

Bonni Stachowiak [00:00:00]:

Today on episode 587 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Layered Learning: Designing Video with Intention and Authenticity with Dr. Flux. Production Credit: Produced by Innovate Learning, Maximizing Human Potential.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:00:24]:

Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. Hi, I'm Bonni Stachowiak and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students. Today on episode number 587 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Layered Learning: Designing Video with Intention and Authenticity with Dr. Flux. Dr. Flux is an instructor at the University of Colorado Boulder with a joint PhD in neuroscience and Clinical psychology. Flux is known for blending science, storytelling and social media aesthetics to create educational content students actually want to watch.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:01:25]:

In today's conversation, we explore his video Education as Content and dig into what happens when teaching meets TikTok and why the format matters just as much as the message. Dr. Flux, welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

Dr. Flux [00:01:42]:

Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:01:44]:

Before we get into our conversation, I want to situate listeners a little bit. Some people might remember Chris Ostro who came on and gave us the most non boring literature review and nuanced literature review about AI detection services. And I heard from more listeners about that and then I got to engage with Chris on LinkedIn etc and he and I had a little joke up there. I don't know if you witnessed this or not or if we were just talking about you behind your back, but I said to him, oh, thanks for sending me this link to this other talk you gave. I'm not able to sleep right now because I'm so captivated he was talking about

his practices. I mean it just, I. He basically just completely ignited my imagination in some really powerful ways and his.

Dr. Flux [00:02:34]:

Voice is like butter. Right? Like, I mean you could just listen to Chris Astro talk forever.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:02:39]:

So this is what he says next. He goes, if you really want to not sleep, let me introduce you to Dr. Flux. So that is a little bit for listeners how you and I are talking today. And so it began. And today we're going to be drawing lessons from your video and education as content. And I'd like you to start kind of fast forward and rewind at the same time. Tell me about the kinds of things that students have told you about experiencing your videos in classes that they take with you versus other videos they might be accustomed to seeing in their educational contexts.

Dr. Flux [00:03:21]:

They, they don't Always know what to do with it. I mean, I've just gotten these responses. I mean, overwhelmingly positive. I think I've gotten like one or two pieces of negative feedback from students who really want slides where they're like, couldn't you just give us slides and make it boring? And I'm just like, that.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:03:38]:

What?

Dr. Flux [00:03:39]:

No. Most students are just blown away. I think that I get feedback where they're just like, I've never seen this before. I feel like I can relate to the material better. The fact that you break this up into multiple videos and that they're short is so helpful. I love rewatching them. I've also started creating these little quiz questions in them, but they're not hard. They're just to keep their attention going.

Dr. Flux [00:04:00]:

And I threw that in there just because I thought it would be helpful. That comes up consistently. I think these students struggle so much with attention that bringing them back with a really simple question, it just, it helps. So, like, all of the different elements that I've been able to incorporate into this, I feel like, have been incredibly validated in different ways by students. And they're just. I think the other piece is the enthusiasm. Right. Like, I have a lot of students who are just

like, you are so passionate about this, and it comes through every single second that you're on screen.

Dr. Flux [00:04:30]:

And like, like, it makes me care about what I'm watching. And that, I mean, that just warms my heart. I love when I can spread the passion that I have for this topic to my students.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:04:39]:

I would have been perhaps a little worried, candidly, maybe more so, about either your self awareness or your truthfulness. Had you said 100% of the time, people are elated. And part of that is an area I've been so intrigued by across multiple contexts in my life, in my work, and that is human beings, our preferences versus what really works. And one particular name I'm just going to throw out. There is a guy named Robert Talbert. He did a little bit of. Of informal research with his students that were essentially asking them before a class or as a class was starting. How do you plan on using, I believe it was, video and other assets for a class? And then at the end, how did you actually use them? And I'm probably completely not remembering the details of his particular look at this.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:05:38]:

But what I. What I really remember from it is we as human beings. And of course, there's lots of other evidence toward this. We as human beings will kind of stick to our guns. We'll. We'll not really be able. And I probably include myself in this too. I can't really separate the preference from what works even when presented with evidence to the contrary.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:05:58]:

So when I find out, oh, actually I scored more, I was able to retain more from this video or from this class or from this whatever interaction I had. Even when presented with evidence to the contrary, we can really stick to our guns. And some of that I would theorize probably comes down to maybe our comfort levels and just kind of wanting to eat the food I normally eat, consume the way that I normally consume and that you maybe coming and interrupting that in a way that sometimes is welcoming but sometimes maybe disrupts a little bit. So I'm going to just ask you to reflect on that. Do you have a hypothesis around that and have you witnessed that as you consume your students feedback and reflect on it?

Dr. Flux [00:06:43]:

Yes. And I mean I think there is some truth to that. I also think some of this is genuine preferences and ways that are not helpful for students. Like this is where

I tend to get really like, I don't know what to do. Right. So there are elements of the videos that I've created that I would not learn well from. Right. Like some of the short form and maybe we'll get into this.

Dr. Flux [00:07:02]:

But like some of the shorter form videos, they're, they're edited so rapidly that watching them for me, I'm just like, I don't like this. I can't learn from this. But so many students seem to enjoy that and actually learn well from it that I keep doing it. But then when a student comes to me and they're just like, the pacing of this is so, so fast. I'm really struggling with this video. That's where I'm like, I am so sorry. I get it. I did this for the most students.

Dr. Flux [00:07:29]:

Like there's captions, can I give you a transcript? How can I help? Another piece of this is that most of that positive feedback is coming from my asynchronous teaching. When I took a similar strategy to in person teaching, I would say it was like half and half. So I did my first. I just, I'm brand new to this. I mean I've just been teaching a year and I started with asynchronous stu. The university asked me to come and teach in person and I do love, I mean I love public speaking. So that wasn't. But I hadn't ever taught an in person class, particularly like a lecture class before.

Dr. Flux [00:08:01]:

It was my first time and I mean I loved it. But there was so Much I had to figure out and learn. And I was kind of basing my class off of another instructor. And he gave me free reign to use all of his stuff. And he did it flipped. And by flipped, I mean the students had to watch the lectures for homework, and they would come into class and do activities. And I was like, this is a great way for me to start teaching in person. I have been doing this for asynchronous teaching.

Dr. Flux [00:08:25]:

So I will just approach this class like it's asynchronous, but then add value and have topic lectures in class, go over homework and stuff like that. And it was like split. I mean, I'd have to look at the numbers, but it felt like 50, 50, or maybe 60, 40. And that I had a lot of students who were just like, this is incredible. I'm so glad to have your lectures. They're so engaging. This is so helpful. And then I had a lot of students who were like, I hate this.

Dr. Flux [00:08:51]:

Why is this class set up like this? I am here to learn from you in person, and you're telling me I have to watch these videos? This isn't how I learn. And I mean, I had. This was the minority, but I had several students who, like, expressed feeling

cheated out of an actual university experience. And I mean, I don't necessarily agree with that. I was still giving lectures and communicating material in class, but I do understand that that format's not going to work for everyone. So I'm trying to figure out how to approach it when I teach again in the fall in person. And I don't have an answer yet. I'm still thinking about it.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:09:20]:

What I'm hearing from you a lot in what you've been sharing here. I'm thinking back to Priya Parker's book the Art of Gathering. And in it she writes, let purpose be your bouncer. And she's of course speaking about events and how we might design them with intentionality. But I'm thinking so much in what I've learned from you already, and I suspect it's just the beginning. Is that purpose be our bouncer as it relates to how we think about designing video content for our classes. So before I even ask you about video length, I'd just like to have you comment a little bit. You started to talk about, well, it was different for me when I was teaching asynchronously than synchronously.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:10:04]:

So you're thinking about with intentionality. How might videos look different? But what are some of. I think you named in this video? Maybe Three different types of videos. What are the kind of general categories of types of videos you're starting to see emerge in your own creativity and pedagogy?

Dr. Flux [00:10:23]:

Yeah, I mean, a lot of this was. I mean, this is really challenging. I'm a very wordy person. I write a lot, I talk a lot. And I think one of the biggest challenges was really, really making things shorter. And I talk about in this video, which is public on my YouTube channel now, I had it as private and yesterday I just made it public if people want to watch it. But that's kind of where I'm at. Right.

Dr. Flux [00:10:46]:

So I think this was like last year when I started approaching making my first class, which was abnormal psychology or clinical disorders. I kind of really wanted to make the lectures very YouTube-y. And then over the summer I was like, I want to keep going with this. I think that there's more room to innovate. Honestly. Chris Ostro was one of the motivators. We talked a lot about the difference between hi fi and lo fi content and how it communicates different messages. And so I started thinking like, okay, so I'm making these really highly produced lecture videos.

Dr. Flux [00:11:20]:

How can I think about this in a lo fi format? And what would that even look like? And so I then went to a friend of mine who's a content creator and I started kind of asking him if he would mentor me on making stuff. And so I would say, like last summer into the fall, I started really trying to make shorter form videos. And it was so hard because it has to be. You have to be to the point, you have to get to the point quickly. You have to make a point, it has to be engaging and it has to be fast. And you have to remove everything that does not connect with making that point. I'm still working on this. To be honest.

Dr. Flux [00:11:59]:

I wouldn't say that I've actually hit on the formula. But like, I would show a video to my friend and he would watch it and he's like, this is a minute and a half too long. And I'm like, it's three minutes long. He's like, exactly. Just like, you know, and it's thinking in terms of short form messaging is something that really got me thinking about this. And so I started looking at what are the lengths of videos that you find online, what has a lot of views, what captivates people's attention, how, why. And I don't think this is, this isn't like a scientific survey or anything, but, you know, I started thinking in things like, okay, yeah, there's like TikTok videos that are like 10 to 30 seconds long, and that can be incredibly captivating. Could I make a lesson that short? And then, to be fair, I haven't really done that yet.

Dr. Flux [00:12:45]:

That 30 seconds is still kind of really daunting for me to teach a lesson in. But then I started looking at one to three minute videos and I was like, I think I can make this work. And then you have some longer videos and then you have like really long videos. And so I just started thinking about the kinds of lessons I could teach in those formats. And that's like, I've really been trying to train my mind to start approaching ideas this way. Way where it's like, okay, what ideas really need time to be set up, like, where I need to bring you through a bunch of things before I can get you to the end. And when I come up with those ideas, it's like, all right, that's going to be the longer lecture video. But even then, I'm still trying to keep things under, under 15, 20 minutes.

Dr. Flux [00:13:28]:

Some of my lectures go a little longer than that, but that's the goal. And then I pull out ideas and I'm like, okay, this could be a shorter one. This could be a shorter one. So, like, in one of the short form videos in my human emotion class, I talk about the Sapir Whorf hypothesis, which is this idea that the language that you have shapes your emotional experience. And it's really amazingly illustrated in the movie Arrival. And I was like, I can tell this story really quickly. And so I, like,

worked out a script and I was like, all right, Sabre Wharf hypothesis. This is what it says.

Dr. Flux [00:13:57]:

Here's the movie Arrival. Here's how it applies. Here's how it's kind of true. Here's how it's not kind of true. The end, you know, and it's like you have to create these rapid arcs. You also have to pay attention to storytelling and, like, how you're ending things and beginning things. It's, it's. Yeah, it's.

Dr. Flux [00:14:12]:

It's been a very different way to think. And, I mean, I have a lot of content creators who have mentored me in some of this stuff that I'm really grateful for. And I'm still learning.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:14:21]:

One of the things I noticed, one of many, I think I watched the video that we're primarily talking about today, probably, and that's sorry for listeners. Education as content. I've watched it probably five to 10 times. And one of the many things that came out of it was that while you're definitely experimenting with video lengths, you did start to find some sweet spots for and what you're describing the way that I would encapsulate the shortest of the shorts. There is a journal article called A Time for Telling, which I first heard about from Derek Bruff but is widely cited among us higher education folk. It's a journal article by Daniel Schwartz and John Bransford. And essentially what they talk about is that we need to stop just saying that students won't pay attention in this day and age. We need to stop saying that young people today, they just can't get into the dense material like we can.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:15:25]:

And shame on them. And should they just even. Why do they even bother to show up? I'm of course getting a little bit dramatic here. But instead they say that in fact learners will have the patience and the diligence, the persistence to get through dense material. But it can be very helpful to have a primer. And I'm not sure if a primer is the word they use or my just clumsy. It has been a while since I've read the article. But A Time for telling is basically something that might happen that would get me curious enough to sustain my attention through the more dense material which yes, some of that could be boring but important.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:16:10]:

So it's not that we have to get rid of all dense material, but I'm thinking about some of these real short things that you're talking about. If I saw that and then you asked me to read something narrative for two or three or five pages, but

you sparked this curiosity for me that might enhance my reading or I watch your really, really short one and then you have one that's more of a 15 minute length that feels a little bit like a lecture ish video. Although I know you and I suspect I'm probably never going to see a straight lecture video. But you know that longer form you can experiment with some shorter ones that are more about getting my attention, more about getting my curiosity and less about delivering dense material. But you're building up my confidence in it's going to be worth it when Dr. Flux introduces me to like I'm, I'm. I'm going to stay with him because he's really gotten me like I, I could do this. I'm curious.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:17:12]:

He made me laugh a little. You know all of this stuff. So yeah, I don't know if, if you have thought about other times for telling and maybe how that's shown up in your, in your work before. That idea of the primer.

Dr. Flux [00:17:24]:

So there is something I didn't really talk about in that video, because it's hard to explain, but it goes into this. You know, I do start off like the video starts off with me coming up with a bunch of common misperceptions about students, and I don't believe most of them, but there is. The fact that students have shorter attention spans is still something I think we need to pay attention to. I don't think it's as bad as people say, but it is actually still a big piece about how I design instruction, because they do. I don't think that that means that they aren't. I don't know if attention span's even the right word. Right. Like, I think they have the desire to pay attention, but they have a really hard time sticking with attention.

Dr. Flux [00:18:05]:

And so, interestingly, there are several techniques that kind of capitalize on this, and one of them I think of in terms of layered instruction. This is really challenging to do, and it goes into the way that I design the scripts and the content. But I noticed this in the way that a lot of TikToks and Instagram Reels and shorts are made, and it's that they go fast, and in order to really get most of it, you have to watch it multiple times. And there's a couple different things that play into this. One is that most students or most young people who are watching things, their attention is going to get divided at some point, even if it's short. That's just kind of a consequence of growing up on the Internet. And so if you make a video that's interesting enough for them to rewatch it, they will keep rewatching it. And then each time they rewatch it, their attention might get disrupted at a different time, and then they'll pick up on other things.

Dr. Flux [00:19:03]:

And sometimes I will add, like, layers of information that you can't really understand until you get a piece from the end of a video. So that encourages you to rewatch it and. And then, like, understand it better. So I have tried, and this is really hard, but I. I like the amount of structure I put into some of these videos is kind of insane. But I will try to layer the learning so that things at the end will. Would enhance learning at the beginning on a second or third watch. And like, that is incredibly intentional because a lot of these students are used to rewatching things that they enjoy.

Dr. Flux [00:19:39]:

Or if you're on TikTok, things will just keep playing on loop until you go to the next video and they're used to that. So I have designed all of my video instruction to be layered in the way that it does this. And that's kind of a priming feature. But it's a priming feature that will show up as you watch something multiple times. And I also got this from student feedback on the number of times that they're watching my content. So, like, in Canvas, for my Human Emotion class, specifically, right now, they have to watch it once in Canvas because there's, like, a little quiz in there, and it just lets me know that they watched it. But then I give them a link to this unlisted YouTube playlist that has all of the videos there, and I tell them, I'm like, look, you have to watch this once in Canvas. I know Canvas is annoying, but if you want to rewatch or binge, here's the link, and you can go here.

Dr. Flux [00:20:26]:

The number of students who use that is. Is. Is astounding to me. And the number of students that will say that in their reflections or assignments where they're like, yeah, you know, I had to watch the video like, six times to understand this piece, but then I really got it, and I'm like, whoa, you're watching my videos six times? Okay, okay, good. Good to know.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:20:45]:

Oh, my gosh, this is so fascinating to hear you share this. I have another related question I now want to bring into the mix, and it has to do with video formatting. So you've talked a little bit about length. Tell. Unravel the mysteries for me between horizontal versus portrait. Do I have to decide in advance am I going horizontal or portrait, or can I change my mind later? How often does that happen behind the scenes where you're using it? One aspect ratio or another. And then what does each of those aspect ratios tell me about the kind of content I might be creating?

Dr. Flux [00:21:18]:

For me, it's all determined in advance. I think that you could probably take it either way, but I just have very different ways about, like, tone and presentation. And there's different reasons for me using these formats. I think the thing I like to preface what I'm going to say is that this isn't necessarily established fact or empirical truth, right? Like, I didn't go to the book on how to make content and have it, you know, handed down for me on high and be like, thou shalt use horizontal format and thou shalt use vertical format for these reasons. Like, no, this just came from me paying a lot of attention and, like, watching a lot of online content and just kind of getting a feel for what each format does and what I think about like when I see this content is it's like vertical, up and down format. It communicates a level of intimacy that I think is different than a horizontal format. And I think that this comes from the way that we use our devices, right? Like when you're working, when you're recording something on a phone, which most of the content online has been recorded on a phone, if you're like using the forward facing camera, you're probably holding the phone with your hand and you're looking at it up and down. And so the video that it's taking is going to be vertical.

Dr. Flux [00:22:39]:

And I think that this just has happened over so much time and so much content creation that we've started to kind of associate those forward facing camera moments in vertical format with a more intimate, personal quality to the kind of content that we're consuming. Whereas if you see something in a horizontal format, that means someone had to think about it, right? Like, even if you're using your phone, you had to like flip the camera, you have to hold the phone differently or you have a studio and you're using like an actual camera or something. Like, I think that for me at least when I look at this content online, it. It really communicates a different level of intention and a different kind of intimacy about what students are going to be watching. So even though everything I produce is incredibly planned, I try to bring that into it. And then I also try to shift things up. So for content for a class, that stuff's really heavily scripted, which I don't always like. But in terms of layered instruction and making sure they get everything and the density of the content that I'm shoving into such a small amount of time, I have yet to figure out how I can just like pontificate and then edit that into something that works.

Dr. Flux [00:23:51]:

So currently most of the videos for class like that are very much scripted. However, I have been trying to do more of these and I'll do like a weekly intro video to the material that week. And I'll also give students feedback, like broad feedback on assignments from the week prior. That is me just speaking off the cuff and then editing it down. And that is a vertical format and it is designed to

look like be very much like me just talking to my students in a way that doesn't feel very planned. And so for that I don't script it. I'll make some bullet points and I'll kind of follow those. But then I end up having to edit down seven minutes of me Just like rambling to two or three minutes, but it communicates a different level of connection and intimacy.

Dr. Flux [00:24:34]:

And for the horizontal format stuff, I really want them to feel like they're getting a lesson. I want it to feel familiar still. I want it to look like something that they might see their favorite creators on YouTube make. But it's, it's a different level of connection than what I'm trying to communicate with the, the vertical videos. And so I think about all of that in advance before I, I even start recording.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:24:55]:

All the way through this, I see so much intentionality and what I'm hearing from this, actually I've been hearing it through this whole conversation. You have such a distinct expression of predictability and unpredictability simultaneously. So. Yes, and, and I do want people, of course, to go watch this video at least 10 times. Right. And by this video I mean, actually I think you should watch both videos, but at least 10 times. But I mean the education as content one, because you do talk a little bit about the different lengths of videos and that becomes predictable in your class. I'm not going to sit down and watch a video and all of a sudden you've recorded 45 minutes.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:25:39]:

I'm going to know that if it's one of the more horizontal format, the one that's more, you know, content driven, perhaps more dense, that may not be the best word to describe it, but I could expect, I know this guy, I've watched his videos before. This one is going to be in the 12 to 15 minute range. But if it's one of the ones that is meant more as that kind of just getting your curiosity going, I might expect a two minute video there. And, and the, and, and it's kind of like you were saying earlier, we can have these rules for things and then we break them. So the rules in podcasting, they, they say, oh, you know, someone's average commute in the United States is. I don't even remember what it used to be, let alone what it is now. But, you know, however many minutes that is. But then there are some really famous podcasters who will go an hour or two or two and a half, and they've broken that quote unquote rule that most of the rest of us might benefit from following.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:26:37]:

So I want to ask you, if I'm just getting started, this is all new to me and I would put myself in this. I've been doing podcasting for a very long time, but it's an

audio format of a podcast and I still feel very new to video. What are a few things that you would say? You're just getting started. Here's some really important things for you to remember as you begin.

Dr. Flux [00:27:05]:

Authenticity. I think that that is probably the most important thing I talk about in that education is content, video. It's so. It's so funny. We're, you know, I've never. I'm very glad that we're going to share that like, that I'm sharing this video more widely. But thinking back to it even now, like, there's elements of that video. I'm like, oh, right, I wish I'd done that differently or something.

Dr. Flux [00:27:23]:

And I. But also I think that the authenticity of how it's produced, even when you break a couple rules or don't do things exactly how you want to, it shines through. And what I see with instructors who are making video content that are new to this, like, even though the editing, all these things matter the most, the biggest thing that matters is for your students to feel like you're a real person. And so this is one of the reasons why I got a teleprompter for the heavily scripted videos, right? I want there to be eye contact. I want it to look like I am talking to the camera. And without a teleprompter when I need to read something. And the reason for that is because of all of the things we've talked about. Dense instruction, short timeframes.

Dr. Flux [00:28:03]:

I need to get it set exactly, precisely now. But I want it to sound and look like it's me. And I also don't think that's always necessary. And I think that particularly for asynchronous instruction, when an instructor is not necessarily interacting with their students, making short videos to just update your students is so important. And that can just be your webcam and talking to the webcam and just talking to your students, as opposed to some like really dry recitation of information or the syllabus or instruction figuring out how to be authentic and to make it feel like you're trying to connect with someone through a screen, any way you can do that is going to be a win. All of the rest of this stuff is just adding on more and more statistical probabilities of getting people's attention, that.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:28:53]:

Authenticity is something that I'm going to have to play back on repeat for myself when this episode comes out. I mentioned having started to experiment with video more in my work. There is a teaching in higher ed YouTube channel, mostly just the audio feed, but I've started to do. I started to just play around with unboxing videos, I realize, yes, a very overdone thing, but guess what? People know what to expect. You say unboxing. And I get a lot of books from

publishers and they're always such treasures to me. And to me it feels like as someone who would like to experiment with the video content, I can do that. I'm not gonna have a ton of time to go and make it heavily produced, but I can have fun setting up a camera, getting my microphones on, and then it just, it's a fun thing.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:29:40]:

And it also helps celebrate the work of the people who have been so generous to me personally and invested their time in this community. It just feels really good. So I, I had, let's see, Tolu. Noah had told me about this deck of cards that are about artificial intelligence, but about what only humans can do. And I thought it was so lovely. And so the deck of cards, they came in and I wanted to do an unboxing video. I was super excited about it and I did it not just for listeners to know. I, I recorded myself, I think, I don't know, is it three or four minutes or something.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:30:13]:

And I just did it straight through. It wasn't scripted. I use a service called Descript. There are many like this today that will automatically create a transcript for you and then you can actually just edit the video. So it was like, let me just delete that sentence. That was a little bit wordy. I, I can so relate to Flux, by the way, in terms of sometimes loving the fact that I have a podcast editor who can save me from myself and my long winded stories. He's not always.

Dr. Flux [00:30:38]:

I need one of those.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:30:39]:

Yeah, Andrew's not always able to, to do that, but a lot of times he can do that. So I, I anyway, I long and story short. So I, I record this video of myself, but then also it's really easy to take screenshots and then to just place them on top. So this is a very, I think you said lo fi. I really like that idea. It was very lo fi with maybe five screenshots of the actual guy's website. Carter is his name. Sorry, Carter.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:31:05]:

I can't remember your last name right now, but Carter's website with the nice pictures of the cards, whatever. So I send it out into the world. It always feels vulnerable. And then my husband mentioned, he just asked if I realized, which of course I did not. My webcam's backwards. It's a new webcam. I had no idea that anytime I held up the Cards and the signs that were sitting behind me in my office. Everything's reversed, but it just doesn't matter, you know what I mean? Like, I'm not going to take.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:31:34]:

Like, that is the risk that we take when we allow these pieces of ourselves to be out there in the world. And it's worth it, even though it's not perfect. And sometimes because it's not perfect, it becomes.

Dr. Flux [00:31:47]:

Yeah. I actually try to put this stuff in many of my videos. If there's a mistake or something weird happens, like, I keep. I keep recording, right? And then I will try and find a way to, like, insert the little mistakes at certain points. So for this week's video, introducing the content to my classes, I went to City park in Denver. They have a jazz festival over the summer, and they were having, like, a jazz day. And I hadn't actually known that was happening. And so it ended up being really cool.

Dr. Flux [00:32:16]:

And I was. I filmed some of it and had it. And then I had to find a spot where I could just record my feedback without the music in the background. And sometimes you could still hear it. And so, like, I would have to stop and I'd be like, oh, man, the music's really loud. Sorry, guys, I don't know if that's coming through. And then, like, when I was editing the video, I pulled out that little clip, and then I'd zoom in fast and be like, ah. You know.

Dr. Flux [00:32:37]:

And it adds a little bit of humanity to what you're doing. I think that's actually something. I've gotten a lot of really great feedback, too, from students. I remember when I was teaching in person last semester for my first time, I got so overwhelmed. I had over 400 students. I was teaching four classes, and I was developing two of them as I went. And we hit a point midway through the semester where I was behind on a lot of things. I was really struggling.

Dr. Flux [00:33:01]:

I had to get another ta, and I had to communicate that to my students because I knew they were waiting on things for me. Grading was behind. I felt awful. So I made a video where I just put my phone in my office and I just talked for like, eight minutes and apologized and was just like, I'm so sorry. But then I cut it down to two minutes and made it a fun little video. And the feedback I got from students was like, I didn't know that professors didn't have everything together. You're demonstrating that you don't always know what you're doing and that you're asking us to be patient. And that made me feel like, wow, maybe it's okay when I don't have everything together.

Dr. Flux [00:33:42]:

And I'm like, yes, like, I don't always have everything together. I'm trying to show you that I'm a real person and I'm using my video editing techniques to highlight that. And it's very valuable, I think, in that lo fi kind of thing, letting people know that you're not this polished professional, always getting everything right instructor, but a person just like them. You just went to school for longer.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:34:08]:

I used to do these pen casts where I would be writing on a piece of hardware that came with a digital pen. And I could share my voice and they could see what I was drawing. And it was really clunky. There was a lot of friction. And so it was one of those things where there's no way I'm starting this thing again for how long it takes, especially because I'm not the greatest drawer. So I had all these sketches that would have to be planned out in advance and all the things. So I sneezed in the middle of one of them and I was just like, we're just going with this. And I had someone come up to me in our calf at.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:34:43]:

At our university. And she says, your name or your voice sounds familiar to me. Are you a professor? Yes. She says, I think my roommate is in your class. Do you teach this? It literally, apparently my sneeze is the cutest sneeze in the entire world. Or at least that one was such that it had to be shared. I mean, it's one of those where, like, sometimes what we do turns out to be something unexpected. And you're reminding me so much.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:35:09]:

I'm just going to read a brief little bit of David Wilcox's song Leave It Like It Is. And I'll put the link in the show notes so people can go listen. It's such a good song. Now, when the paint jar tipped off the table, you watched it as it started to fall. Glass popped, shattered and splattered and painted spray hit the wall. Bright blue glossy enamel across the kitchen floor. You said, good God, look at that pattern. I've never seen that before.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:35:39]:

And then the chorus repeats throughout the song. Leave it like it is. Never mind the turpentine. Leave it like it is, it's fine. And so I. You're as you were sharing that story of your time at the city park in Denver, I was. Had that song playing in the soundtrack of my mind. Leave It Like It Is, or in your case, perhaps even better remix it like, it is so that you.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:36:02]:

You take the broken and you turn it into the beautiful. But that does take some intentionality. It isn't just not caring.

Dr. Flux [00:36:11]:

Well, yeah. And I. I want to bring up something that you said earlier, and now I'm forgetting exactly how you said it, but it was like, I. I don't know, chaos and intention or predictability and unpredictability. There we go. You know, I think about that a lot in that in order for me to communicate the messages that I want to communicate and the time that I have, it takes a tremendous amount of work, planning and rehearsal and, like, all of this stuff. But then I want to include some of the pieces I didn't expect. And I've gotten this from several different creators.

Dr. Flux [00:36:40]:

The thing that comes to mind, I don't know how familiar you are with Bo Burnham's Inside the special on Netflix. So Bo Burnham is a YouTube creator, and he made this special for Netflix during the pandemic called Inside, where he basically just lived in his apartment and worked on this video nonstop for months. And the things that he created are so technically complex that they require a tremendous amount of planning and rehearsal. But the end product still includes some of those asides and some of the unplanned components to make it feel more real and to really help you realize how much work went into this. I just remember, I don't know, like, one of the segments, he does this amazing, like, lighting, dancing, singing thing, and then it ends, and you hear him, like, sigh, and he's like, okay, one more take for safety. And you're like, right. Oh, right. This person has been doing this same thing for days and wants another take.

Dr. Flux [00:37:41]:

And, like, it just kind of breaks the fourth wall slightly. And you realize that everything you're seeing is incredibly planned and intentional, which gives you so much. It adds so much value. But then you also see that there's a real person doing this and that they had to do it a million times. And I try to bring that spirit to the way that I end up producing my final videos. In that, I want you to recognize that I put so much effort into planning this, writing it, rehearsing it, performing it. But I also want you to see that I'm a real person and that mistakes happen. And, you know, I'm trying to bring both of those elements into.

Dr. Flux [00:38:16]:

Into this in a way to help cross the bridge between the screen, between me and my students.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:38:22]:

This is the time in which we each share our recommendations, and my recommendation just flows smooth like butter right into this. And that is to the. We were talking a little bit about how do you start small. And as someone who's really been trying to start small in some really humble ways, I think you just kind of need a toolkit. So you mentioned a lot of video getting recorded on our phones. One piece of equipment that I have acquired and it's still not my best friend because I still even every time I take it out, it. It's not just smooth quite yet getting things set up, but I know that it can be. So I just have to keep practicing and practicing.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:39:00]:

And that is a DJI Osmo Mobile 7. There are many pieces of equipment like this. This is a gimbal. But it's a gimbal that has a little bit more juice to it than many people are per used to, at least than I was used to. And so what it allows me to do is I can record myself almost like a selfie stick. And right now Flux is holding up perhaps his. Is it the same. The same kind? It's.

Dr. Flux [00:39:28]:

It's a different brand but yeah, it's. It's a gimbal.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:39:30]:

So we can, we can record ourselves, we can record other people, we can get B roll of our surroundings. And I'm just going to recommend. The one that I'm really enjoying is the dji. But like I said, there's ton of them out there at lots of different price points. But I'm just going to recommend like just get toolkit like find, find a way to always have it with you. Mine is always with me in my backpack. What I'm working on right now is just the idea of like, well, just take it out. So the unboxing video that I talked about, I did one with my friend at work and I had that sitting right there.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:40:00]:

It comes with a little thing that can be extended to be a tripod and you can actually extend that. I mean it just a lot of flexibility. But the thing is have your toolkit with you, take it out and use it and then to some extent leave it like it is like the act of creation and refinement. I feel in many ways the only way we're going to get better is when we take the risks to just do it. And people, they don't need you to be perfect. And if they do, that's kind of on them, you know, maybe they'll move on to other people and you'll have a more rich audience and community of people that appreciate your stuff versus ones well.

Dr. Flux [00:40:37]:

And the rough edges is they're useful. They. They humanize the work. So if everything is a million percent perfect, it doesn't look real. And I think that, like, modern students can sniff that out.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:40:48]:

Yep. And we're not going to get good if we don't fail. So, I mean, like, I. I really want to get better at video as a medium. I'm not great at it now, but I'm never gonna get great if I don't take the risks and have the tools with me and just experiment and see how things go. So that's mine and I get to pass it over to you for whatever you'd like to recommend.

Dr. Flux [00:41:07]:

Well, just to follow up, I wasn't going to recommend these things, but since you brought it up, I use the Insta360 Flow Pro gimbal, which I really like. I did some research on trying to find something that was kind of like a low to mid tier kind of gimbal, and it works really great. It also can pair with smartphones and stuff like that. And then adding to that, I also looked for mobile audio setup that was really easy. I use the Hollyland system, which is great. I mean, I have like several different audio systems that I work with. I think I have like a Rodeo system that is like, more professional for when I'm like, in studio. I've got.

Dr. Flux [00:41:41]:

What am I using right now? This is the Blue Yeti, which is like my current standard, like, desk microphone. And then I have this Hollyland system, which plugs right into my phone and allows me to capture better audio when I'm on the go.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:41:55]:

Love the Hollyland. Love it. Can't say enough good things about it. It's awesome. Awesome.

Dr. Flux [00:42:00]:

That wasn't my recommendation though.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:42:01]:

Yes, I have a drum roll. I wish I had the sound effect. All right, we're inserting the sound effect of a drum roll. What do you have to share today?

Dr. Flux [00:42:09]:

I would like to share the work of C Thi Nguyen. So I heard C Thi Nguyen on the Ezra Klein podcast several years ago, and I just really liked what he was talking about. He works on this philosophy of games and by games, kind of like tabletop games and games in general. But I think he's very oriented to tabletop

games, which is nerdy in a way that I love. But one of the things that really stuck out for me in his work is that he talks about different types of games. He calls them outcome oriented games versus what's the other one? Striving games. And the more I thought about how he presented this, the more it started to inform just my entire approach to education. So to briefly say what this means, an outcome, a purely outcome oriented game would be something like the lottery, right? The only reason to play the lottery is to win.

Dr. Flux [00:43:08]:

Unless you really like picking numbers, the cash register or I guess, scratch off. Tickets are fun to scratch, but for the most part, the only reason to play the lottery is to win. So the whole reason to play is for the outcome. There's not really a whole lot of agency or choice involved. On the flip side, you have nearly pure striving games, which I like to use the example of Twister. In Twister, there is a way to win Twister, but you don't usually play Twister to win. You play Twister to get tangled up with your friends and fall on top of each other because of that, the way that Twister is structured, all of its design elements are based on creating an experience. And I think about that so much in the way that I plan my life and in the way that I plan education.

Dr. Flux [00:43:53]:

And this goes back into my Van Gogh and AI course policy video. Think about the processes that I'm trying to facilitate as an instructor. And that process is learning. And it's not the grade that I want students to focus on. I understand why they want to get a good grade and why this is important for them, but the outcome is superfluous in my mind. I want to design a journey for them because the journey is what's going to provide the experience of learning. And I have been so attentive to the journeys that I create in the way that I design my classes, in the way that I do pedagogy, in the way that I structure my videos. Everything goes back to the kind of journey that I'm facilitating and how that structures student agency, right? Like, how is it that I'm creating a journey that gives my students the most agency as possible.

Dr. Flux [00:44:47]:

I would like them to choose to keep learning. I would like them to choose to do their homework. But I also don't want to manipulate them into it. I want to create a system that gives them the most possible choice while making the journey that I want them to take the most attractive. And that takes a lot of attention to detail and design in ways that I have spent hours and hours and hours and hours and years and months, like so much time thinking about. And I think it's easy. Like, the students don't quite know that there's a few of them who pick up on it

when they have watched a lot of my video instruction and they're like, oh, wow, there's some patterns here. But for the most part, this is the invisible piece.

Dr. Flux [00:45:25]:

This goes into the pedagogy. There's things that no student is ever thinking about. But I, because of, of the way that I have internalized a lot of C Thi Nguyen's work, I think so much about structuring a journey to facilitate student agency in a way that brings them to learning. And I just want to share his work because that was so influential for me in developing that process.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:45:46]:

Dr. Flux, thank you so much for joining me on today's episode. I know we both thank Chris Ostro for connecting us and I feel embarrassed to say it, but I hope this is just the first of many conversations because what a delightful, stimulating conversation conversation. Thank you so much.

Dr. Flux [00:46:04]:

Oh, you're very welcome. I had a blast and I would love to keep talking. There's so many, so many elements of higher education that I am so passionate about and have thought so deeply about. So it's, it's a pleasure to be able to, to discuss them with you. I really appreciate it.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:46:19]:

Thanks once again to Dr. Flux for joining me on today's episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. Today's episode was produced by by me, Bonni Stachowiak. It was edited by the ever talented Andrew Kroeger podcast. Production support was provided by the amazing Sierra Priest. If you've been listening for a while and have yet to sign up for the Teaching in Higher Ed update, now is your chance. Head over to teachinginhighered.com/subscribe. You'll receive the most recent episodes show notes including including the links to the videos that you're really gonna I hope want to see now and some other resources that extend beyond the show notes links.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:47:03]:

Thank you so much for listening and I'll see you next time on Teaching in Higher Ed.

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