



# TEACHING THROUGH DISTRACTIONS

**CAN WE CULTIVATE THE ATTENTION OF OUR STUDENTS?**

Based on the book, *Distracted: Why Students Can't Focus and What You Can Do about It.*



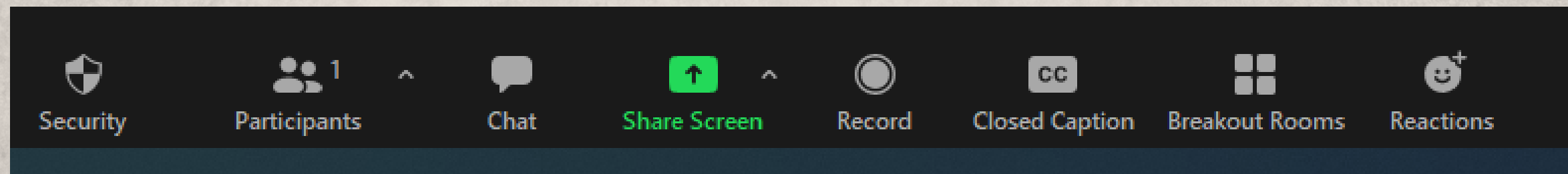
*Stephanie Jainer*

commanding attention with shoulderpads, neckwear, and  
big hair since 1980-something...

# Welcome to our learning community

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- What are my expectations for this session?
- What are your expectations for this session?
- Let's pause and get to know each other



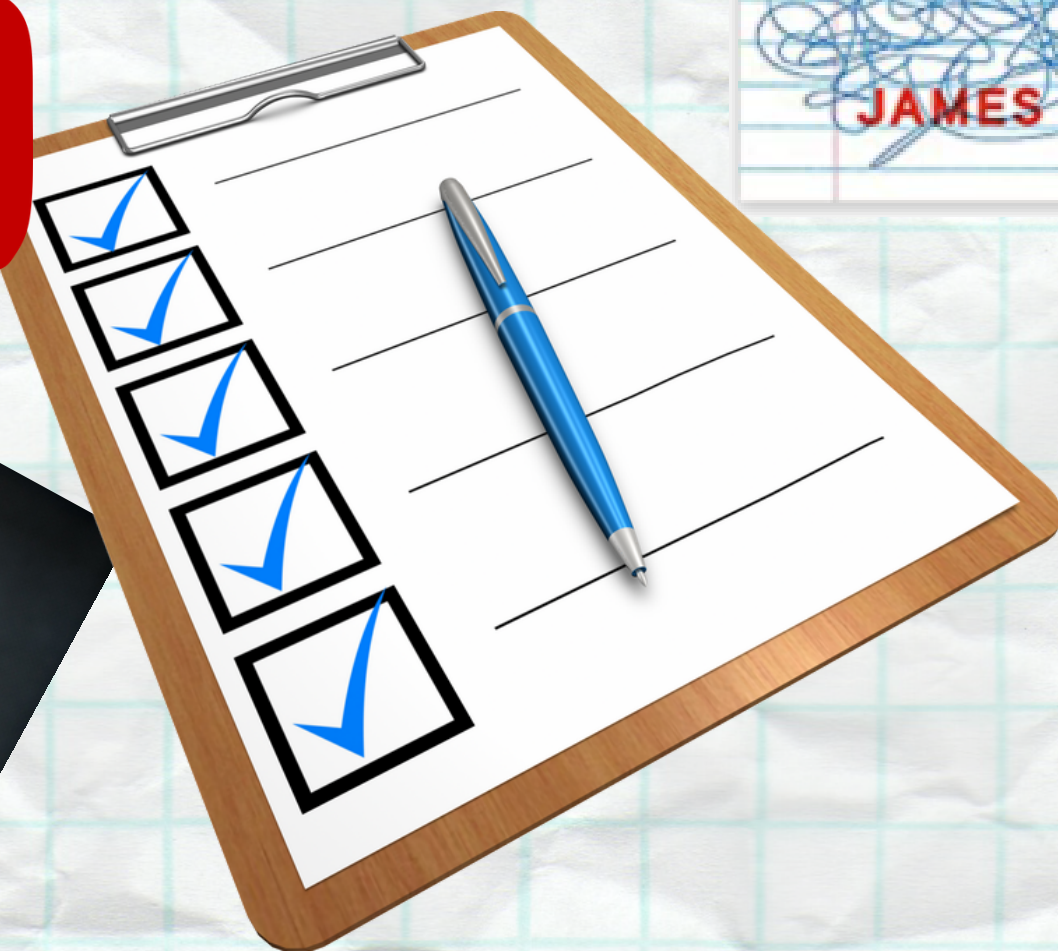
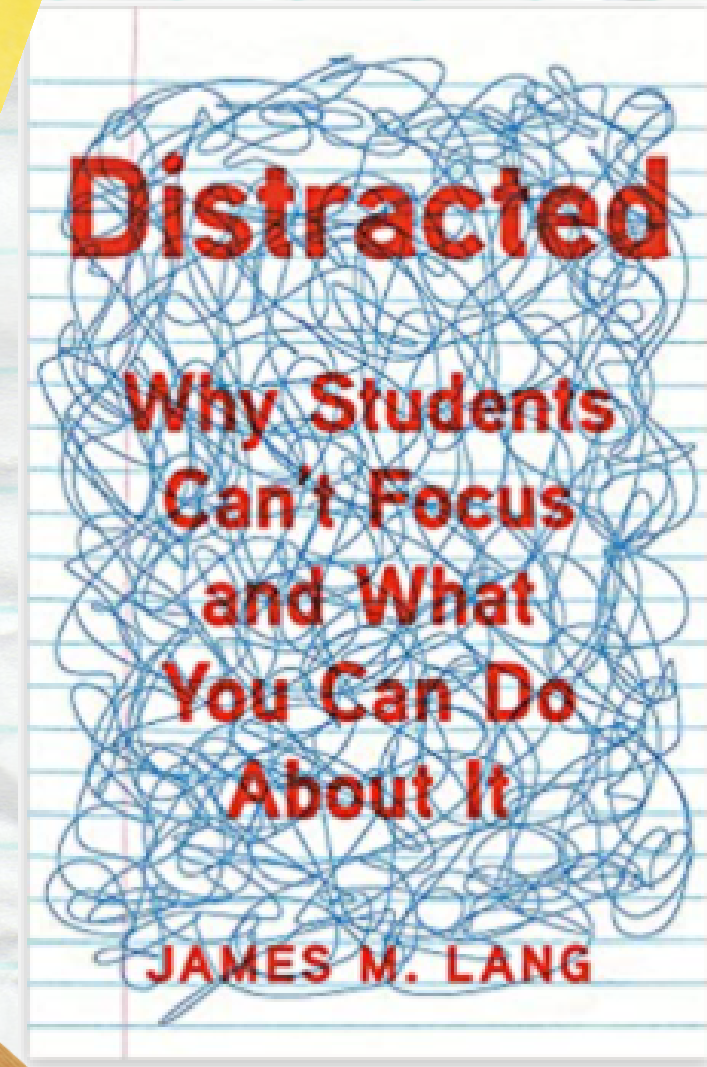
# Guiding Questions:

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- Why are we here?
- Are distractions the enemy?
- How can we cultivate attention?
- Where can we find more support?

# Why are we here?

Distracted book review & Barton Cares II



# Barton Cares II

- 119 Respondents from Great Bend, Ft. Riley, Ft. Leavenworth, and Grandview Plaza Campuses
  - Successful course delivery - 66%
  - Successful faculty availability - 72%
  - Access to support - 75%
- 56 Students offered comments regarding challenges and/or suggestions for improvement.
  - What challenges were presented?
  - What suggestions were made?



# Are distractions the enemy?

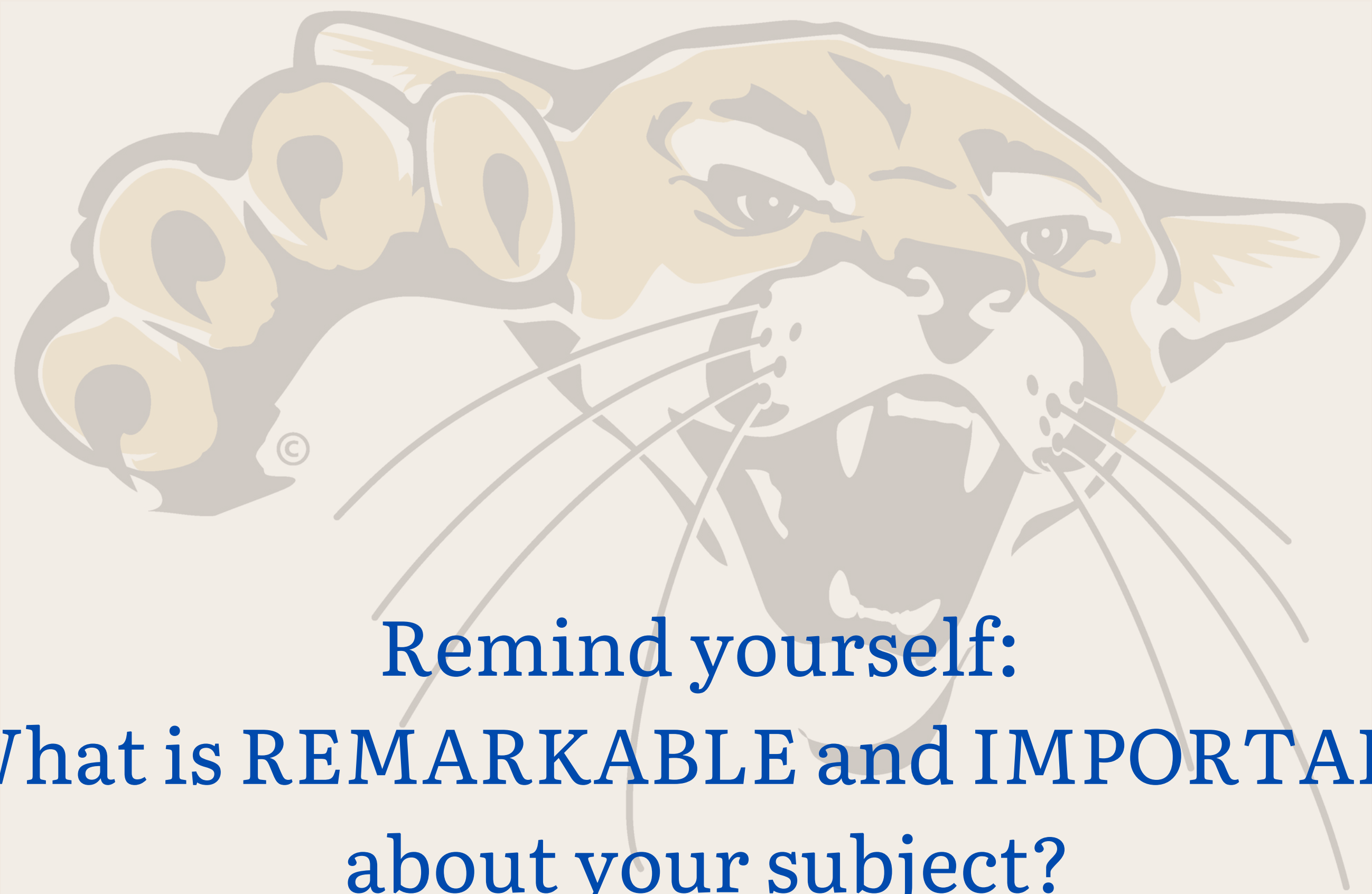
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"At our core we are *information-seeking creatures*... We have "ancient brains in a high-tech world" (p. 12-13).

How does technology add to the distractions? How does it aid in focus?

Do classroom policies regarding technology help or hinder? (technology ban)

We need to change the conversation from *preventing distraction* (impossible) to *cultivating attention* (possible).



Remind yourself:  
What is **REMARKABLE** and **IMPORTANT**  
about your subject?

# How can we cultivate attention?

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- A culture of attention begins with us...
  - What signals to do we give that we believe our class and our students are remarkable and important?
  - What does our behavior and our language model?
  - Consider course syllabus and class policies, as well as 1st day activities and guiding questions.

Review your course description and renew your sense of awe in your subject.

**Helpful  
Hint**

Learn your students - not just their names (value)

**Physical space is important**



Instructions for living a life:

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.

-Mary Oliver, "Sometimes"

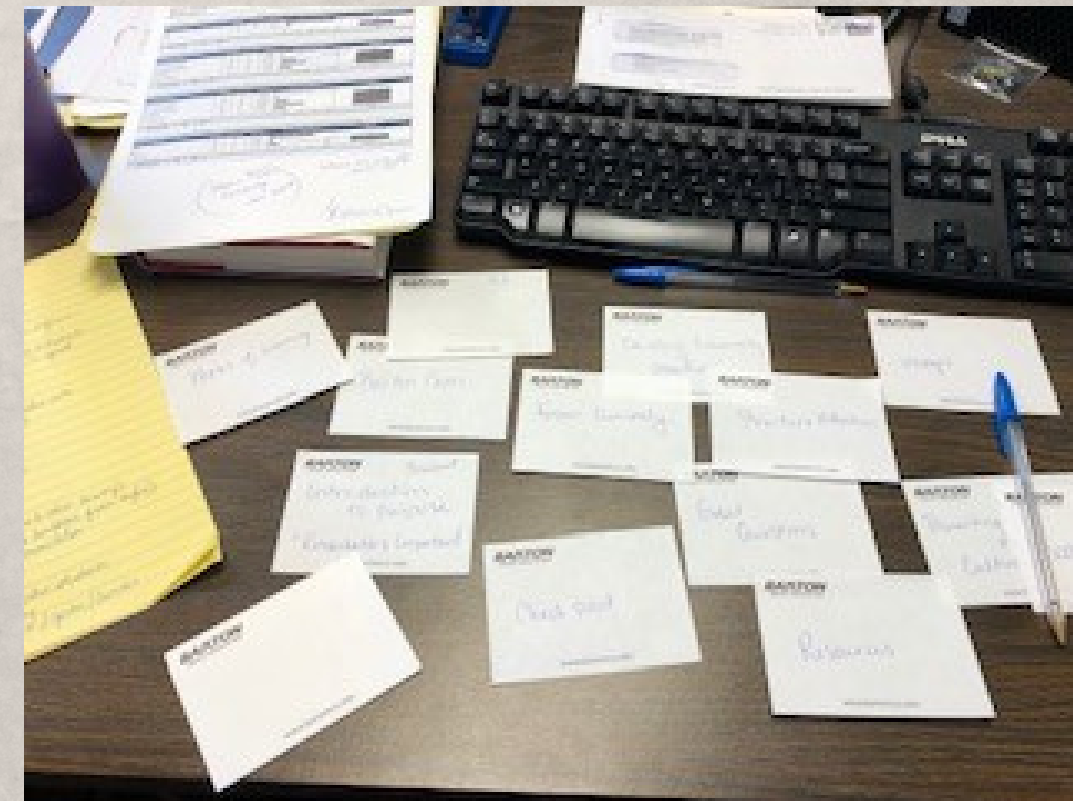
- A culture of attention fosters curiosity...
  - Course questions and daily questions
  - What questions do you have?
- A culture of attention is built...
  - Create balance by structuring your activities
  - Use signposts to provide direction
  - Remember to get an Amen!



### Activity Modules

Helpful  
Hint

Create post-it  
modules for your  
course design



- Maintain a culture of attention by sprinkling in "signature" activities...
  - Focusing
  - Creating
  - Connecting
- A culture of attention is supported by assessment...
  - low-stake graded activities
  - the testing effect (retrieval is a step in the process of learning)
  - Out of classroom application assignments



Allow students to assist in assignment, test, or project design

**Helpful Hint**

Partner with colleagues to create "shared" assignments

# Community of Practice

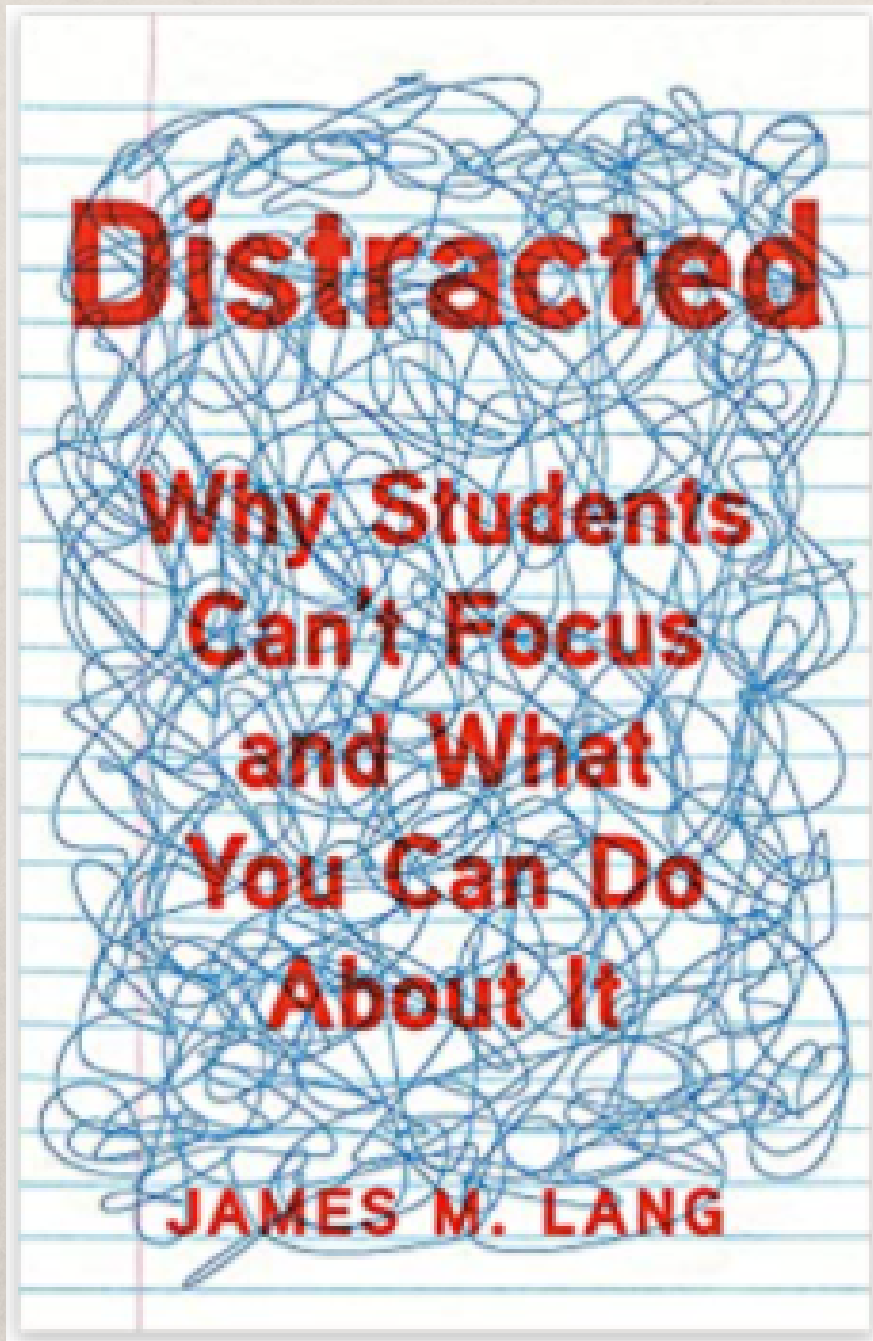
What are your signature attention activities?



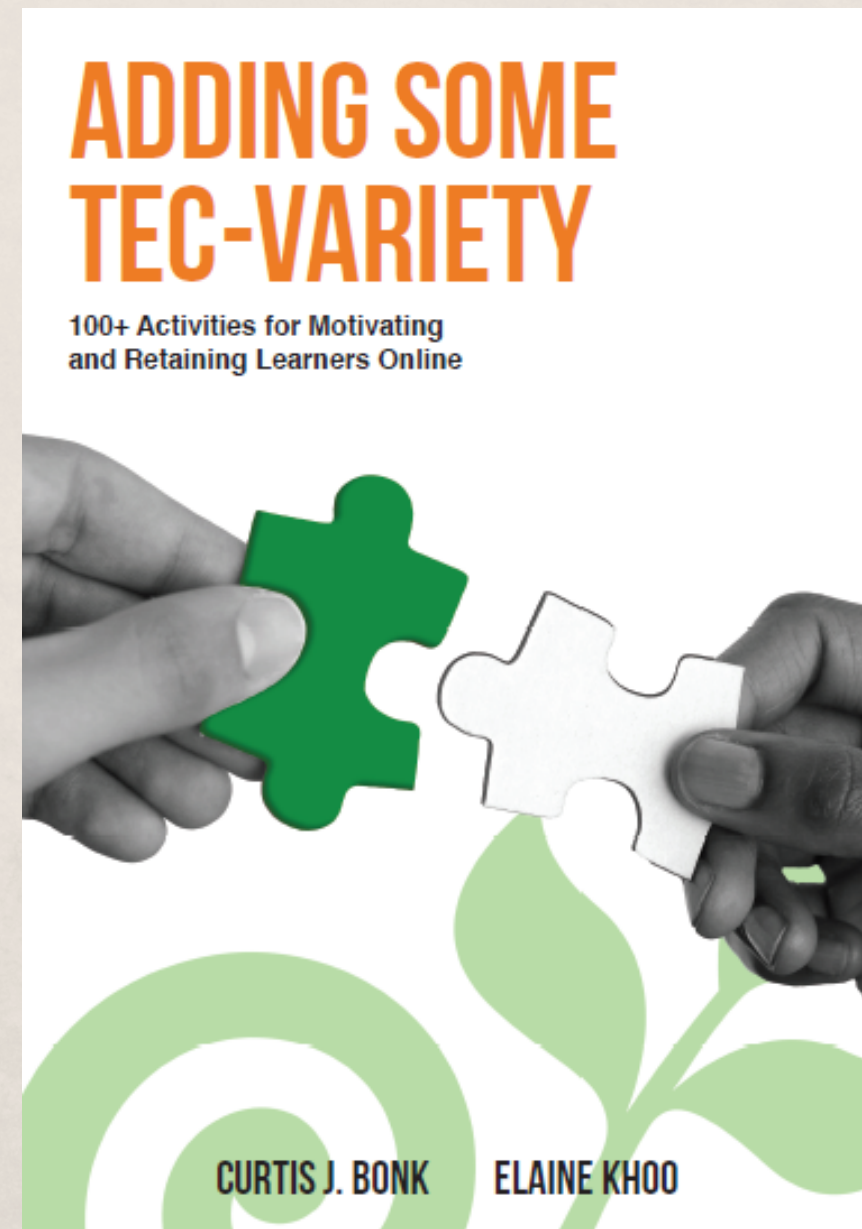
# **BARTON**

CENTER FOR  
INNOVATION &  
EXCELLENCE

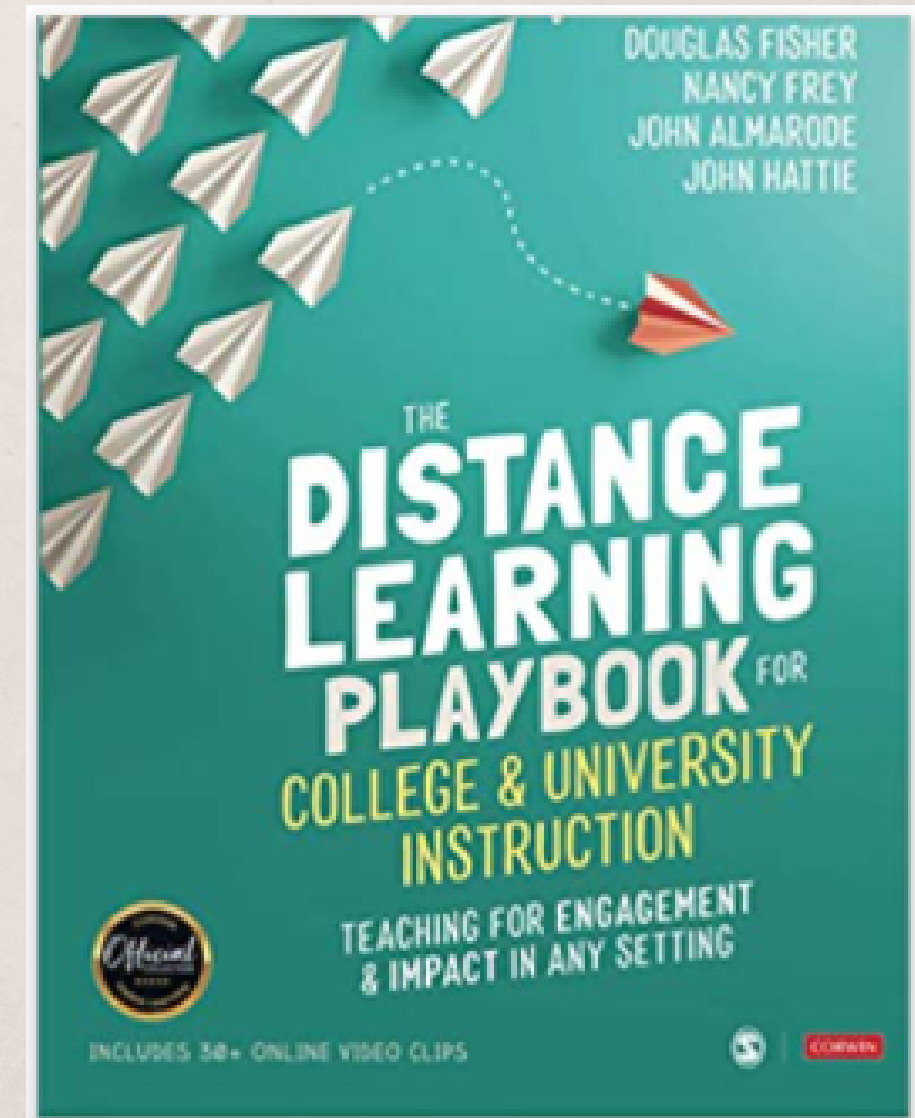
# RESOURCES



Available at Barton Library



Online OER text



Coming soon to Barton Library

**BARTON**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Stephanie Joiner**  
Director of Student Academic  
Development  
joiners@bartonccc.edu

245 NE 30 RD  
Great Bend, KS 67530

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bartonccc.edu

f t i s y w

## Appendix

### Our Device Policy

#### *British Literature Survey II*

In this class we will spend the majority of our time engaged in activities that depend upon you being present and attentive to one another, and of course to the works of literature we will study. We are all challenged these days by the ways in which our digital devices—including laptops, tablets, and phones—can steal our attention away from our immediate surroundings. In this class we will have a technology policy that is designed to support your attention to one another and to the course material. I have developed this policy for three reasons.

1. A significant body of research demonstrates that when students engage in off-task behavior on their devices, it **hurts the learning of the peers sitting near them**. In one study, students who were *not* using a device in a class lecture, but were seated *within view of a peer with a device*, performed 17 percent worse on an exam based on that lecture material than students who were not within view of someone else's device. Hence the first purpose of this policy is to ensure that your devices are not harming the learning of your peers.

## Appendix

2. This class depends upon everyone's active engagement. My job is to provide you with exposure to the course material and organize class so that you develop your own ideas about what that material means. Your ideas will become richer when they are articulated and engaged in dialogue with the ideas of your peers. If you are focused on your device, instead of our work, you are depriving the entire class of your ideas and questions—both of which we all want to hear. Your attention contributes to *all* of our learning.
3. Finally, since so much of the course depends upon discussion, I want to make sure that we all show respect for one another by listening to each other. We all have likely had the demoralizing experience of trying to speak with someone who was focused on their phone, and feeling hurt by their lack of attention to us. In this class I want us to respect everyone's voices by being present and listening to each other.

In order to achieve all of these objectives, the device policy for the course is as follows:

1. You *may* use laptops to read the texts and take notes in the course as you wish and as needed. If you use a laptop, close any tabs that are not related to the course. Remember, off-task behaviors can hurt the learning of your peers.
2. If you choose to read the works online and use your laptop in class, get an app or program that can help you take and save notes directly on the texts themselves. You can use the online tool Hypothes.is to do this, but I can provide you with other ideas, depending upon how you are getting access to the works.

## Appendix

3. You *may* have your phone out on your desk, but keep it facedown so you are not continually seeing new notifications that steal away your attention. Those continued flashes of light have been engineered to hijack your attention, and can hurt both your learning and the learning of your peers.
4. There will be times in class when I want everyone to put their devices away and focus on some activity: a quick writing exercise, a discussion circle, a worksheet. In those activities, we will all be device free.
5. Finally, in order to show everyone that we are listening respectfully to one another, please remove any AirPods or earbuds at the start of class.

If anyone has an accommodation that would make any of these policy items challenging in any way, please let me know by e-mail prior to Wednesday's class. I will make sure I modify the policy accordingly. *I am very happy to do this*. If you have any other hesitations or concerns about the policy, for any reason at all, please let me know that as well. I want to ensure that this policy supports our work while meeting your needs as a student.

We will revisit this policy at the midterm, to check and see whether it is still working for everyone. For now, please indicate that you understand the policy and agree to abide by it with your signature below.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Teaching Tips for Using Zoom in the Classroom

- Think of the Canvas course shell as the course classroom – all activity should be reflected and available in the shell
- Give students a tour of the course shell and refer to "where" items are located in the shell regularly
- Use a secondary laptop or tablet for classroom zoom so online students see their classmates
- To provide content to all students, use digital whiteboard software, whiteboard via Zoom, or preload lecture notes to course shell
- Call on students for answers and questions via Zoom like a typical face-to-face environment
- Encourage in-person students to log into Zoom with personal device and utilize break-out rooms for group-work
- Use Zoom Reaction options like emoji's and thumbs up to determine quick understanding
- Use the Canvas Chat feature for end of the class questions or quick CATs
- Document end of the class reminders via announcements
- Don't distribute worksheets or handouts that are not available online
- Provide detailed instructions for timed assignments or tests and warnings before time is over
  - Allow for grace and understanding: technology will be difficult – Set clear guidelines but teach students how to follow



## Barton Fuzion & LiveOnline

- Schedule some office hours on Zoom
  - Record class via Zoom in course shell for easy access
  - Arrive early and greet students as they enter Zoom
- Use Zoom's whiteboard so written lecture notes are recorded
  - Be willing to be silent longer than usual for responses to questions
- Be mindful of screen sharing – open multiple tabs in web browser to easily toggle between needed sources
- LiveOnline - Use the polling feature for end of the class questions or quick CATs
- Be proactive with checking in on students missing class – Encourage engagement

### Questions or Suggestions for Training?

#### Contact The Center for Innovation and Excellence

Claudia Mather – matherc@bartonccc.edu

Todd Mobray – mobrayt@bartonccc.edu

#### Special Thanks for Faculty's Best Practices

Janet Balk - Kathy Boeger - Charlotte Cates - Deanna Heier

Erika Jenkins-Moss - Stephanie Joiner

## Barton County Community College Barton Cares II

### 1 - Did you take at least one Fuzion or LiveOnline course (delivered via Zoom)?

| Response Option      | Weight      | Frequency  | Percent | Percent Responses | Means    |
|----------------------|-------------|------------|---------|-------------------|----------|
| Yes                  | (1)         | 109        | 91.60%  |                   | 1.08     |
| No                   | (2)         | 10         | 8.40%   |                   |          |
| 0 25 50 75 100       |             |            |         |                   | Question |
| <b>Response Rate</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>STD</b> |         |                   |          |
| 119/119 (100%)       | 1.08        | 0.28       |         |                   |          |

### 2 - How successful was the delivery of the course material in the remote format?

| Response Option       | Weight      | Frequency  | Percent | Percent Responses | Means    |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------|---------|-------------------|----------|
| Not at all successful | (1)         | 1          | 0.85%   |                   | 3.79     |
| Not very successful   | (2)         | 6          | 5.08%   |                   |          |
| Somewhat successful   | (3)         | 33         | 27.97%  |                   |          |
| Successful            | (4)         | 55         | 46.61%  |                   |          |
| Very Successful       | (5)         | 23         | 19.49%  |                   |          |
| 0 25 50 75 100        |             |            |         |                   | Question |
| <b>Response Rate</b>  | <b>Mean</b> | <b>STD</b> |         |                   |          |
| 118/119 (99.16%)      | 3.79        | 0.85       |         |                   |          |

### 3 - How would you rate the faculty availability and responsiveness to student needs in the remote format?

| Response Option       | Weight      | Frequency  | Percent | Percent Responses | Means    |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------|---------|-------------------|----------|
| Not at all successful | (1)         | 2          | 1.69%   |                   | 3.85     |
| Not very successful   | (2)         | 5          | 4.24%   |                   |          |
| Somewhat successful   | (3)         | 26         | 22.03%  |                   |          |
| Successful            | (4)         | 61         | 51.69%  |                   |          |
| Very successful       | (5)         | 24         | 20.34%  |                   |          |
| 0 25 50 75 100        |             |            |         |                   | Question |
| <b>Response Rate</b>  | <b>Mean</b> | <b>STD</b> |         |                   |          |
| 118/119 (99.16%)      | 3.85        | 0.85       |         |                   |          |

### 4 - Do you feel you had access to the necessary student supports to achieve academic success while learning in the remote format?

| Response Option      | Weight      | Frequency  | Percent | Percent Responses | Means    |
|----------------------|-------------|------------|---------|-------------------|----------|
| Yes                  | (1)         | 89         | 75.42%  |                   | 1.42     |
| No                   | (2)         | 9          | 7.63%   |                   |          |
| Uncertain            | (3)         | 20         | 16.95%  |                   |          |
| 0 25 50 75 100       |             |            |         |                   | Question |
| <b>Response Rate</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>STD</b> |         |                   |          |
| 118/119 (99.16%)     | 1.42        | 0.77       |         |                   |          |