Intro to Ethics & Great Thinkers – Author's Interview

Transcript

00:00:00:13 - 00:00:09:00
Riley: Introduction to Ethics and Great Thinkers project author's interview. Introduction.

00:00:09:03 - 00:00:44:27
Jenna: (Secwepemctsin) Weytkp te Weytep. Hello everyone. My name is Jenna Woodrow. Jenna: Woodrow ren skwekwst. Te Kuujjuaq re st̓7é7kwen Kuujjuaq is where I'm from. So I'm a professor of philosophy. My position is as an associate teaching professor, and I've been at TRU for, I think, about 15 years now. And I'm really very grateful for this opportunity to speak a little bit more about the TRU Open Press and the support that it's provided for my work, and really importantly, for students that I've been working with on various projects.

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Riley: Please tell us about the project and how the TRU Open Press team was able to support you.

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Jenna: So TRU Open press provided invaluable support for, two projects, and I'll speak briefly about both of them. One of them is an Open Educational Resource, which is a textbook for introduction to philosophy, great thinkers, to the enlightenment and the enlightenment to modern. So those are two separate courses that we teach here in the philosophy department at Tru.

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Jenna: But we elected to create one open educational resource that was able to scope over the content in both of those courses. The second Open Educational Resource was also a textbook, and this one was for philosophy 2010, which is Introduction to Ethics. It's a second year course, but it deals more specifically with the topic of ethics. And that course I collaborated with Ethics Board Canada, which is, a national and international organization, to get a number of case studies integrated into the open educational resource.

00:01:53:17 - 00:02:19:15
Jenna: So for this, there had been a long time in thinking about these to open educational resources, really importantly, because of how it can help students achieve their learning outcomes through the course. We know that the inability to pay for very costly textbooks is one of those big impediments to students being successful in courses. And so it had been on my on my list of things to do for quite some time.

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Jenna: I had created an open educational, resource, which is an open textbook in logic back in, I believe it was in 2017 and 2018 that I had completed that. And, I found lots of success with that, with the students not having to pay for a textbook. And also, I got to make the textbook that I wanted to make, in that case, it was it had a lot of highly interactive logic games that students could play.

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Jenna: So how that TRU Open Press helped me with this? Well, I honestly can say that I wouldn't have been able to do it in the time frame that I was able to do it, and without TRU Open Press. So I had been working on these and developing these. But Terrapin Press really helped, by helping me provide training to students that would enable me to get the Open educational resources from like concept, and draft into the actual pressbooks.

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Jenna: So I hired three students, grinder, Hunter Aiken and Calum McCracken. And these students really helped me take the draft that I had written and then put it from that stage into an open textbook that the students could actually access and use. So, yeah, they provided the students with the training. They also provided an enormous amount of assistance, with editing the final, product.

00:03:42:13 - 00:03:51:22
Riley: Have you or the students encountered any challenges or limitations while working on this project? If so, what were they?

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Jenna: There were some challenges with timelines. We originally thought it would take a certain amount of time, and then it ended up taking about two and a half times as much as we had allocated. So there was a time at which I had to, rehire, the students in order to, to proceed with that work. That's not unusual for lots of things.

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Jenna: Just take more time than we would expect. There were some more technical challenges that we encountered with the Pressbooks platforms. One of them was that I really wanted students to be able to have a page number for their references. So that's one of the things I try to teach students in my classes, is how to do proper citations, and is really difficult to do that when you have to count through paragraphs.

00:04:39:02 - 00:05:04:22
Jenna: And so that was one of the technical things that we simply weren't able to find a, a way of doing what we wanted to do, there with, with page numbers, which is relatively minor. Another difficulty that we had with the platform itself was navigate ability within the Pressbooks. So for the Open Educational Resource, we wanted this to be like highly, highly accessible, like maximally accessible to students.

00:05:04:22 - 00:05:31:20
Jenna: And we also wanted it to be really easily navigable. So that wherever students were, they could find their way back to the reading or into the questions or over to the exercises. And we found that there was only one level of navigate ability, like an overarching chapter, and then you could navigate within that, but you couldn't like bumper round really easily from one thing to the next.

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Jenna: So that was a small challenge. I think what we ended up doing was a fair enough fix. We decided to have at the top, I believe, a navigation plan so that to navigate within the chapter, you would just scroll back up to the top and then click on, one of them. So that was one of the, smaller issues that we had.

00:05:50:14 - 00:06:17:14
Jenna: And then an issue that we had that we got a tremendous amount of help from was because for the ethics textbook, we had, we wanted to collaborate with other authors on resources that that they had written, and there was a matter of how to obtain the appropriate licensing from there. From from them and to help them really figure out what license they want to use, because we wanted everyone involved in the project to be, like, really excited and happy to be involved in the project.

00:06:17:14 - 00:06:46:15
Jenna: And so Danny Collins was very, very helpful to us, really outlining the different kinds of licenses that were available and providing for US contracts that we could then provide to those authors so that their work could be represented in the textbook, but with the license that they wanted. And all of them agreed that the license they wanted was a share, you know, broadly, but not for commercial use, which I think was very much in keeping with the ethics, of the project as a whole.

00:06:46:18 - 00:06:56:25
Riley: What advantages and benefits did you gain and will students gain from this project? And if you know how many students used your project.

00:06:56:28 - 00:07:24:04
Jenna: I think I might have already spoken to the advantages and benefits to the students. A real important impediment is having to pay for textbook textbooks in philosophy. The Introduction to Philosophy course textbooks can run upwards of $250 for the textbook, and many of the sources that are being referred to are sources where the persons have been dead for a long time, the period.

00:07:24:04 - 00:07:53:02
Jenna: It's an ancient philosophy, v2 modern. And so there are lots of sources that are available in the public domain. And so it only seemed reasonable to, find a way to package these sources up for students to be able to use another advantage of having like, a tailor made, open educational resources that the progression of the, materials in the open educational resource in the textbook actually follows the progression in the course outline quite closely.

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Jenna: And so that can help students just in terms of figuring out what to read next. Well, wait to read next is what comes next in the in the text book. The other thing that I, that I think this did, really well was that in some open educational resources, they can find sources that are in the public domain, like for example, like Descartes Meditations on First Philosophy might be in the public domain, but then it's just the meditations.

00:08:18:02 - 00:08:40:15
Jenna: And so my research assistants and I, worked to develop introductions to each of the pieces, so that the students wouldn't be coming to the material, cold as it were. They would have an introduction to it. And we also developed a series of thought experiments that would really help students think through the material, in methods that align well with philosophy.

00:08:40:15 - 00:08:45:29
Jenna: So I think all of those are benefits to the student.

00:08:46:01 - 00:08:52:26
Riley: How thoroughly does the project address fairness, inclusion and accessibility?

00:08:52:28 - 00:09:25:10
Jenna: So fairness, inclusion and accessibility were their prime motivators for the project. The end result, I think, does very well. That is because we conscientiously and intentionally, sought, for example, fonts that were easy to read. And then the open educational resources, themselves are amenable to things like e-readers, so that, folks who don't see very well can still have the benefit of, of the same access to the resource.

00:09:25:17 - 00:09:54:17
Jenna: Economic equity is, is a huge issue. And access to resources like this is one of the main incentives for undertaking the projects. All of my classes are zero cost classes, so I don't have any paid textbooks for my classes. But when there's an open educational resource that has the curated material goals with an introduction that really eases the learning experience for students.

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Riley: What might a future project scope entail?

00:09:59:19 - 00:10:26:10
Jenna: So I do aim to have an open educational resource, a textbook, for all of the courses that I regularly teach. So I have now created one for, Introduction to Logic, which is elementary formal logic. I have one for Introduction to Ethics, have one for Introduction to philosophy, which is two different classes. There's 1010 each into enlightenment and, and, enlightenment to modern.

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Jenna: But there are other courses that I teach, for which I do not yet have an open educational resource. And so my, my objective is piecemeal. Anyhow, each one of my classes will have its own open educational resource and also to share the resources that I have. I know how my logic textbook has been taken up by some of my colleagues at other institutions.

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Jenna: For example, I think the Sandy ban scoffs at our in college, uses it and finds the interactive games to be really helpful for students to progress through the material. Well, so that's another vector is, you know, sharing the the resources both, you know, on campus with other philosophers. The introduction to philosophy, textbook was intentionally created so that I could use it.

00:11:15:01 - 00:11:23:08
Jenna: And also my colleagues, when they teach the course, they, they can use it. And then our students kind of benefit from that.

00:11:23:11 - 00:11:29:16
Riley: How did you learn about TRU Open Press opportunities?

00:11:29:19 - 00:11:53:13
Jenna: Okay. So I think I've been involved with, open access to educational resources, since I was doing my, my graduate work. And so my area philosophy is in epistemic justice. That's

knowledge based injustice. And so this idea of the costs of knowledge, is something that's that's been on my radar and I've been centrally aware of that.

00:11:53:13 - 00:12:17:22
Jenna: And so when I became a professor, one of my first objectives, was to try to find ways of mitigating that costs and mitigating the asymmetries in achievements that, that are available to students, based on money alone. And so since I've been that true, I was involved quite early with the Open Educational Resource working Group.

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Jenna: I don't remember the actual title of the, of the group, but there are amazing folks on campus, like, for example, the philosophy, history and politics, librarian, Brenda Smith and Jim draws that, of course. And then people like Suzanne, foxy people who are working on making education just more accessible. So I had been working with them on the project itself.

00:12:41:26 - 00:13:07:10
Jenna: And so when an opportunity came up, when I was working on my initial OER, which was the elementary formal logic of er, I connected up, there and actually got assistance in developing that are particularly with coding for the interactive games. I got assistance, at that point. And then I am involved in two of the larger projects on campus right now.

00:13:07:17 - 00:13:45:20
Jenna: One of them is the arts Cohort project, and one of them is the Honors Project. And those are under, an umbrella where we, get to talk to other people, particularly the people who, spearheading the the TRU Open Press Project. And so I got to hear about it really quite early on in the game and connect up my students with TRU Open Press, I should say, along the way, there's another project that I have that's still underway, that is developing, an open educational resource for faculty, on campus about how to make education more broadly accessible and more, more, more equitable.

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Jenna: And that I'm working on with two students, right now.

00:13:50:08 - 00:13:57:04
Riley: What was your experience like using TRU Open Press and receiving support from the team?

00:13:57:06 - 00:14:36:07
Jenna: And, you know, it was wonderful, highly supportive, really responsive to any questions that I had and any questions that my students had. And so, like my my work on these two latter years, I had developed the template and created the open Educational Resources. Then we need to know, like what is actually the best way of doing this? And folks at, Open Press were really amazing, timely in their answers, willing to willing to help us try to solve any problems that did arise and then able to actually give my students some training that helped stop problems from arising in the first place.

00:14:36:07 - 00:14:39:19
Jenna: Yeah. So accolades all around, I think.

00:14:39:22 - 00:14:50:09
Riley: How do you think open educational resources will improve students education? How would the quality of the education differ without your.

00:14:50:12 - 00:15:19:11
Jenna: I think it enhances the educational experience for students. Having an easily navigable, appropriately curated textbook is essential. And I know that there's actually a hurdle right now, amongst students and even the general public about how much people actually do read it. So having any barrier to reading or engaging with materials removed is, I think, essential to, to fostering good, healthy, intellectual communities.

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Jenna: I think it also helps faculty members to help students. And I'll just give you a little quick example. So in one of my courses that I don't have an hour for, yet, just today I had, with the help of, Brenda Smith, our librarian, I had developed stable links to sources that were in the public domain.

00:15:39:15 - 00:15:59:23
Jenna: But just today, one of my students pointed out that the link to the one that was for week 11, is broken. So he's doing his project on that, and he can't find the source because the link is broken. So now I have to go find another stable source, re embed it into the Moodle and into the course outline.

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Jenna: So having an open educational resource where links won't be broken I think is really, going to be helpful for minimizing that kind of upkeep, that trying to have free materials. Otherwise it does require a lot of effort.

00:16:22:00 – 00:16:30:01
Riley: What types of Open Educational Resources would you like to see in the future?

00:16:30:01 - 00:16:56:00
Jenna: So I think I already mentioned that I intend to develop for each of the courses that I regularly teach, the ones that I've already finished. So there's 3 or 4, depending on how you're counting them. My intention with the students seems students hopefully to do a version 2.0. We got each of them to a point where we're actually really happy in their bit. Could be very useful for the students, but we did want to also do things. One of the things that I have in my courses is I have embedded small videos explaining the material, highlighting things to look at, and we didn't have a chance to do that.

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Jenna: So integrating more multimedia for resources I think will be a next step that will come after I have like the basic versions for each of the courses. One of the things that I hope to do, with my students is, for my master's students is to develop an OCR together as a class so that each student, their, their work for that class will be part of something that we together as a class, end up publishing.

00:17:28:00 - 00:17:44:24
Jenna: So that's another hope that I have. It'll take me a little while to get, I guess, sufficient, materials under that hope, right, to change the pedagogy a little bit to, to enable that. But that's another thing that I would like to do.

00:17:44:26 - 00:17:47:09
Riley: Thank you for the interview, Jenna.

00:17:47:11 - 00:17:48:26
Jenna:
Okay, kukwstsétsemc. Thank you.