



Creating a Welcoming Classroom: Fostering Belonging **CELT Professional Day: Tuesday, August 26, 2025**

Welcome Back! This year's CELT theme is **Creating a Welcoming Classroom: Fostering Belonging**. How can we create a classroom environment to make every student feel welcome? How can we help our students belong, connect, and build community to support their learning? All CELT events are open to all full-time and adjunct faculty at Middlesex College and are in person. We look forward to being together to share ideas and learn from one another.

Please **register** August CELT events by clicking the following link:

- CELT [Fall Professional Week](#) (for 3 days of events in August)

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Join us for our Keynote speaker, **Dr. Cate Denial, *A Pedagogy of Kindness*** This keynote will be followed by lunch at noon and a workshop on the *Kind Syllabus* from 1 PM – 2 PM

A Pedagogy of Kindness, Dr. Cate Denial (CB, Brunswick Room)

What does it mean to practice a Pedagogy of Kindness? This presentation will explore three tenets of compassionate teaching: justice, believing students, and believing *in* students. We'll reflect together on what kindness (and its lack) has meant to us within academia, and how we can - piece by piece - assemble a kind approach to pedagogy that meets the needs of our students and ourselves in a time of great change.

Catherine (Cate) Denial, Ph.D. is the Bright Distinguished Professor of American History and Director of the Bright Institute at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. A winner of the American Historical Association's Eugene Asher Distinguished Teaching Award, Denial has served as a member of the Educational Advisory Committee of the Digital Library of America, as a Distinguished Lecturer for the Organization of American Historians, and as a Learned Scholar for the National Historic Landmarks division of the National Park Service. Denial currently sits on the board of *Commonplace: A Journal of Early American Life*. She has held an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation fellowship from the American Philosophical Society, and she is an elected member of the American Antiquarian Society.

Denial's historical scholarship focuses on the experiences of marriage, divorce, pregnancy, and childbirth among early nineteenth-century Ojibwe people and the missionaries who lived among them. Her article, *Mother of All the Living: Motherhood, Religion, and Political Culture at the Ojibwe Village of Fond du Lac, 1835-1839*, appeared in *Early American Studies*, and built on the work of Denial's first book, *Making Marriage: Husbands, Wives, and the American State in Dakota and Ojibwe Country* (2013). Her current project is a new interpretation of the life of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, and her life among the Ojibwe and fur trade cultures of Sault Ste. Marie. Denial's new book, *A Pedagogy of Kindness* argues that higher education needs to get aggressively and determinedly kind. *A Pedagogy of Kindness* is about attending to justice, believing people, and believing *in* people. It's a transformational discipline.

We gratefully acknowledge and thank the generous support of the Middlesex College Foundation Board of Directors for sponsoring the keynote address and opening workshop for CELT Professional Day and for helping to advance teaching and learning at Middlesex College.

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. **The Kind Syllabus** Dr. Cate Denial (Brunswick Room, CB)

Join Dr. Cate Denial in this hands-on workshop as we discuss strategies to create a **Kind Syllabus**. Learn how you can create a syllabus that is compassionate, promotes kindness, supports learning, and helps your students succeed.

2:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. AI-Assisted Teaching in Sciences and Humanities: The Secrets of Prompt Engineering Alexander Pichugin (*Raritan Bay Room, CB*)

The workshop explores the principles and strategies of prompt engineering to effectively integrate Gen-AI tools into teaching various subjects across the sciences and humanities. Participants will learn how to create, analyze, and modify prompts to maximize AI's potential in creating engaging, interactive, and personalized learning experiences. Practical examples and hands-on activities will equip educators with the skills to enhance their teaching with AI-powered solutions. Participants are encouraged to bring a laptop to this session.

Wednesday, August 27, 2025

9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. Disability Accommodations: Under or Over Accommodating? Elaine Daidone and Jason Holmwood (*Amboy Room, CB*)

A conversation centered on finding the balance in accommodating students with disabilities in your class. Special attention will be paid to behavioral challenges and assignment extensions. Faculty are encouraged to submit a pressing case example to either Elaine Daidone (edaidone@middlesexcc.edu) or Jason Holmwood (jholmwood@middlesexcc.edu)

10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. Bad Advice for Teaching Susan Altman and Junghee Kim (*Raritan Bay Room, CB*)

As educators, we often receive formative advice from instructors, mentors, and peers about how to teach, but how often do we stop and consider the merits of that advice? This roundtable discussion will be an opportunity to share the “bad advice” you may have been given about teaching. What were you told that is antiquated or produced a culture of inequity for your students? How did you turn that advice around to be “good” teaching? Whether you are a new faculty member or one with many years of experience, this workshop is an opportunity to reflect critically on your teaching practice in order to develop more thoughtful strategies in the classroom.

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Enjoy a Lunch Break on your Own

1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Stacking the Cups: An Immersive Demonstration and Discussion on Motivation Nikki Gonzalez (*Amboy Room, CB*)

This workshop engages attendees in a hands-on activity to explore the complexities of motivation and individual priorities through a group exercise inspired by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Milton Rokeach's Value Survey. Participants will reflect on the challenges of balancing diverse perspectives, examine the role of self-reflection in understanding motivation, and discuss how to support students in identifying their own goals. This session will highlight the instructor's role in fostering an environment that supports both foundational needs and higher-level aspirations.

Choose between one of the following two workshops (one is repeated on Thursday) at 2:15 – 3:15 PM:

(Choice #1) 2:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Community Engaged Learning Information Session Kim Silverio Diaz & Pattiann McMahon (*Raritan Bay, CB*)

Faculty are invited to a CEL information session to explore current research on aligning course outcomes with community needs. The session includes an overview of the recruitment and alignment processes, student reflections on the impact of CEL courses, and a Q&A discussion.

(Choice #2) 2:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Access for Success - Ally with Accessible Web Content Megan Elliott and Lindsay Arnold, eLearning (*Amboy, CB*) *(This workshop will be repeated on Thursday, August 28)*

Join the Department of eLearning to get a better understanding of the new **Ally** program in Canvas and what the Title 2 requirements coming next year will mean for your Canvas courses. This session will walk through how to utilize the Ally tool and help you to remove the roadblocks that students face with online content. Adding alternative text to images, adding captions to videos, designing readable presentations, and more will help your courses be accessible to all!

3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Testing the Waters: What's new in Artificial Intelligence Michael Sullivan and Megan Elliott, eLearning (*Amboy, CB*)

Thinking about using AI for assignments in your classes? Unsure about which program best suits your needs? Curious about what is new? Afraid to try it? Join us to learn strategies to successfully utilize generative AI tools in your classes and support teaching and learning for your students.

Thursday, August 28, 2025

9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. Yoga for a Balanced Body and Mind Arianna Illa (*Brunswick Room, CB*)

Explore the benefits of yoga to help decrease stress and start the academic year off strong! Yoga is a great way to help energize your body and relax your mind. This will be an introductory level class that will include breathwork, meditation, and a full series of yoga postures. Please wear comfortable clothes and bring your own mat if possible.

10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. Bridging the Gap: Strategies to Support First-Generation College Students Priscilla Hernandez (*Raritan Bay Room, CB*)

First-generation college students often face unique challenges navigating higher education. As educators, we can play a key role in fostering their success by creating supportive, equitable, and inclusive environments that affirm their unique experiences and needs. Join us for a discussion on effective tools and strategies that promote culturally responsive teaching, support first-gen student success, and empower them both in and beyond the classroom.

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Enjoy a Lunch Break on your Own

1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. The Secrets of Microsoft 365, Information Technology (*Amboy Room, CB*)

Know how to check your email and build a PowerPoint presentation but not much else? Join us to learn how to use the many useful features of **Microsoft Office 365** including One Drive, SharePoint, Forms, and more. Learn techniques to make your work life easier and discover ways to collaborate with your colleagues and students in real time. Participants are encouraged to bring a laptop to this session.

2:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Access for Success - Ally with Accessible Web Content Megan Elliott and Lindsay Arnold, eLearning (*Raritan Bay Room, CB*)

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