

Feminist Perspectives of Time Toward Collective Well-Being in Online Pedagogy

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Abstract: Utilizing feminist theory, this article offers online pedagogical practices that acknowledge time as a factor impacting students' learning experiences online in order to move toward collective well-being. Collective well-being acknowledges that students and instructors are human beings and need to be treated with respect and care to function at their highest potential and capacities. The embodied aspect of connectivity recognizes that the humans behind the screens bring their full selves to the work, even as not all of themselves are seen or acknowledged through a digital connection. Time is a part of the embodied lives of students and instructors. In this paper, we share examples illustrating how recognizing and honoring the role of time allows teachers and students to move beyond academic wellness toward humanizing practices and collective well-being.

Keywords: Feminist Perspectives in Online Learning, Collective Well-Being, Online Pedagogy



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INTRODUCTION

Feminist perspectives in online teaching and learning contribute to students' and instructors' success, especially their collective well-being. Feminist perspectives in education can be defined as "creating, crafting, and teaching online courses in the intentional narrative of shared humanity" (Quinn, 2022). Through our work, we see a shared humanity in online pedagogy that makes space for the multiple identities students and teachers bring to teaching and learning. As bell hooks states, "Feminist education for critical consciousness is rooted in the assumption that knowledge and critical thought done in the classroom should inform our habits of being and ways of living outside the classroom" (hooks, 1994, p. 94). We identify with scholars who believe in the feminist perspective of designing for care and humanizing teaching and learning, especially in online communities (Tuckwiler & Milman, 2019), which allows for a transfer of this learning to the communities beyond the online classroom. We term this personhood of learning as collective well-being. In this paper, we explain collective well-being in online communities, describe time in relation to feminist online pedagogy, and share tips that center instructors' and students' collective well-being.

COLLECTIVE WELL-BEING IN ONLINE LEARNING COMMUNITY

For us, collective well-being in online learning is honoring and caring for the mind, body, and spirit



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of the students and instructors (Tuckwiler & Milman, 2019). As teacher educators, we refuse the notion of valuing the mind over the body and the spirit. We believe that students learn and instructors teach best when their bodies and spirits are welcomed, honored, and validated in the online space. This view of collective well-being acknowledges that students and instructors are human beings and need to be treated with respect and care so that they can function at their highest potential and capacities. Collective well-being needs to be designed for and intentionally practiced by instructors before it can be part of embodied pedagogy (Rollag Yoon et al., 2024).

Designing for collective well-being involves creating a syllabus that reflects that 'life happens.' This means that our syllabi should have some form of flexibility or room for negotiation when the unexpected or emergencies take place in life. Might we dare say that collective well-being is what most of us hope for yet do not know how to advocate for, with the never-ending demands of administrative pressures to codify, standardize, and account for elements of life that deserve to be conceptualized for their quality, not quantity. Collective well-being validates the thinking, planning, and reflecting parts of teaching and learning, which are normally invisibilized and not counted for the work that needs to be done. As people frequently say, "It is not that thought takes time; it is that time takes thought." One often absent element of online education, which feminist pedagogy can bring, is how time operates for students and instructors. In this paper, we offer online pedagogical practices that acknowledge time as a factor impacting online teaching and learning experiences to move toward collective well-being.

FEMINIST ONLINE PEDAGOGY AND TIME

There are tenets of feminist online pedagogy relating to time, which we adhere to in our practice: 1) trusting students, 2) acknowledging that we live time differently, and 3) being dialogic. In enacting these tenets, we trust students by implementing project-based learning where students have the freedom to explore topics that interest them within a given framework (Gilpin et al., 2023). This allows us to negotiate deadlines within the project timeline, encouraging us to view time flexibly. We

know we live time differently; therefore, we create modular course structures with clear milestones but flexible completion dates. We offer “catch-up weeks” where no new material is introduced, allowing students to review or get ahead as needed. Lastly, we are dialogic in action and offer office hours during which students can drop in for casual conversations or seek support. We believe “if the structure does not permit dialogue, the structure must be changed” (Freire, 1970, p. 64). By actively practicing these tenets, educators can create a more inclusive, supportive, and effective online learning environment that respects and accommodates the diverse temporal experiences for themselves and students (Rice, 2023). These tenets enhance teaching and learning outcomes and promote equity and well-being within the online community.

Below, we share a vignette from one of the author’s experiences that captures the three tenets of feminist pedagogy relating to time: 1) trusting students, 2) acknowledging that we live time differently, and 3) being dialogic.

After welcoming students to our third synchronous Zoom class session, I asked them to turn on their cameras if possible because it is mighty challenging to build community while staring at black boxes on a Zoom screen. Joey, one of the students in the class, texted to let me know that he wouldn’t be able to have his camera on this evening because he was tending to his sick child while trying to pay as much attention as possible to the iterative cycles of the action research process, which he is still having a hard time comprehending. Keitha-Gail replied and let Joey know that as a parent she understands how difficult it is to focus on schoolwork when one is taking care of their sick child. She told Joey that he can excuse himself from the session to take care of his child and she will record the lecture and send it to him. In reflecting on the moment, Keitha-Gail remembered the times that each of us was distracted from a task. We talked about times when we could move through our distractions or times when we just were not able to and needed to be able to focus on the work at a point when it worked for us, rather than the moment that was defined by the syllabus schedule.

In the vignette, we see that the student’s focus was in line with the timescale and trajectory of a sick child. Keitha-Gail honored and recognized

the ways that this happens often. As authors, we believe that the agency of time in online learning can support students and recognize where they each are in relation to time in their own lives and their learning. Therefore, as feminist reflective pedagogical inquirists, we often ask how often the ways that we honor time in online learning might be supportive of students’ needs and sociocultural experiences. For us, we have come to believe that time matters deeply and that time in relation to our online pedagogy offers a lens into why online pedagogy can and should be humanizing.

TIPS RELATING TO TIME TO ENHANCE COLLECTIVE WELL-BEING

To acknowledge time as a significant factor impacting online teaching and learning experiences and to move toward collective well-being, here are some basic online pedagogical tips from our practices that educators might want to implement:

Throughout the semester, we:

1. share with students what is happening in our lives and how that might impact our time, and we invite students to do the same;
2. offer flexible scheduling and deadlines, allowing students to actively engage with the course materials at their own pace and accommodate diverse schedules during the semester;
3. provide regular check-ins and feedback to show students that we care and are intentional about supporting their well-being;
4. frequently remind students of our teaching and learning mantra: It is the goal that all of us end the semester successfully and be mentally well;
5. describe wellness activities that we engage in daily to live out our teaching and learning philosophy, and we invite students to do the same;
6. communicate times we will not be available as we try to separate our work life from home life;
7. invite students to sign up for an incomplete if the semester is coming to an end and they need additional time to complete their work;
8. teach time management strategies to help students with pacing, organization, and prioritization to lessen feeling overwhelmed;

9. provide rubrics, checklists, templates, exemplars, and flexible grouping when possible to help students understand expectations and supports available which in turn support collective well-being; and
10. inform students about the institution's mental health resources that they can access online.

By implementing these practices, educators can better accommodate the diverse time constraints of students and themselves, fostering a more inclusive and supportive online teaching and learning environment that promotes collective well-being.

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