

Taking time to reflect; Imagining higher education futures

Catherine Cronin • 16 December 2022



ATU Teaching & Learning Showcase

Image: Dan Freeman (Unsplash)

Link to slides:

<https://bit.ly/ATU-Christmas2022>



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Catherine Cronin

Online educator since 1995

NUI Galway 2000-2014,
IT lecturer & online MSc coord.

National Forum 2018-2021,
Digital & open education lead

GO-GN Fellow 2022

Research: critical & social
justice approaches to open,
digital and higher education



How are you this morning?



Image: [Tim Mossholder](#) (Unsplash)

Context: a time of crisis and instability

- Climate crisis
- Covid-19 pandemic
- Rising authoritarianism & war
- Deepening inequalities, multiple & intersecting
- Cost of living crisis
- Multiple challenges & instability within higher education
- ...

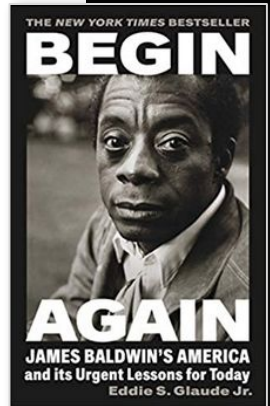
“after times”

interregnum

disruption and splintering of old ways

what was before and what is coming into view

[Eddie Glaude \(2020\)](#)



Today's keynote...

- Introduction
- Irish HE: Next Steps for T&L
 - EDI as a critical lens
 - Distributed leadership
 - Multiple modes of learning & participation
- HE futures, and hope



NEXT STEPS

for Teaching and Learning:

Moving Forward Together



- Published November 2021
- 15 Irish HE partners, coordinated by National Forum
- Question: In the context of Covid-19, what have we learnt and what does it mean for the future of T&L in Irish HE?
- Evidence-based findings
- One summary report & 20 'Insights' from individual partners

www.teachingandlearning.ie/nextsteps

7 key messages from Next Steps project

- **Enabling culture** essential for positive change in T&L
- **EDI** as a “critical lens”
- **Community & well-being**, essential for students & staff
- **Shared decision-making** and leadership
- **Student engagement/partnership** in policies & practice
- Effectively enable **mixed modes of learning & participation**
- Digitally infused world (of work), requires **lifelong learning**

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Next Steps 'Insight':

Key themes in online & blended learning 2010-2020

 <h3>NEXT STEPS</h3> <p>for Teaching and Learning: Moving Forward Together</p>	 <p>NEXTSTEPS</p>
<h3>Key themes in online and blended learning, 2010-2020</h3>	 <p>NATIONAL FORUM FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION</p>
<p>This Insight outlines key themes in online and blended learning scholarship in the period 2010-2020, before the Covid-19 pandemic. The review begins with definitions of key terms and then outlines several major themes in online and blended learning as well as recent critical approaches.</p> <h4>Introduction</h4> <p>A key task as we look to the future in Irish higher education is to reflect and make sense of what we have learned since March 2020 in the context of what we already knew about effective</p>	<p>to describe a form of distance education intentionally designed in advance to be delivered fully online (Bates, 2016). Knowledge and practices of online learning have evolved considerably since the first use of computer mediated communication (CMC) in higher education in the 1980s; web browsers and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) in the 1990s; lecture recording systems, open educational resources (OER), social media and massive open online courses (MOOCs) in the 2000s; the rise of mobile computing, datafication and learning analytics in the 2010s. The scope of the term <i>online learning</i> is narrower than that of <i>digital education</i> and <i>e-learning</i>, both of which</p>

www.teachingandlearning.ie/nextsteps

Digital / online / blended learning



“ ‘Virtual learning’ ... is always ‘in person’, even when the person is alone & home in front of a screen.
(Gourlay, [2021](#))



Images: CC0 (L to R) by Andrew Neel, Dollar Gill & Humairah L.

Digital / online / blended learning



Access • Openness • Multimodality
Collaborative Learning • Critical Digital Pedagogy
Building community • Equity



Image: CC0 by [Emily Morter](#)

Datafication issues:

Privacy

Data protection

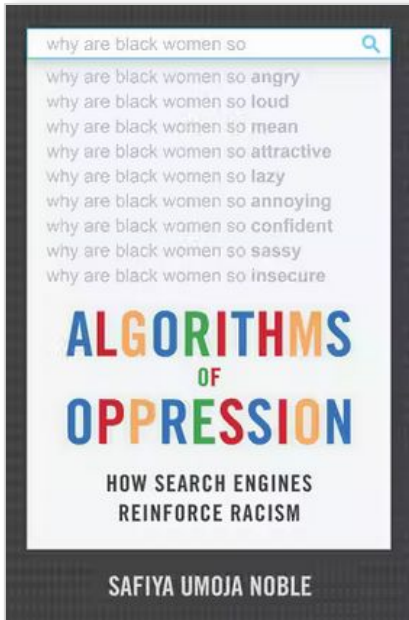
Data ownership

Surveillance

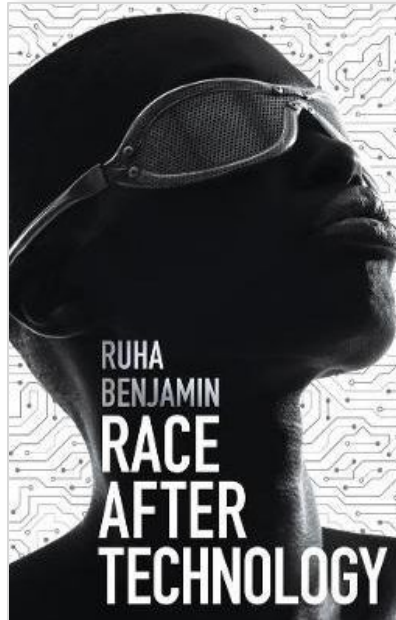
Algorithmic bias/decisions

Analytics

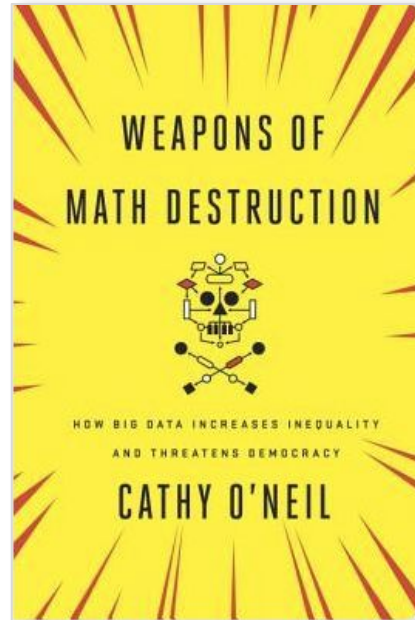
AI tools



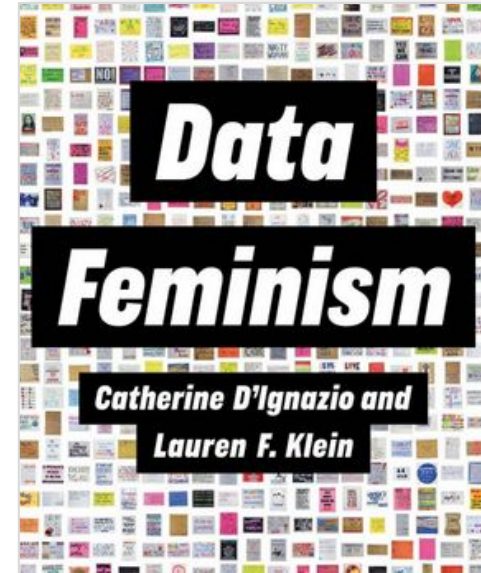
Safiya Umoja Noble (2018)
Algorithms of Oppression
([Wikipedia](#))



Ruha Benjamin (2019)
Race after Technology
([Wikipedia](#))



Cathy O'Neil (2016)
Weapons of Math
Destruction ([Wikipedia](#))



Catherine D'Ignazio &
Lauren F. Klein (2020)
Data Feminism ([open version](#))

Surveillance practices in higher education

(Beetham, et al. [2022](#))

- Datafication is manifest in dominant **business models** of **surveillance capitalism**
- Student & educator activities are rendered or “**datafied**” via use of digital platforms in HEIs — such platforms designed to **obscure data flows**
- **Inequalities of power** between data owners/ companies and those whose data is being collected, analysed & shared... including students & educators

“ Whether educators want to **engage with data** or not, their work both generates it and guides students into environments that mine it.

Bonnie Stewart & Erica Lyons ([2021](#))

Critical Digital Literacies

Understanding the power dynamics, inequalities and oppressions at work in and through digital technologies stands as a precondition to educating fully literate, fully competent digital citizens and technology users.

Jennifer Ross, et al. ([2022](#))

Digital capabilities

- Use of the term “capabilities” draws explicitly on work in the area of human development, i.e. the **Capabilities Approach** (Sen, [1998](#))
- **Capabilities** are opportunities created by a combination of a **person’s abilities**, together with their social, economic, political, educational **context** (Nussbaum, [2011](#))
- Capabilities at both an **individual & organisational** level ([Jisc](#))
 - *Individual*: abilities needed by students/staff to thrive in a digital, datafied environment
 - *Organisational*: extent to which the culture, policies & infrastructure of an organisational enables/supports digital practices

Examples of student digital capabilities

- **Navigate** technical tools and practices
- **Interrogate** digital multimedia texts
- **Design & create** critical digital texts
- **Engage** with ethics, power structures & inequalities attendant with digital technologies & datafication
- **Create/revise** academic, public & online identities
- **Cultivate** “agential capacity”
- Make **informed choices** re digital/open practice

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Learning modes

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Student Engagement & Partnership ([NStEP](#))

Engagement: process by which students & staff **work together to shape decision-making**

Partnership: emerges from meaningful student engagement; enables a **culture** of change through **collaboration, reciprocity & shared responsibility**

Student Engagement & Partnership ([NStEP](#))

4 Drivers of Student Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A culture of students as partners• The institution as a site of democratic citizenship• The institution as an inclusive learning community• A culture of institutional reflection and enhancement
4 Domains of Student Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Governance and management• Teaching and Learning• Quality Assurance and Enhancement• Student Representation and Organisation
5 Principles of Student Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dialogue• Trust• Equity and Inclusivity• Empowerment• Students as co-creators
5 Enablers of Student Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capacity building• Institutional approaches• Supportive Policies and Processes• Communities of Practice• Sustainability

5 Principles:

- ★ Dialogue
- ★ Trust
- ★ Equity/inclusivity
- ★ Empowerment
- ★ Students as co-creators

Open Educational Practices & Student Partnership



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- Student agency & participation
- Co-creation of knowledge
- Empowerment of learners
- Ethos of equity & social justice
- Developing critical digital literacies

“ **OEP** includes the use/reuse/creation of OER and **collaborative, pedagogical practices** employing social & participatory technologies for interaction, peer-learning, knowledge creation & sharing and empowerment of learners. (Cronin, [2017](#))

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion



Image: CC0 by [Oliver Cole](#)

- “ Employ EDI as a **critical lens** through which developments and changes across Teaching & Learning are considered.
(Next Steps report, [2021](#))
- “ Equity isn't for all. Equity is **for those farthest from justice**... [who] can define for themselves what they need to be whole, healthy, and in just relations with others.
(Erin Okuno, [2018](#))

Critical questions re Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

- Who is included/welcomed?
- Who is excluded/marginalised?
- Who is accommodated?
- Who is disaccommodated?
- How, and why?
- Whose voices are heard & listened to?
- What can be done to further equity?

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Examples of equity-focused teaching, learning, assessment, engagement & support



[DigitalEd.ie](https://www.digital.ed.ie)



[NTUTORR programme](https://www.ntutorr.ie)

... and many examples to be shared today

Examples of equity-focused & openly-licensed teaching, learning, assessment, engagement & support



[Data Praxis project](#)



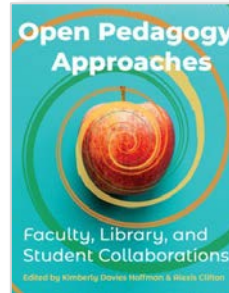
[Learning Design Voices](#)



[Digital Literacies toolkit](#)



[Open Education & Social Justice](#)



[Open Pedagogy](#)



[Student Partnership & Open Pedagogy](#)

Higher Education for Good: Teaching & Learning Futures

Book Editors:

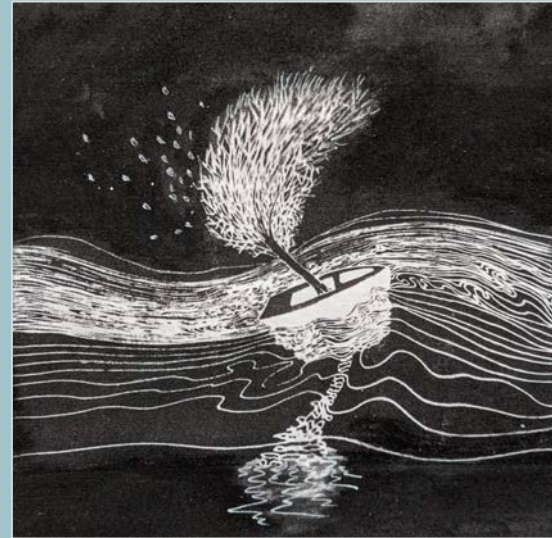
Laura Czerniewicz

University of Cape Town

Catherine Cronin

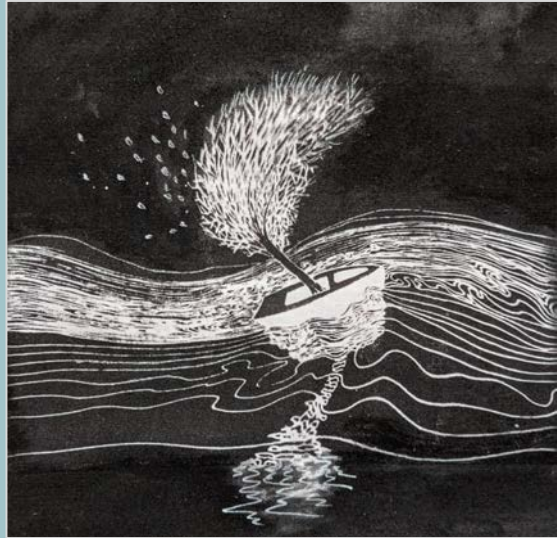
Independent scholar, GO-GN Fellow

#HE4Good will be openly licensed,
due for publication 2023



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#HE4Good: countries & genres



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Brazil	Finland
Philippines	Hong Kong
South Africa	USA
England	Ireland
Scotland	Jamaica
Canada	Ireland
Tanzania	Italy
Uganda	Austria
Germany	Kenya
India	Spain
Australia	

- Critical reflection
- Conceptual
- Poetry / haiku
- Speculative fiction
- Dialogue
- Ethnographic
- Graphic novelette
- Visual & audio

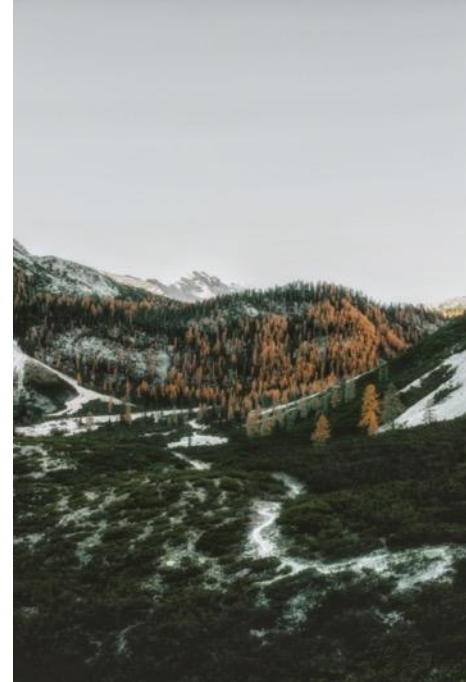
#HE4Good topics & areas of exploration

Austerity
Alienation
Datafication
Digital divides
Inequality
Injustice; coloniality
Knowledge hegemonies
Climate change



Critical pedagogies / Critical data literacies
Humanising learning design
Data justice / Design justice (UDL, AI)
Ethics of assessment
Infrastructures of care
Models of collaboration/partnership
Blended & open learning ecosystems
Decolonising knowledge
Open knowledge institutions
New T&L business models

Collaborative systemic approach



Images: CC0 (L to R) by [Hedi Alija](#), [Mihail Ribkin](#), [David Kovalenko](#), [eberhard grossgasteiger](#)

Pulling it all together...

- Designing approaches, structures & systems informed by what we learned from pandemic experiences:
 - During pandemic, ERT was most equitable/inclusive approach
 - A single solution (e.g. returning to campus) is no longer equitable for all
 - Consider **co-location & dis-location** (Beetham & MacNeill, [2022](#))
- Goal of **flexible approaches** is to ensure that all students have meaningful learning experiences and that staff are fully supported
- Appropriate Learning Design & Curriculum Models require investment — and co-design with students

“after times”

interregnum

disruption and splintering of old ways

what was before and what is coming into view

[Eddie Glaude \(2020\)](#)

- Current situation of complexity/instability is likely to be our reality for the foreseeable future
- Creative, collective, continual, equity-focused problem-solving is necessary
- Though solutions will vary, the principles developed during the pandemic period will serve us well, e.g. focus on EDI, distributed leadership & flexibility

“Our responsibility as educators in these times, wherever we are working... is to support our students to think with hope and with rigour about the sorts of futures that are being made today; and to enable them to care for, imagine and make liveable futures in collective dialogue with others whose futures are also at stake.”

Keri Facer (2019)

“ Hope is invented every day.

James Baldwin

Thank you.



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