

Robert Dawson (Saint-Mary's University)

Editor-in-Chief



As I write this, it's late July: and this week I'll be teaching in person.

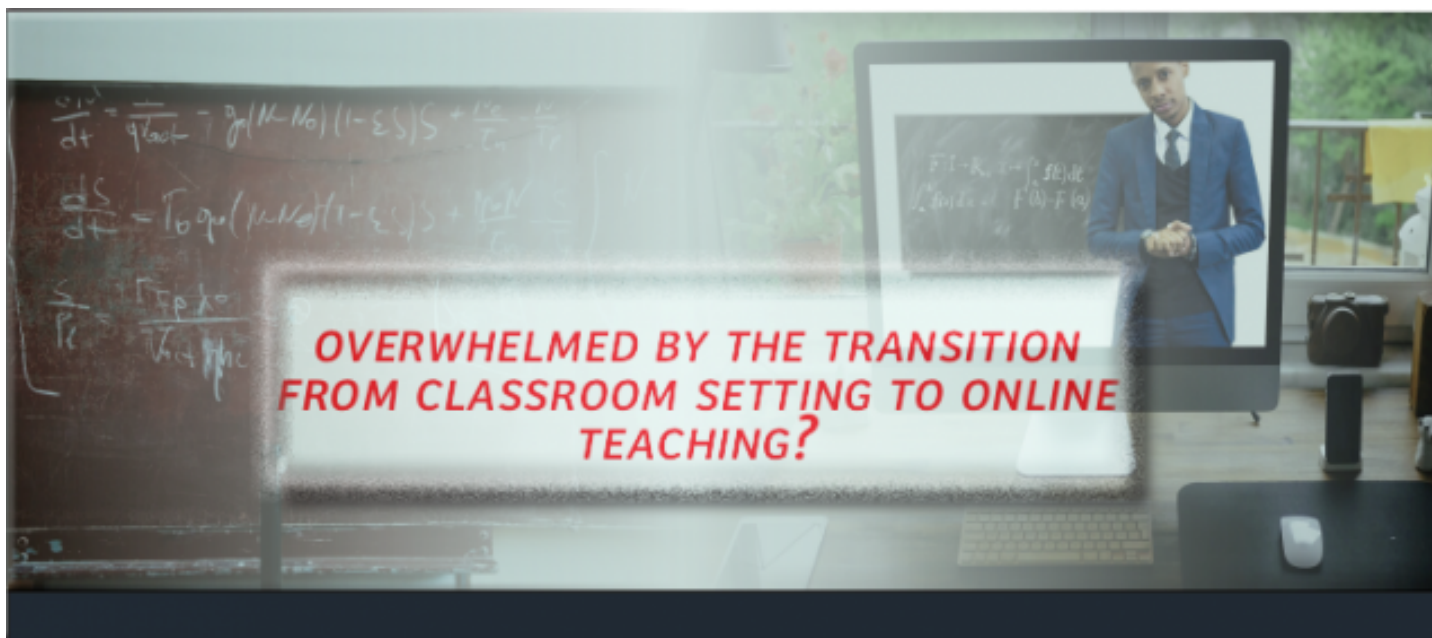
Only for one morning: and not mathematics, but a creative writing class for young teenagers: I write fiction in my spare time. Only half a dozen students will be there, spaced out in a full-sized classroom. But I'm going to make the most of it, because it may be my last opportunity for a long time.

Come September, my first-year calculus section will have something like two hundred students. Many of them will be from outside the province, some from outside Canada. There is no way to space that many students out in a classroom. In some cases, there may not even be a safe way for them to travel to Nova Scotia. We're going to have to put that class on remotely. I'm not holding my breath for winter courses, either.

Like many universities, Saint Mary's University has summer school courses that are mostly taught by part-time instructors. As a result of this, many of our part-time faculty will have taught two full courses and their labs or recitations online by September, while the full-time faculty will have done no more than finish up an abbreviated version of their winter courses. This creates a humbling situation in which I, and many of my full-time colleagues, will be learning (if we are wise) from the example and experience of the part-time faculty. Of course, smart assistant professors have known all along that seasoned sessional instructors are specialists in lower-year courses, and pay attention to any graciously-offered advice, in the same way that subalterns who want to learn their trade listen to the NCOs. But this summer I find myself listening carefully even to the doctoral students whose hiring I recommended so recently. They've been there, and I haven't yet.

To everybody else who's preparing for the same experience: good luck, and please be properly appreciative of your department's sessional instructors. They deserve it now more than ever.

And to all sessional instructors reading this: thank you!



Attend the education sessions at the CMS Virtual Winter Meeting in December and discuss challenges and strategies of online learning with other educators

When: December 4-7

Where: Whova App

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