
The Innovative Library Classroom (TILC)
Conference

Jun 2nd, 2:10 PM - 3:00 PM

Upending student expectations: Enhancing classroom learning and engagement with levity, dialogue, and storytelling

Josh Rakower
Western Carolina University

Sarah Steiner
Western Carolina University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/tilc>


Rakower, Josh and Steiner, Sarah, "Upending student expectations: Enhancing classroom learning and engagement with levity, dialogue, and storytelling" (2023). *The Innovative Library Classroom (TILC) Conference*. 3.

<https://scholarworks.wm.edu/tilc/2023/presentations/3>

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences, Symposia and Events at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Innovative Library Classroom (TILC) Conference by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.

Abstract

- For many students, few activities seem less exciting than attending a library instruction session. While their lack of enthusiasm can be anxiety inducing for the instructor, it also provides us with a golden opportunity. In this presentation you'll learn how to turn student expectations on their heads using humor, dialogue, and storytelling. These tools can quickly and effectively foster engaging and inclusive learning environments. You will learn specific strategies and exercises you may use in your own classes and explore research-based backing for humor, dialogue, and storytelling as pedagogical devices.



Upending student
expectations:
Enhancing classroom
learning and engagement
with levity, dialogue, and
storytelling

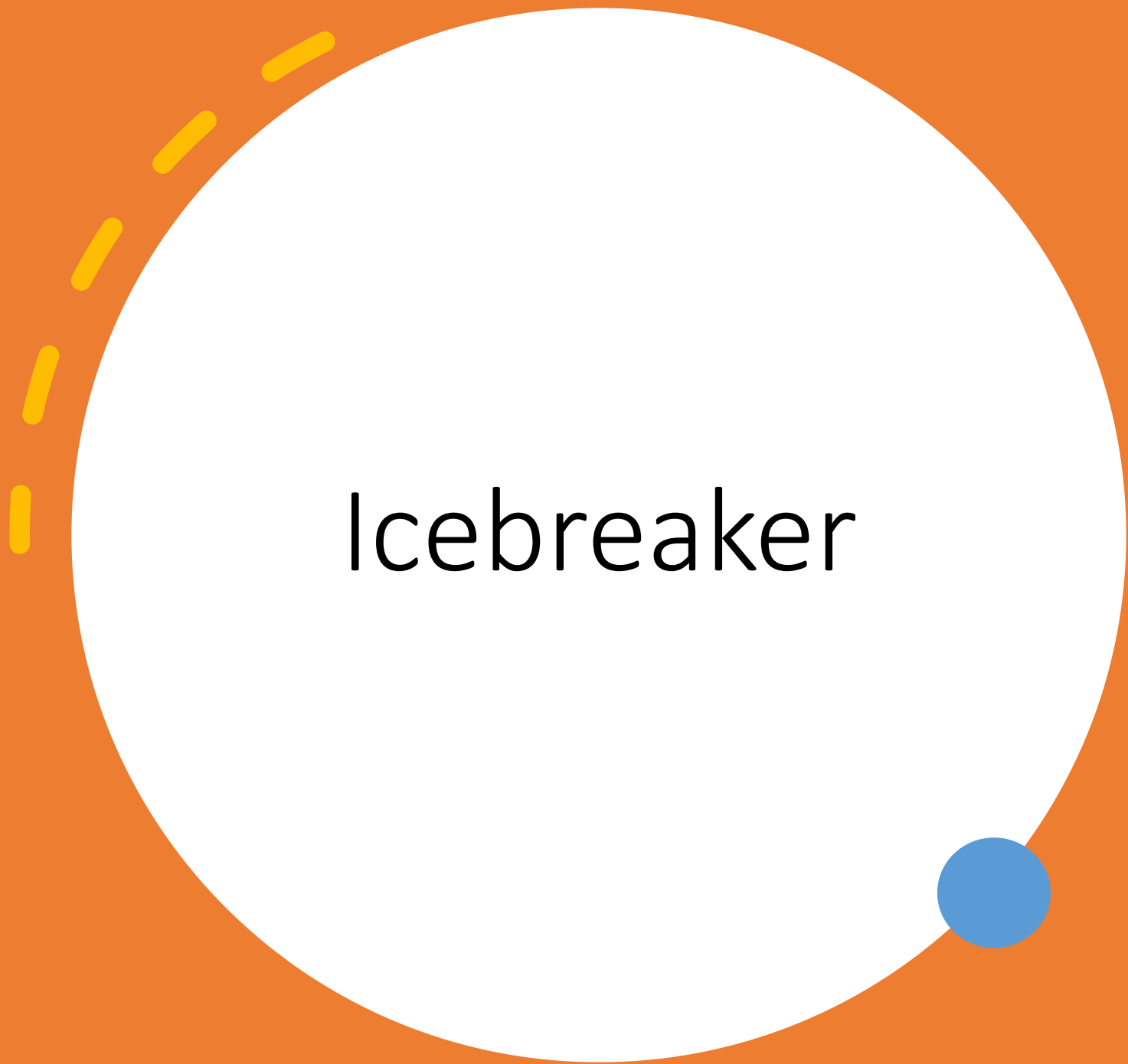
Josh Rakower
Undergraduate Experience Librarian

Sarah Steiner
Business Librarian

Western Carolina University



Icebreaker





Crafting Memorable One-Shots



ARCS Model, Keller



Attention



Relevance



Confidence

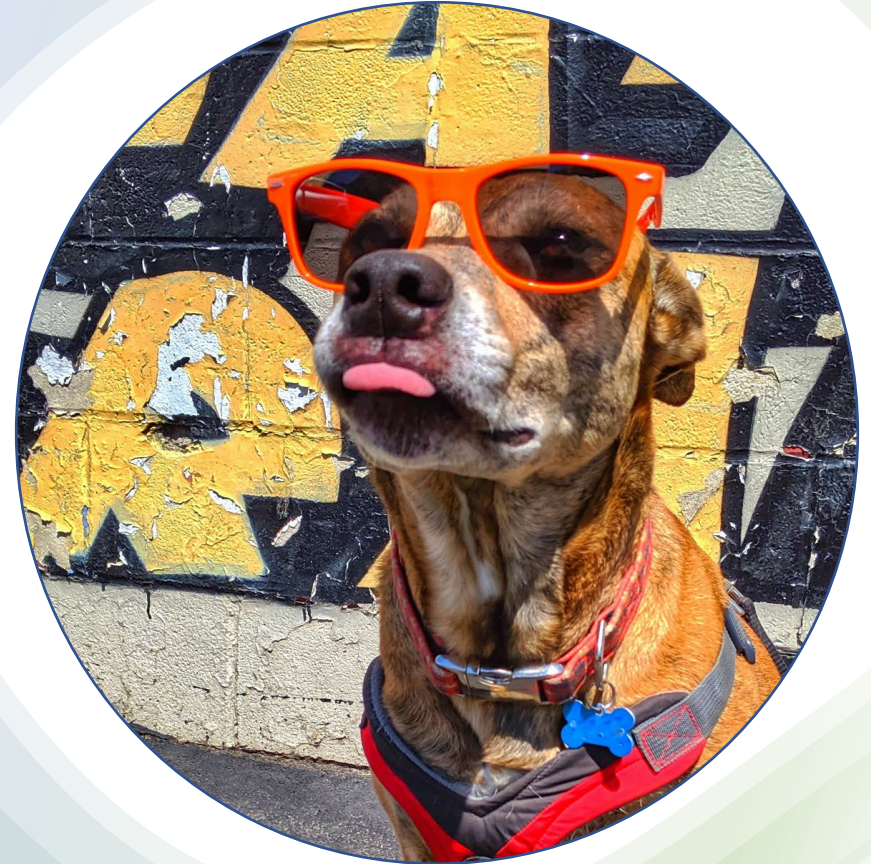


Satisfaction



What is Levity and is It Useful?

- A general feeling of lightness. Includes humor, laughter, playfulness, amusement, cheerfulness, etc.
- One study measured levity as a mixture of humor and whimsy (Cline, Kellaris, & Machleit, 2011)
- Programming designed to help students learn about librarians in informal ways can help ease library anxiety by making librarians more accessible (Muszkiewicz, 2017)





“If they’re laughing, how can they bludgeon you to death?”

– Mel Brooks





What is Humor?

- No agreed upon definition
- My favorite is benign violation – (McGraw & Warren, 2010)
 - Something is funny when it violates some sort of norm and is not perceived to be harmful

Some of the Benefits of Humor in the Classroom

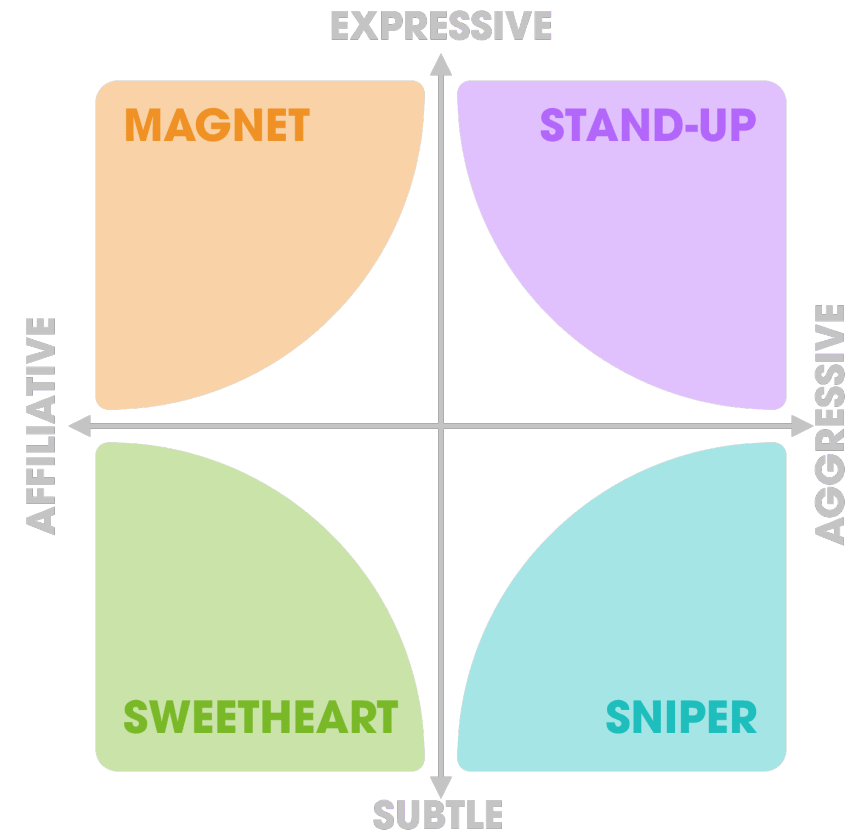
When humor is delivered as part of an instructor's natural personality, students can create more powerful connections with material and instructors (Smith & Worth, 2017)

Instructional humor can increase in class participation and out of class communication (Baker, Clark-Gordan, & Myers, 2019; Goodboy, et al., 2015)

Effective use of humor can lead to better course evaluations (White, 2019)

Am I Funny? Measuring Humor

- Sense of Humor Scale (Mcgee, 1999)
- Humor Style Questionnaire (Martin, 2003)
 - Scales humor in four types: Affiliative, Aggressive, Self-Promoting, and Self-Deprecating.
 - Students are more likely to engage with a professor who uses affiliative humor than aggressive humor (Nienaber, Abrams, and Segrist, 2019)
- Humor Typology Quiz (Aaker & Bagdonas, 2021)
 - Expressive vs Subtle and Affiliative vs Aggressive



Ways to integrate humor/levity

- Videos
- Jokes
- Activities
- Being yourself



Levity in Video





Stories Create
Dialogue

Dialogue
Creates Stories

Stories & Dialogue in the Literature

Stories have been shown to improve attention span and affective response (Kromka & Goodboy, 2018).

Stories and dialogue can help address learning inequalities in predominantly white institutions of higher education by building safety, inclusion, and equity (Georges, 2020).

Stories and dialogue help students connect complex interdisciplinary topics, learn more effectively, and feel a stronger sense of agency (Miley, 2009).



Story Selection Tips

1

Keep stories short:
2-3 minutes
Include every 10
minutes

2

Have a point (or
two) and stay
relevant—the story
IS the lesson

3

Be kind and
situationally
appropriate

4

Note the elephants
in the room:
performance
anxiety, shyness,
inequality



The Elephant

“students generally feel that their own library-use skills are **inadequate** while the skills of other students are adequate,
(1) the inadequacy is **shameful** and should be hidden, and
(2) the inadequacy would be revealed by asking questions.”

-Constance A. Mellon





Elephants Shrink When Hugged

“Far from proving a weakness, my fallibility designates me as an empathetic ally, role model, and resource.”

-Wendy Doucette



Story and Dialogue Tip Recap

1

Start with stories
(theirs or yours)

2

Make it safe to
share

3

Give them time +
clear/simple
parameters

4

Consider
breaking them
into small groups
or pairs

5

Sum up



Sarah's Favorite Exercise

(a dramatic re-enactment)

Hello and welcome! Please fill out this sheet when you arrive.

What things about your pending research assignment for ENGL 202 make you feel nervous?
If you've already begun encountering obstacles, what are they?

I can't find any articles in the library database on my topic

Why do you think it's important to use the library's resources (instead of Google) for your research project?

Credibility

Think about your paper topic. What words do you think would be best to type into the library search to find resources on that topic?

Mexican Tortilla Shortage

Mexican tortilla shortage

Ethanol fuel

corn crop

Mexico

United States

Corn import*

Corn Shortage OR Price*

SOCIAL MEDIA
narrow

college student
debt in Cullowhee

broaden

Thank you!

Josh Rakower

jrakower@wcu.edu

Sarah Steiner

sksteiner@wcu.edu



Works Cited

- Baker, J. P., Clark-Gordon, C. V., & Myers, S. A. (2019). Using emotional response theory to examine dramatic teaching behaviors and student approach–avoidance behaviors. *Communication Education*, 68(2), 193-214.
- Brown, B. (2015). *Daring greatly : how the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live love parent and lead*. Avery an imprint of Penguin Random House.
- Cline, T. W., Kellaris, J. J., & Machleit, K. A. (2011). Consumers' need for levity in advertising communications. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 17(01), 17-35.
- Doucette, W. C. (2021). Sharing our experience: Guidelines and examples for incorporating relevant personal narrative into library instruction to support, motivate, and connect with students. *Public Services Quarterly*, 17(4), 231-247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15228959.2021.1895021>
- Fyn, A. F. (2013). Peer group mentoring relationships and the role of narrative. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 39(4), 330–334. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2012.11.016>
- Georges, Jr., C. T. (2020). Establishing culturally responsive pedagogical practices via ‘storytelling. *Office of Community College Research and Leadership*, 5(3), 1–7
- Goodboy, A. K., Booth-Butterfield, M., Bolkan, S., & Griffin, D. J. (2015). The Role of Instructor Humor and Students’ Educational Orientations in Student Learning, Extra Effort, Participation, and Out-of-Class Communication. *Communication Quarterly*, 63(1), 44–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2014.965840>
- Keller, J. M. (2010). *Motivational design for learning and performance: The ARCS model approach*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1250-3>
- Kromka, S. M., & Goodboy, A. K. (2019). Classroom storytelling: Using instructor narratives to increase student recall, affect, and attention. *Communication Education*, 68(1), 20–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2018.152933>
- Marek, K., & American Library Association. (2011). *Organizational storytelling for librarians: Using stories for effective leadership*. ALA Editions.
- Martin, R. A., Puhlik-Doris, P., Larsen, G., Gray, J., & Weir, K. (2003). Individual differences in uses of humor and their relation to psychological well-being: Development of the Humor Styles Questionnaire. *Journal of research in personality*, 37(1), 48-75.
- McGraw, A. P., & Warren, C. (2010). Benign violations: Making immoral behavior funny. *Psychological science*, 21(8), 1141-1149.
- Mellon, C. A. (1986). Library anxiety: A grounded theory and its development. *College & Research Libraries*, 47(2), 160–165. doi:10.5860/ crl.76.3.276
- Miley, F. (2009). The Storytelling Project: Innovating to Engage Students in their Learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28(4), 357-369.
- Muszkiewicz, R. (2017). Get to know your librarian: How a simple orientation program helped alleviate library anxiety. *Public Services Quarterly*, 13(4), 223-240.
- Nienaber, K., Abrams, G., & Segrist, D. (2019). The Funny Thing Is, Instructor Humor Style Affects Likelihood of Student Engagement. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 19(5), 53-60.
- Thuna, M., & Szurmak, J. (2019). Telling their stories: A study of librarians’ use of narrative in instruction. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 45(5), 102048. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2019.102048>
- Vossler, J. J., & Watts, J. (2017). Educational story as a tool for addressing the framework for information literacy for higher education. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 17(3), 529–542. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2017.0033>
- White, M. A. (2019). Academic Course Evaluations in Health Sciences Can Be a Joke: A Cross-Sectional Examination of Whether Students Appreciate a Professor’s Sense of Humor. *American Journal of Health Education*, 50(6), 398–404.