now. I'm like, I've only had it. Maybe a quarter of that cup. I don't need it. You don't? I don't need it. Brendan knows it. I know. So I'm telling them that I'm bringing my A-game and my expectation is that they bring their A-game also.

Steve Sclarow: And then I get into managing expectations. So I start off telling my background, my story. I practice 20 years in industry and not to play with the old saying but I started practicing architecture. I went for brick and mortar to digital. I go from building buildings to building students, and I share that with them. And then I'll let you all picture my family and I now know what and after my depressor is because I got a two and half year old son.

Steve Sclarow: So I try to humanize myself and I self-deprecating humor as much as possible with them. It does. That does work and you can be as as you play any any side of that. Managing that expectation from day

one is important. And now I teach again three different courses. So just focus on the undergrads and the 21 to one course.

24:56–25:19

Steve Sclarow: When we came online for the pandemic, it was the 50 minute, hour long, two hour long classes. Right now I'm only teaching the two hour version, so there are some differences there. That discussion in class activity and class activity has to be woven in and condense. That's, that's real challenging. The idea of incorporating technology into the discussion using breakout rooms, I do my best.

25:19–25:38

Steve Sclarow: Again, it's a little bit different in-person versus online, learning their names not just from reading them, but using their first name. Students love it. I actually I do my best to see what I see because I avoid the whole pronoun game. I just call them by their names. People love it. And I actually get a professor mind back when I was in Syracuse.

25:39–25:55

Steve Sclarow: Professor Laurence Thomas, I'll never forget it was it was it was a philosophy. One on one is the largest lecture on campus. Didn't matter where you sat, he stood up on the stage. He knew your name and he would call you and you had to pay attention. So I don't do the cold calling because that I found that does not work.

25:56–26:14

Steve Sclarow: But cameras on. Oh, I'll show view. So here's another thing I'll do. That's so, so, so so here's what I'll do with the cameras. I will. I'm I'm playful. I am not funny. I know it. I'll tell them that. My sister will tell you I get one joke a day. That's it. But not simply I'm not. I know I'm not, but I'm but I'm engaging in that.

26:14–26:32

Steve Sclarow: I'll tell them stories. And so I tell them I'll play around with them the first time with the camera issue because it is it is an issue early in the pandemic. We would have eight years with us and we would actually tell them, hey, we're going to boot you from class. Guess what? That shows up on the student feedback forms, problem, instant feedback forms as you read them at the end of the semester.

26:32–26:55

Steve Sclarow: And there I call them file stuffers because what happens is someone a year from now could pull it out and not know the context of the class and what happened. So to me, you could talk about that another time. So it so what we do is I do it with classes as I'm looking and I try to have my main screen up and as many of the pictures I can see and I'll scroll through if I start to see a bunch of cameras off, I don't call out a student, but I'll explain to them.

26:55–27:14

Steve Sclarow: I said, Hey, look, I did this in industry and it's like literally putting your head on your desk. And if you were in class you wouldn't put your head under the desk, would you, or come in with a bag over your head. So I also tell them there is no difference to me between teaching in-person and online. I'm going to tell you straight up, I am if you come in my class, I will teach you the same way.

27:14–27:30

Steve Sclarow: The only difference is I'm running around the room like a maniac as opposed to sitting on my chair being in the street. And so, yeah, so the constraint is I got arm rest and I could spin around a little bit. But so I really managing the expectations is really part of it. We use some good quotes as a Ben Franklin quote, which I brought in my notes.

27:30–27:49

Steve Sclarow: I'm not going to misquote it, but in essence is, you know, teaching versus engaging and that I could tell you anything you want, but unless you engage with me, you're not going to learn anything. And I'll come back to that quote pretty it pretty often. So that helps. We talk about technology, content and activity. I really use the breakout rooms to engage with them.

Steve Sclarow: And so depending on the size of the class, because I've done this for 120 students, I've done it for small as I guess ten. You know, there's I think also for online, there's a sweet spot I think 36 is a sweet spot. Anything more than that is it? My professional opinion is a disservice to the students. You just can't you can't engage with that many students online. You're going to you're going to have people.

Sarah Looney: Yeah, right. Depending on the content. I mean, that's fair. You know, just talking from an instructor perspective, like we do have courses that are two to 50 students online it may not be the best, but like you said with campus WordPress, like we have what we have and we have to work, we.

Steve Sclarow: Have to work with it.

Sarah Looney: And I think one of the things that we've learned from a lot of articles which we'll share afterwards is putting the students at the center of the learning. And you talk about a Ben Franklin quote, I can't even quote who it was, but one of my professors at the beginning this semester, it was like, you know, there's the base level where you're reading, you're learning, you're listening, and then there's, you know, teaching to someone else. Like if you can teach the material to someone else, you've mastered it. So, you know, part of our job is to make sure that they get the content. But part of our job is also giving them the skills to master that content, whether it's doing a presentation, putting a paper. There's there's so many outlets that we have. But I think our job as designers and professors is to not only get the content across them, but to create a space that they're absorbing the content

Steve Sclarow: Absolutely!

Sarah Looney: And I mean, we've talked about this in some ways with giving them options of assignments if you want to present present if you're better off writing. Right. But, you know, when we're in a classroom or in those moments, like you said, I think creating expectations beforehand, this is how I'm going to grade. You're going to have time to structure.

Brendan Goggin: Expectations out of the gate. Yeah. With that is important. We talk about crickets in the classroom, but there's nothing worse than blind crickets where you can't see them at all, you know?

Steve Sclarow: So yeah. And dealing with that as a child. So I'll try that. I'll try any tactic to get them the first time. But I found over time as I just let it go after I have to let it go. And now that goes goes against my professional judgment. And I had to I had to it took me a while to learn that those students, they're going to have to ultimately got to figure it out on their own and it's going to come back to their responsibility.

Steve Sclarow: I pulled out the quotes I did what I did, what I did. I did want to share it. It's important. The other thing with with this idea of engagement in the breakout rooms, what I'll do, especially when I have we

have ideas, information technology assistants, they're slightly different than Tia's. We have our department helps support us a little bit with that.

30:16–30:35

Steve Sclarow: And so especially when we get into the coding content, they attend our classes. And so for breakout rooms, especially in the larger classes, it's phenomenal because what I'll do is I'll say, okay, I say, Alex, you're going to take rooms one, three, six, seven. Yeah, you're going to take rooms seven or 13. And I'm going to say, I'm going to take 14 through 18.

30:35–30:57

Steve Sclarow: And then as we get through each room, we cycle cycling through. So there's very little time in breakout rooms where students aren't engaged. And I do that with the graduate program as well. I'll hop in and out of the rooms as much as possible. One, it personalizes the experience for the student. And so they know, Hey, I better get my camera on, and that's where I can be even more playful with them about having the camera on.

30:57–31:25

Steve Sclarow: I'll jump in there and like, Yeah, see, no one has a camera on it. What's going on here? Come on, guys. It's just us now. Just does room and then are the the last cycle out on that? I don't talking about here is what, what I also do and I think I heard it in the video that the one that you would recommend it here I tell everybody have your camera on and if you're uncomfortable with your background I make it a point every single glass depending on what my mood is I have a different background and so I'll talk about it and so some classes I've even gone into.

31:25–31:42

Steve Sclarow: All right. Let's have 5 minutes discussion whoever. We're not doing anything because I'm a child of the eighties and then let's talk about what you've got and that also just kind of like breaks the ice and makes it feel comfortable. And I said, I don't care if you're in your bed, in your pajamas or on the beach having a cocktail, just put a background up. Let's see your face or whatever you want.

31:42–31:58

Sarah Looney: To engage. Yeah, I think the human factor from day one and being consistent with that as well, I've heard from a lot of faculty that if successful or something flops, why maybe you had a bad day and the students are going to run with that, unfortunately. Yeah.

31:58–32:22

Brendan Goggin: And you wouldn't be surprised how many faculty just will continue to speak with blank screens, you know, and to me, as someone who likes to talk a lot, you know, knowing your audience is important and if your audience is blacking out, that would tell me I need to switch something up or after required somehow. And yet if you're constantly pressing questions on that answer, that's that's a big difference. But sure, your time is valuable.

32:22–32:38

Steve Sclarow: So to add on and I'll pass the time. So on that, one of the things that I tell the students, both in-person and online, is when I was a student and the video when I was a student the math was different in that I used to take the average age of the room and equate that to minutes. That was attention span.

32:39–33:15

Steve Sclarow: Today, attention span is 30 seconds at best. At best. So even when I'm playing a video, I'm cognizant of that or whatever I'm doing. I'm not going to go past 2 minutes on that on that video. So that's the first thing I know. I have their attention for 30 seconds at best, whatever they're going to do on their own. And then that quote is Tell me and I forget teach me and I remember involve me and I learn whether it's really

attributed to Franklin I don't really know what the content is the concept though I'll reinforce a number of times across the semester and I'll I'll tell them, hey, the more you're involved and I'll tell them the data

33:15–33:23
Steve Sclarow: shows on the exams the students are more involved and I can point to it do much, much better. Hands down, I'd have to give them a percentage. It's just it's obvious.

33:23–33:24
Nick Hakun: Isn't.

33:24–33:24
Steve Sclarow: So good.

33:24–33:46
Nick Hakun: And so this inspired me with two or three things I can't remember now. So the first is I had an experience just last week I was teaching and for whatever reason I had a lot more black screens than normal. And I told them within like 5 minutes and the guys, my energy is just dropping right now because I can't see you guys.

33:46–34:01
Nick Hakun: And I was just kind of honest with them, like, you know, and I was it's funny, I was on my new I usually teach on the Mac, I was on a PC and I couldn't get the windows right. I'm like, guys, I just need to take a minute, but I need you guys to kind of like step it up a little bit because it's feeling flat.

34:01–34:19
Nick Hakun: And if it's feeling flat for me, I can only imagine how bad it is for you guys. And that worked. And I never had to pull that card before, but it did work on that topic. I have kind of again, Steve, you said like against the difficulty with the black screens is something where you have to make concessions.

34:19–34:46
Nick Hakun: And so the current equilibrium I have is first half of the class, while it's primarily me talking, you guys can go screens off. And if you want to talk screens on second half of class, everyone has to be on the whole time because that's when I expect everybody to be chiming in. And I've gotten feedback that they like that and it kind of feels like they're winning you know, it's kind of like a win win a little bit.

34:46–35:07
Nick Hakun: Exactly. So it's like we're splitting the baby and give me half on, half off, and it leads to the right kind of discussion in the second half of class, maybe at the expense of a little bit less engagement in the beginning. And then, oh, it was the third point. I am terrified about breakout rooms, why I have to relinquish control.

35:08–35:27
Nick Hakun: Right. My my assumption is thinking back to some my less than great days as an undergraduate, if I was just told go into this breakout room for 20 minutes, you know, it's a situation where if if parents aren't watching, if there's not a set of adult eyes, I have fear that I'm not going to necessarily get what I want.

35:27–35:27
Steve Sclarow: Sure.

35:27–35:48
Nick Hakun: And so it's a big thing for me as a younger professor relinquishing control and as I'm saying this, I'm probably sure the answer is, well, you have to set clear expectations, have clear deliverables, things like

that. I'm just nervous and then as I cycle through the rooms, I feel like I'm interrupting. So those are big fears that I have.

35:48–35:49
Nick Hakun: So I just love to get you something.

35:49–36:23
Brendan Goggin: So you're coming in basically. Sorry, Steve. Coming in basically like, hey, I'm here. This is I'm here for 45. You need who's going to give me the update on what's going on this breakout room? And then you feel like everyone's like, all right, who's going to speak here for all of us? You know, you know, so I get that that's that's salient. But going to your point about cameras on cameras or when these I think one of the webinars we gave out faculty member maybe it was or where the articles is giving some flexibility like okay if I'm going to be giving a lecture on something, maybe say I don't need your cameras on because it's just a lecture or whatever or I might want you for in this time.

36:23–36:38
Brendan Goggin: But if you're if work on assignment together, you don't have to have it on, you know, just don't insult me while I'm talking like something along those lines. But I do like the idea of having giving them an option. It's somewhere along where they can turn it off. I do think that's a good approach.

36:38–36:55
Steve Sclarow: And along those lines, right? There's no one magic approach. Right? And that's the saying that it's a little bit tougher in an online course and in-person, but every cohort has a culture. I wish there was a way we could quantify it's all qualitative. So how do you collect the data on that? Because I can tell you I teach right now.

36:55–37:10
Steve Sclarow: I'm teaching three courses over 11:00 at 1:00 and at 3:00 each personality of the class radically different. Yeah, they score differently on exams now. I teach the content exactly the same. This is the same online too. And I just, you know, there's, there's lots of different components there.

37:10–37:40
Brendan Goggin: So I'm just thinking about that now. We do have analytics campus some even with our videos, we've been in the past been able to watch the videos to see where students are watching, where they start where they trail off in the video vaults. It's good to know. It also be kind of interesting if Zoom ever got to a point where we could see like this artistically how many people are blacking out, what time do and when in the course of our lectures that happening because, you know, getting those analytics helps you design your course better. I would think so all that stuff is I think coming down the pike pretty quickly.

37:40–37:54
Sarah Looney: My mind kind of goes back to what you're saying earlier about we used to build buildings, now you're building students. One of the things I think the students want to know and that's going to make them engage is how why do I need this content? How am I going to use it? Is this for a grade? Is actually for real world application?

37:55–37:56
Steve Sclarow: Sure.

37:56–38:32
Sarah Looney: So like when you are in those two hour classes, are we just going over in this is for the exam? Are we going over like there's there's like you said, there's no one fit all it's going to depend on the content. Is it qualitative? Quantitative, it's that there is no one answer but I just have one last question for both of you guys, because we're we're reaching max capacity. I think the goal at some point is we might break it up and take

multiple different. So I can see how this conversation built to maybe have two or three options out of this. Certainly, I think it'd be interesting to come back and address some of the stuff later or come back to some of the questions like topics we came up with.

Sarah Looney: But final thoughts and wrapping up, what would you guys like if you had to give like some great, not some great sorry, some sage advice to someone teaching online for the first time and they are worried about that first Zoom class you know, how are their students going to gauge what if they don't answer? What would be some some general tips or something that helped you, whether it was like a specific class or story?

Nick Hakun: Sure.

Steve Sclarow: It's not. It's almost answering the question first about about going into breakout rooms. So just click on that. Yeah, so a couple of things of the take practice. Gabby is sitting across from a student perspective and we work together as peers as well. Building these ideas and class activities, building the work that the students have to do into that activity, telling them whether it's graduate, undergraduate, especially undergraduate, these are their colleagues.

Steve Sclarow: The best job they've ever gotten are from my alumni network. And so when they're in that breakout room, it's important to meet and connect with those other students because two, five, ten years down, the road is like, this might be your next best job opportunity. So that helps. And then having working through whatever that deliverable is so that there is something they have to build to, and then jumping in the room.

Steve Sclarow: Yes, it is. It is drive for some students. So I just do my best and you can tell them I can be obnoxious. I just to like I'm here because it is I've been on the other side of it and it's jarring when someone comes in the room. And so I just make myself known. Even if they're talking, I just, I go against my, my norms.

Steve Sclarow: I just interrupt them because it is awkward to just all of a sudden there's that face there. And even if they're in that, they're like, there's something I walk into. There's like a real heated discussion. So it just takes time and you just have to do it. And I think appreciate you for doing it. And then sometimes it's a working start, says, Hey, I'm just checking in.

Steve Sclarow: And at least if you have to gauge the temperature of each room and then the first time you go through it, it'll be awkward. And then next time it'll feel natural. Right now. Yeah. I'll pass the baton to you for final thoughts, then I'll ask.

Nick Hakun: Okay. So I think for me, the single biggest piece of advice I would give and it's funny looking at who's running or who's feature on this podcast today. I think what Steve said earlier about just having enthusiasm and energy that's been the single, that's been a theme throughout all the classes I've taught. And for me, it's really the only way that I could see surviving online teaching is if you are flat.

Nick Hakun: It's there's like, how would I say it? However energetic you are, divide that by, divide that in half. And that's probably how energetic the students are going to be. So I feel like especially in the online classroom where that depreciating factor is bigger, you need to be more energetic and more excitable and interested in

what you're talking about and interested in how you're teaching and when you do that and you're self-deprecating and all those things, you get buy in from the students.

41:30–41:49
Nick Hakun: And that allows you to make the kinds of Mayakoba is like what I had to do last week when I did have cameras on, I said, look, guys, I, I want to be at my game, but right now I need more from you guys and kind of building that social contract between you and the students that this is still new.

41:49–42:08
Nick Hakun: I think we can all say that it's still new to be doing a full class fully online. And I just tell the students up front, it's like, look, help me help you. And with my energy and enthusiasm and just sometimes blatant honesty, I think that is the the solution, right? Like the camera just exposes you for who you truly are.

42:08–42:16
Nick Hakun: And if you're trying to be someone else, it's you're not going to be able survive how many hours of screen time you're going to be on with them. So that would be my advice.

42:17–42:36
Steve Sclarow: Yeah, those are fantastic. I would agree wholeheartedly with all of them. All of us for me are manage expectations day one, first class. And then I've also learned to do it throughout the semester. Don't just make it the first class. Sometimes you may have to go back to it and they just do it every class. But again, each cohorts different One thing that I try to exude is my passion for the profession.

42:37–43:00
Steve Sclarow: I am passionate and so I try to that that come out in anything I do, which also ties into your point about enthusiasm. I think there's some synergy between the passion and enthusiasm they have to be aligned. Those thing I tell the students and is I'm doing my best, even though you're taking online class, I'm giving you an in-person experience and I want them to know that they're not missing anything by taking online.

43:00–43:15
Steve Sclarow: It's the same and it's just we're just using a different medium to do it. So I try to do that. And then from a faculty standpoint, preparation, practice, practice, practice, I brought you know, I pulled out my notes. I didn't know I wasn't going to bring today, but I prepare a little bit differently for online than I do in-person.

43:16–43:31
Steve Sclarow: I use the same content, but I go through, I tap it, I underline, I makes different kind of notes, and I even make a different spreadsheet and how, depending on the type of class, it's almost down to the ten to 15 minute mark of what content I need to cover because online you're on the clock more than you are in person, something.

43:31–43:42
Steve Sclarow: You're in a classroom in high school and can see the clock on the wall. But online, everyone's got clocks everywhere. They've got the mobile device, they've got the screen, everything. So timing, I think is much more critical and be cognizant of that is a little bit different online.

43:43–44:07
Sarah Looney: Yeah, I think you guys have highlighted there's there's so many ways you approach it online class. I mean, it poses problems, it poses, you know, there's opportunity, I think in it. And as we're, you know, continue teaching online, we're just going to keep learning more. But you guys have given us so many ideas for our future. You know, this is great. I definitely have like more questions. I want to go in, too. But I think that's the purpose of the podcast is we get to explore that and future episodes.