

Narrator: Welcome to the UP Tech Talk podcast, coming to you from the Academic Multimedia Studio on the University of Portland campus, produced by Academic Technology Services.

Ben Kahn: Welcome to UP Tech Talk. This is Ben Kahn. I'm the Academic Technology Specialist at the University of Portland. Today I'm joined by my co-host Maria Erb. Hello, Maria.

Maria Erb: Hey, Ben.

Ben Kahn: Today, we're so happy to have joining us in the studio, Rebecca Gaudino, who's a professor in our Theology department at the University of Portland. Thanks for joining us, Rebecca.

Rebecca Gaudino: Thank you for inviting me.

Ben Kahn: We're here to talk a little bit about technology in the classroom or to supplement your teaching, and I remember last Spring I got a phone call from you, and I get phone calls from faculty all the time. Usually it's like we'll work on one thing, and then they get what they wanted to do done, and then they move on. With Rebecca, it just set off this avalanche of experimentation. I know you've done so much in the last six to eight months to embrace what technology can do for you in changing outcomes in your classroom. I think the main focus for you was on flipping the classroom? Is that correct?

Rebecca Gaudino: Yes, that's correct.

Ben Kahn: Can you talk a little bit about how that idea got planted in your head?

Rebecca Gaudino: Okay. It was a number of years ago. I went to one of our faculty trainings in January, and I listened to an art professor talk about doing some things around flipping the classroom. He gave just a little example of that, and I thought, "This is very interesting." It was about helping students to understand elements of how you look at artwork and so forth. I began thinking about it, and I was very interested in using it in my Biblical Studies class. It's the Theology 205 Bible Past and Present. In that class, while I teach a lot of content, I'm really interested in how that content helps students learn how to read the Bible, to read an ancient text written in a culture they're not familiar with and so forth. It comes really down to methodology. I can lecture about that methodology. I can demonstrate it. They can read other scholars, ways of doing it and see it in action, but I thought, "You know, it would be wonderful for them to practice, practice, practice."

That was one thing that really interested me. How could I clear class time so that students could be really involved in practicing and doing the dance, the three-step dance that I'm trying to teach them. Then, I was really interested in the student engagement piece. How could I get students more involved doing things, hands-on,

involved, talking to one another? Then, the third thing, I wanted the classroom to be more of a communal experience. How can we be a community of scholars, or how can I have them do group work and so forth where they're really involved with one another and talking and excited and engaged? Those were the three things that really pulled me into flipping the classroom.

Maria Erb: What did you do first?

Rebecca Gaudino: Well, one of the first things I did, I had to decide what I would clear the class of, right? How am I going to make time? I very carefully went through my lectures and decided which ones I was going to keep and which ones I could do without and my students could do without. I really boned them down. I went through the PowerPoints and all of that, and so I recorded those. That was a huge thing, to get those recorded, and then Ben made sure they were captioned and their transcripts, too.

Ben Kahn: That's right.

Rebecca Gaudino: Then, I wanted to move the quizzes out of the classroom, too. Ben helped me with online quizzes and setting that up. That was a big, big step, because I had to come up with a question bank. I had to have a couple dozen questions ready to go for each time I wanted a quiz. That quiz would cover not only readings but also the lecture. I had to get all of those set up. Once I had those things out of the class time, now I had a container that I could begin to fill with the different things I wanted to do. As I was moving through things, I was beginning to design activities. I have group activities. I have individual activities. I have whole-class collaborations going on. Then, of course, things that I've always done like presentations, discussions, always, those kinds of things. It was just a lot of fun to think of how to get students really involved with one another and with the content and practicing these different things. It's really been a wonderful experience, trying this out. I use various different programs and software. It's been a real adventure.

I've gone from being a person who's hardly used the computer at all to being somebody where the computer is the central tool for everything that we do in the classroom.

Maria Erb: I'm so glad you explained that in such a clear way, the methodical process you went through, because I think a lot of faculty, it's sort of vague to them. "How do I even start?" You had such a clear goal where you wanted to go, and you had a really good reason for using these tools to begin with. I'm just so glad that you explained it that way.

Rebecca Gaudino: Oh, thank you.

Ben Kahn: I'm curious how the reaction from your students has been, because UP tends to be a little bit more traditional. I know there's a lot of lecture. There's a lot of Scantron quizzing. How has the reaction been from the students?

Rebecca Gaudino: Well, I've been starting to hear from students, and I've been hearing that there is this ... Some students say, "Wow, this is a lot of work," because now they've got to watch the lecture. By the way, I boned those down, so they're not long. They're anywhere between nine and 15 minutes. I try to keep them in there. That's a lot of work. I've heard from other students that it's fun. After one of our first group activities, I heard a student say, "Well, if I have to spend an hour and 20 minutes in class, this was a lot of fun," that kind of stuff. I've had this last week, I tried out an individual exercise. All the students had to write something and then upload it in a program or whatever you want to call it, VoiceThread. We did that, and we've practiced that before. A group of students stopped by to say, "Thank you so much for making the content of this class relevant to our lives."

Of course, that's exactly what I'm trying to do with this, is get them constantly to think. I want them to know the content, but what does it have to do with our lives? All the research shows that students really come alive when they begin to see how what they're studying has something to do with their lives that's meaningful. That's where I'm going with everything that I'm doing in that class.

Maria Erb: The lectures that you're having them watch, the nine to 15 minute lectures, what are those like? How are they recorded? Is it basically just you talking, looking at them, or do you have a lot of visuals?

Rebecca Gaudino: They're done through Kaltura. I sit at my desk, and I got myself a little camera for my computer. It's a nice one, by the way. I got a good recommendation. I sit there, and I talk to the students. I usually don't have notes, because I know what I want to say to them. It's not something they have in their book, that they're reading. This is something extra, added that I'm bringing to them. I have my PowerPoints. I get my PowerPoints going. I get the recording going. What the students will see then, are my PowerPoints and then up in the upper right-hand corner is this little box with me talking to them. They see me waving my hands like I'm doing now, and they see me moving back and forth in my chair. They just see me as me, talking to them and so forth.

Ben Kahn: I remember when we were initially talking about setting it up, I was showing you, "Oh, you can turn the webcam on or off." I usually just bring that up, and honestly most professors and just like, "Off, default to off. I don't want to have to record myself and be comfortable with projecting myself into this digital realm." To you, it was really important that you had a visual presence and an audio presence to go along with the presentation.

Rebecca Gaudino: Yeah, not because I'm beautiful or anything like that. It's just that I want them to see my face. I want them to see my passion about what I do. I want them to see me waving my hands around. I want them to see this matters to me, and I try to reach them with my voice, with everything that I have, including, I hope, some good PowerPoints.

Maria Erb: Now, what would you say to other faculty contemplating something like this, as far as the startup time and investment? Did you pick this up right away? Do you find that doing these 15 minute, off-the-cuff types of recordings takes a lot out of you or a lot of extra prep or a lot of extra up-front time?

Rebecca Gaudino: I worked on these lectures over the summer break, which was not summer break for me, because I was teaching summer school. I was teaching this very class at that time, and I was teaching it the traditional way with my lectures and so forth. I would go back, after I'd given my lectures, I would go back to my office. I would fine-tune my PowerPoints, and I would record them right then, while everything was fresh in my mind, and I knew exactly what I was going for. It really worked pretty simply for me, and it was very straightforward.

Maria Erb: Even learning how to use CaptureSpace ...

Ben Kahn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Maria Erb: ... and VoiceThread? You're learning how to use all these new things. How did that go, as far as learning curve?

Rebecca Gaudino: Well, I'm not good with a computer. I see myself as computer illiterate. I've done all I can to avoid using the computer except for things like Word and PowerPoint and all that. Ben would come and sit with me and say, "Hit this button." I'd say, "Which button?" I'd be looking all over the screen for the button. I felt like my students must feel: humble and ignorant and all the rest of it. I felt like some of them must feel sometimes. I kept at it. When Ben wasn't there, then I had nobody watching me. I would go back, and I would practice it, and it made sense to me. I had to be willing to be uncomfortable. I had to be willing to put myself in a space where things, where I was not the expert.

Once I did that, I found that I could learn enough to use these different things in a meaningful way, and that that was enough. I don't need to know everything about it. I just need to know enough to make this useful and to help my students use it. I really believe that when I put these things out there, my students are so savvy that they often figure it out. I'll put VoiceThread out there, and all I need to say is a little bit, "Here, do this. Do that," and they've got it figured out just like that. I use them as a resource to help me, and it's my being open to their teaching.

Ben Kahn: It's an interesting way to put it. I also like that you brought up the idea of literacy in the digital realm, because I think it is important for people to know or reflect on that you don't have to be an expert to use these tools. They're really designed for teachers, especially in the case of something like CaptureSpace. It's analogous to if I visit a foreign city, I don't have to completely know the language. I have know how to ask for directions or how to hail a taxi. There's certain symbols that you need to understand, and you get that through practice.

Maria Erb: Yeah, and I'm glad that the payoff for you was just valuable enough for you to keep

going and to keep going until you got it. Now that you have it, I'm wondering are you going to incorporate this into all of your classes?

Rebecca Gaudino: I don't know if I will in all of them. I want to just try with this. I teach another class that's incredibly different from this, and I don't know. I would really have to work on that. I don't know if I would be able to do that for that one, but it's something that I'm thinking about. For right now, I want to really craft this. Even as I go along, I find myself revising things or trying this out. Like the VoiceThread thing, I didn't know anything about that this summer, but when Ben told me about it, I thought, "Well, let me give it a try."

I set up a couple of assignments that were in Moodle, Moodle assignment, I made them VoiceThread assignments, and they're so much easier to read and to comment and get things back to students. Students have even responded to me. I said to one person, "Wow, this is a really feisty Proverb that you've written, a contemporary Proverb." She wrote me right back, and said "I have more where that one comes from." They can easily respond through video, audio, text. The VoiceThread is wonderful, and I want to figure out how to use that more.

Ben Kahn: Yeah, what I like about VoiceThread is that it has the ability to foster that connection that you might get in person, but it could be on your own time, over the weekend or from the dorm room or wherever. Definitely it's a good one.

Maria Erb: Yeah, I'm glad that you're finding that to be such a valuable tool, because it's new for us on the campus. We're rolling it out, and we really like to hear when people have found a very good fit for their class and their teaching style.

Ben Kahn: I have to be honest. I have admin access to your course, and I went and checked it out. It looked like the students were having so much fun.

Rebecca Gaudino: Yeah, they're doing all right. I, at first, just had them all log on and wave at me or do something on video. I thought, "Maybe they won't do that. Maybe they'll just leave me an audio comment," but every one of them left me a video. They're doing goofy things. Yeah, it's fun,

Ben Kahn: Okay. Well, Rebecca, thanks for coming to join us today. We had a lot of fun talking to you, even though we had some audio technology difficulties. IT have them, too, so we're recording with our backup setup today. Apologies if the audio is a little echoey. Again, thanks for coming with us. It's so refreshing to hear your story and your enthusiasm and your passion for teaching.

Rebecca Gaudino: Thank you.

Maria Erb: We love, love that you're in theology and using technology.

Rebecca Gaudino: Yeah, thank you very much. It's great fun,

Ben Kahn: Okay, listeners, thanks for tuning in. If you want to continue the conversation with us, you can follow us on Twitter @UPTechTalk, or you can visit us at techtalk.up.edu. Check out the blog, and look at our Future of Learning series that we've been doing, and send us ...

Maria Erb: The next episode comes out this Friday.

Ben Kahn: Very, quite soon.

Maria Erb: That's right.

Ben Kahn: Well, [crosstalk 00:15:42]

Maria Erb: The first Friday in November.

Ben Kahn: Yeah, it will already be out by the time you're listening to this.

Maria Erb: It will already be out, so make sure you listen to [inaudible 00:15:48].

Ben Kahn: If you missed it, go back and listen to it. All right. Well, thanks again, and we'll catch you next time.

Narrator: Thank you for joining us for another episode of the UP Tech Talk podcast. We post new episodes on Friday mornings. If you want to hear more, please subscribe through iTunes or check out the Tech Talk blog at techtalk.up.edu.