A Manifesto for the Future:
My Hopes for the Post-Pandemic University

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My Territorial Journey

- I join you today from my home in Tk'emlups te Secwepemc territory within the unceded traditional lands of Secwepemcúl'ecw (Secwepemc Nation), where I am an uninvited guest.

- I moved here from nine years spent in the territory of the Qayqat First Nation, one of the smallest First Nations in Canada and the only registered First Nation without a land base.

- I attended graduate school in territories associated with the Wabanaki Confederacy, the traditional homelands of the Wolastoq and Mi'kmaq peoples.

- I was born, raised, and primarily educated in lands covered by the Upper Canada treaties and the territories of Algonquin Anishinabeg.

- I am conscious of the privilege I embody in being free to move about these territories even as the original stewards of these lands await meaningful reconciliation with the settler state.

A Little Bit About Me

- I spent nine years as a full-time English instructor at a community college before transitioning to faculty support.

- I work at a regional university in a tenure-track faculty role, supporting a faculty complement of 500 with their digital teaching and learning needs.

- I had been working as an educational technologist for about seven months when March 2020 hit.

- I am very tired.

A Little Bit About the Work I Do

- I run workshops on issues of digital pedagogy and good practice in teaching and learning online.

- I help people design assessments for online modalities.

- I support faculty projects using Mattermost, Wordpress, and other learning technologies.

- I fix a lot (a lot) of Moodle shells.

- And sometimes I work on my own projects: scholarly podcasting, open tenure processes, and edtech as care work.

How are you?

No, really. How are you?

Please share in the chat if you feel comfortable to do so.

Today's Talk…

I'm going to talk about two key discourses that emerged over the course of the pandemic: care and surveillance.

Care

...and co-option.

Care was the best discourse to emerge from the pandemic…

… but do you need another mindfulness webinar, or does your unit need adequate staffing?

Resisting neoliberal manifestations of care.

- Care is not
  - something we do to enable more work to take place.
  - antithetical to notions of "rigour."
  - the responsibility of the individual to undertake.

- I have come to see these wellness webinars as positioning my exhaustion, my stress, my overwork as something I can solve on my own, with deep breathing or lunchtime yoga; they invite me to see my struggle as a personal failing.

- **I am not failing. I am being failed.**

Gender & Society, "Who Does the 'Housework of the University' During a Pandemic? The Impact of Covid-19 on Precarious Women Working in Universities"

"Teaching and the accompanying administrative and pastoral work is considered less prestigious and beneficial to career advancement than research and publishing. Frontline engagement with students is the housework of the academy and it usually falls at the feet of women, women who are junior, women of colour and especially women who are precariously employed."

The Tricky Truth About Care

- Care is strategically useful to the institution to cultivate on the micro level, between individuals; consider how much institutional marketing in the pandemic hinged on celebrating the efforts of individual instructors and their efforts.

- If individuals are enacting care, the institution can remain relatively indifferent to necessary structural changes.

- But care ultimately fails on the macro level when it isn't supported by institutional structures (eg. an understaffed support unit).

- **Care cannot be extracted in perpetuity.**

A note on grace.

Are we bad at extending grace within the academy because we have not felt empowered to ask for it?

Surveillance
… not just e-proctoring.

Why is surveillance tech so at home in our classrooms?

- Vendors respond to needs educators express.

- Proctorio, ClassDojo, Microsoft Habits, Zoom's attention-tracking function: these tools are responding to existing anxieties institutions have about students.

- Surveillance masquerades as care – I want to know my students are keeping up! – but it is in fact control. We monitor not for learning (none of these tools can measure learning), but for compliance.

What do we believe we are entitled to?

- The lack of control over classroom space has led to an overreach re: what faculty are entitled to know about students.

- Is it reasonable to exert control over:
  - Where and how students live and work?
  - Behaviour in the homespace?
  - When students complete their work?

- E-proctoring tools and learning analytics offer us more information about our students' private lives than we have had before. Why are we so willing to use it?

- Consider the impact of implicit bias once we know what we know now.

This data is already being collected, so…

- Would it be a welcome innovation for students to know how long an instructor spends marking an essay, what time they finish writing their lectures?

- What about for Chairs and Deans to track and review that data?

- As Audrey Watters and Cory Doctorow have both pointed out, surveillance was never intended to be for students alone.

How much harm is too much? How much harm is just enough?

- Students in difficult living situations can find it hard to accommodate the needs of the e-proctoring tool.
- Akash Satheesan's research shows that e-proctoring tools struggle to treat students of all skin colours equitably.
- Students report being unable to use the bathroom during exams.
- Students with disabilities have reported issues with their needs being accommodated or their behaviour viewed as suspicious.
- Gender-diverse students report problems being identified.

- **How much harm to marginalized students is acceptable collateral damage to the twin altars of Academic Integrity and Rigour?**
  - Data supporting e-proctoring as a solution is limited.
  - Instructors can intercede, but we return to information and entitlement…

I hope the way forward embraces care and rejects surveillance.

These are not surface-level changes; they require renegotiations of what we see as the purpose and responsibility of our institutions.

This is more than a wellness webinar series and a cancelled contract.

What is care when it considers institutional responsibility?

What is a classroom without compliance?

What do you hope for?

JohnRobertson
@KavuBob

Replying to @brennacgray and @BCcampus

not going 'back'; continuing to value of fac dev & ID. Underlying those, I hope that we keep hold of education being a collaborative effort. I also hope, as I sit responding to twitter while waiting to wake my kids up for church, that we remember work/life balance & switching off

10:26 AM · Apr 11, 2021 · Twitter for Android

Heidi Tiedemann Darroch
@DarrochHeidi

Replying to @brennacgray

It would be great to see more faculty awareness of staff work--in instructional tech/design, but also in student support and learning services across the board--as a culture shift after this past year. Fewer silos. Less hierarchy.

8:48 AM · Apr 10, 2021 · Twitter Web App

Irwin DeVries
@IrwinDev

Replying to @brennacgray and @BCcampus

It would be inspiring to see institutions spend more time openly reflecting on and discussing how their mission and goals are being advanced, where the gaps are, inviting ideas and showing progress. I.e. much more time than spent writing them in the first place.

10:00 AM · Apr 10, 2021 · Twitter Web App

Anne-Marie Scott
@ammienoot

Replying to @brennacgray and @BCcampus

That we remember why public education is a collective good, not just an individual's job training scheme.

7:54 PM · Apr 9, 2021 · Twitter Web App

Dr. Bonnie Stewart
@bonstewart

Replying to @brennacgray and @BCcampus

that we who teach do more thinking about teaching as what it *could* be, not what was done to us.

and that decision-makers listen to those thinking about teaching...rather than the vendors in their ears.

7:39 PM · Apr 9, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

Brian Lamb
@brlamb

Replying to @brennacgray and @BCcampus

I hope the gaps and deficiencies in higher ed that have been exposed won't be papered over in our return back towards the comforts of "normal".

Maybe some of the skills, capacities and lessons that emerged over the past year can help. I think it would be a mistake to bury them.

1:42 PM · Apr 10, 2021 · Twitter for iPad

David N. Wright
@davidnwright

Replying to @brennacgray

That we don't undervalue what students have taken from this year going forward. No petty sniping about how pandemic students can't write, etc. They did the work; they can do it.

2:00 PM · Apr 10, 2021 · Tweetbot for iOS

Jes Battis
@jesbattis

Replying to @brennacgray and @BCcampus

Flex deadlines. Equitable grading. More concrete commitments to accessibility. More blended learning and intentionally designed asynchronous elements in courses.

Isabelle Ava-Pointon
@i_aletheia

Replying to @brennacgray and @BCcampus

Much more accessibilty and flexibility for students and staff with disabilities, outside responsibilities etc.

10:00 PM · Apr 9, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

Ann Gagné, PhD
@AnnGagne

Replying to @brennacgray

Real practical applications of comprehensive access. Not just captions, alt-text, but multi-modal inclusive approach to pedagogy that is INTENTIONAL & MEANINGFUL. Meet learners, instructors, & staff where they are. No tack-ons: eg. race, class, disability, gender as foundational

8:14 PM · Apr 9, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

Dr. Xinli Wang 王新丽
@xinli_w

Replying to @brennacgray and @BCcampus

No more precarious labor; let people who love teaching do their job and have a decent life.

9:26 PM · Apr 9, 2021 · Twitter Web App

Beyhan Farhadi, PhD
@BBFarhadi

Replying to @brennacgray and @BCcampus

Funding for faculty, staff and students, not corporations.

7:20 PM · Apr 9, 2021 · Twitter for Android

So.
What's next?

A Manifesto for the Future

We will build our universities on – and value – care.

We will centre issues of access and equity in everything we do.

We will extend grace and understand that we are likewise entitled to grace.

We will expect – and where necessary, demand – that our institutions respect the work of teaching and learning.

We will respect and celebrate the expertise within our walls.

We will trust our students and each other.

To me, this is
a manifesto
of openness.

Looking forward to your questions, thoughts, and shared experiences.

Please reach out to me about anything in this talk: bgray@tru.ca or @brennacgray on Twitter.