Redefining the undergraduate learning experience in Creative Writing

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Project Summary

The UBC School of Creative Writing is one of the oldest, most distinguished programs in North America. We offer three streams for undergrads and grads: the Minor Program, BFA Program and MFA on-campus and Optional-Residency Programs.

The largest of our programs is our open enrollment undergraduate Minor Program with over 5500 seats across 54 sections. **This large grant TLEF project is currently in year 3 and it supports the renewal of our Minor Program curriculum by redesigning 11 courses in a complete blended learning redesign.** The purpose? To increase student engagement and learning flexibility.

"The online material was complementary to the in-class content and provide more in-depth info."

- CRWR 208 Student

Can It Be Taught? Bricks & Mortar vs Digital Pedagogy

The face-to-face workshop has long been unchallenged as the signature pedagogy in creative writing. But digitizing the creative writing classroom offers an untapped pedagogical opportunity to help writers at all levels flourish.

Our project considers how to integrate the best in creative writing pedagogy and innovative learning technology for interactive blended learning.

How we can help students cultivate foundational tools in craft, technique, and critical analysis while challenging them toward deeper understanding and more thoughtful application of the concepts learned through more face-to-face engagement in person?

Scaffolded Approach

This project includes the application of an innovative digital craft pedagogical model that focuses on three main areas to cultivate learning:

1. **Interactive micro-lectures** – videos and podcasts.
2. **Critical reading and analysis** with companion online evaluation tools to enhance and apply foundational concepts.
3. **Peer- and self-assessment tools** to provide students with deeper awareness of their creative intent while fostering greater student to student and student to instructor engagement in-class.

The Student Experience

Benefits of the blended creative writing classroom:

- **Students control their own learning pace**.
- **Frees up class time for more interactive elements**.
- **Increased learning opportunities: greater variety in teaching approaches and resources.**
- **Access to content and instruction any time, any place.**
- **Collaborative/collegial.**
- **Seamlessly integrated into 100% online (as evidenced during the pandemic)**

"I adore how the online material created a foundation and then the in-class content built on that foundation (i.e. enhanced our learning in unexpected ways!)." - CRWR 201 Student

Strength in Numbers

- **Teams of instructors** (two per genre/course) work on the redesign in a collaborative manner.
- **Stronger pedagogy** & discipline-specific foundation for each course.
- **Builds collegiality** within our program as instructors mentor one another.
- **Fosters intellectual & creative** richness for the students.
- **Pivoted quickly** to a 100% online model during the pandemic.
- **Created a strong knowledge base** of online, blended and in-class pedagogy and process within our unit.
- **Our pedagogical strength = collaboration.**

"The online content was quite engaging and encouraged me to work on my writing each time."
- CRWR 209 Student
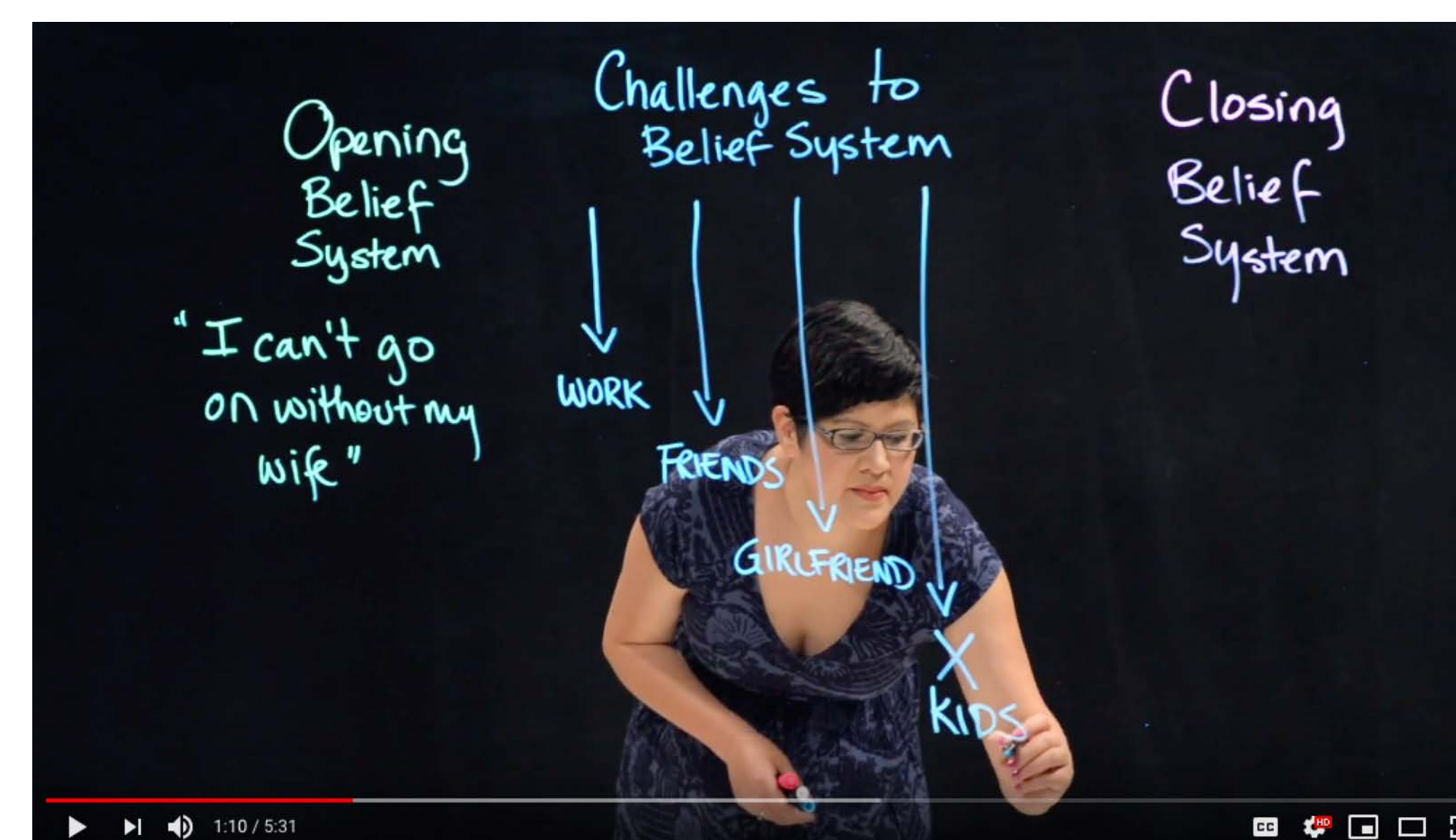
Year 1 Courses (2018/19)

Approximately 1000 students from these four courses participated in the project:

- CRWR 201: Intro to Writing Poetry
- CRWR 209: Intro to Writing Fiction
- CRWR 301: Intermediate Poetry
- CRWR 309: Intermediate Fiction

Year 2 Courses (2019/20)

Approximately 900 students participated in the project in these three courses:

- CRWR 206: Intro to Screenwriting (completed remotely during the pandemic 2020/21)
- CRWR 208: Intro to Graphic Forms (aka Comics)
- CRWR 213: New Media
- CRWR 306: Intermediate Screenwriting (completed remotely during the pandemic 2020/21)
- CRWR 308: Intermediate Graphic Forms

Year 3 Courses (2021/22)

Approximately 600 students will participate in the project in these two courses:

- CRWR 230: Intro to Comedic Writing
- CRWR 310: Video Game Writing

Acknowledgement

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