A Marie Kondō-Inspired Approach to Designing Accelerated Online Courses

Joanna C. Dunlap & Alexis S. Bjelica

Instructional Design Online Courses Accelerated courses Marie Kondō

Accelerated courses offer the same learning outcomes and credit hours as their semester-length counterparts but over a shorter duration of study. At many universities, accelerated online courses are gaining traction as a solution to students' demand for more flexible scheduling. Many educators find it challenging to convert 16-week online courses to eight-week online courses. To help think through this conversion, we have been inspired by Marie Kondō's system for decluttering and tidying living and work spaces, only keeping items that are needed and spark joy. In this article we share our Marie Kondō-inspired approach to designing accelerated online courses.

Introduction

Imagine what it would be like to have a bookshelf filled only with books that you really love. Isn't that image spellbinding? ~ Marie Kondō[1]

Our university has seen a rapid increase in the number of eight-week online course offerings to meet student demand for flexible scheduling. Accelerated courses, also referred to as intensive or compressed courses, are courses that take less time to complete than conventional semester- and trimester-length courses but provide the same credit and contact hours (Vlachopoulos et al., 2019). At our university, the most common duration for accelerated courses is eight weeks as opposed to the traditional 16-week offerings. These accelerated courses are typically offered during the summer term, but they are increasingly being added to the fall and spring semester-length terms as well. The reasonable approach for many faculty is to simply double the workload each week; for example, a project that would be scheduled across two weeks during a semester-length course will be scheduled to be completed in one week during an accelerated course. The contact hour calculations used by universities also seem to encourage this doubling up approach, and the aim to create equivalent experiences for students in both formats is a valid one. Learning theory, research, and student feedback, however, have shown that doing the exact same thing in half the time is not the best

approach to take (Holzweiss et al., 2019; McDonald et al., 2017). More direction in designing and delivering accelerated courses is necessary.

Our university is not alone in adding accelerated courses to its year-round offerings. Many universities see accelerated courses as a way to increase enrollment (Holzweiss et al., 2019). There is a growing demand for accelerated courses because of the perceived time efficiency; many students enrolled in accelerated courses and programs are juggling work and family commitments while completing their university education (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2010).

The increased length of time spent together in a classroom each day in accelerated face-to-face courses offers students the ability to complete a course in a shorter time frame, focus on one course at a time, engage in a more immersive learning experience, and strengthen social connections among students and faculty (Herrmann & Berry, 2016; Lutes & Davies, 2018; Richardson et al., 2017). However, accelerated online courses present significant design and facilitation challenges, especially if the online courses rely on asynchronous learning, communication, and collaboration platforms and tools (Demmans Epp et al., 2017; Richardson et al., 2017).

Decluttering and Organizing Online Courses for Accelerated Delivery

> *Once you learn to choose your belongings properly, you will be left with only the amount that fits perfectly in the space you own.* ~ Marie Kondō

With the increased time spent working at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, many people tackled new projects. One project pursued was decluttering and reorganizing living spaces to better accommodate stay-at-home lives. Decluttering our homes so that entire families could live, go to school, and work comfortably in the same space became commonplace. Marie Kondō—an already well-known organizing consultant—became a household name during the pandemic as did her "Spark Joy" approach, and many were inspired by her videos, books, and television series to engage in significant reflection about their accumulated stuff and the role of their stuff in their lives.

There are a few basic tenets that make up the foundation of Marie Kondō's KonMari Method (2014):

- Clear out the space and start from square one.
- Focus on categories of belongings (e.g., coats, books, mugs) instead of rooms (e.g., bedroom, kitchen).
- Choose only those belongings that spark joy, or have a clear function.
- Keep feelings of nostalgia at bay.
- Care for and respect your belongings.

Inspired by this advice, we adapted these five tenets to our accelerated online course re/design work—Alexis from an instructional designer's point of view and Joni from the perspective of a faculty member developing an accelerated online course. We already embraced the recommendations of many practitioners regarding the design and facilitation of effective accelerated online courses, including (Brandt et al., 2015; Caskurlu et al., 2020; Colclasure et al., 2018; Kyndt et al., 2014; Lee & Horsfall, 2010; McDonald et al., 2017; Saxon & Martirosyan, 2017; Walsh et al., 2019):

- Ensuring content is necessary and directly relates to learning outcomes;
- Using of smaller formative assignments;
- Focusing on depth over breadth;
- Breaking large projects into smaller deliverables;
- Providing timely feedback;
- Providing opportunities for collaboration and group work;
- Providing clear expectations and prescriptive instructions and assessment tools;
- Using synchronous discussions instead of asynchronous discussions;
- Using video communications and materials instead of text-only; and
- Creating more active learning opportunities.

Along with these recommendations, we found Marie Kondō's prescription for decluttering and organizing a living space to be a practical and effective way of decluttering and reorganizing a course in preparation for an accelerated learning format. Plus, because of its familiarity, Marie Kondō's KonMari Method was a comfortable and easy-to-follow approach to the daunting task of redesigning the 16-week online course to work in the accelerated term. Throughout this article, we reference Joni and Alexis' redesign of Joni's online course on Creative Designs to describe our application of the KonMari Method in the early stages of course redesign for an accelerated online delivery.

Clear Out the Space and Start from Square One

It's easy to get rid of things when there is an obvious reason for doing so. It's much more difficult when there is no compelling reason. ~ Marie Kondō

The main goal of the Creative Designs course redesign was to create an online course that worked equally well in both the accelerated eight-week summer session and the full 16-week fall semester in terms of students' learning experience and achievement of four learning objectives:

1. Embrace the creative side of instructional-materials design, and embrace the disposition of creative designers.
2. Design effective (i.e., inclusive, relevant, engaging, memorable) instructional materials for a chosen audience and in a chosen subject area
3. Apply research- and theory-based principles to the design of effective (i.e., inclusive, relevant, engaging, memorable) instructional materials.
4. Support design decisions with specific reference to principles, objectives, outcomes, and context.

Joni had been teaching the online Creative Designs course every fall and spring semester for more than seven years. She had revised the course several times to keep it up-to-date and aligned with student feedback and general continual improvement efforts at the program level; each year Joni made adjustments, changed assignments, and added resources. Most recently, the Creative Designs course had been divided into four parts over a 16-week semester:

- Weeks 1-5 (five weeks): Introduction to creative approaches; completion of creative design mini-projects on visual design, text design, drawing, and storytelling.
- Weeks 6-9 (four weeks): Presentation design project.
- Weeks 10-13 (four weeks): Infographic design project.
- Weeks 14-16 (three weeks): Reflection, revision, presenting, and celebration of course accomplishments.

When thinking about teaching the Creative Designs course during the accelerated summer term, Joni's initial idea was to keep the course content and sequence as it was and simply adjust the timeline. For example, instead of the Presentation and Infographic design projects each taking four weeks, her plan was to have each of those projects take only two weeks to complete. This approach was also going to make it relatively easy to prepare the online course in Canvas because it would only require a few edits and changes to the timeline. She quickly realized that this tactic was flawed because it assumed (a) the original course content and sequence was the gold standard for the course, and (b) it was instructionally reasonable to squeeze all of the existing content and assignments into a shorter timeframe and expect the same learning outcomes and positive student experience.

It can be easy to fall into the "gold standard" trap with a course that has been updated frequently and receives positive end-of-term evaluations. However, even well-received courses can become bloated over time as more content, materials, and resources are added without eliminating anything. Therefore, decluttering is a reasonable goal to have for long-standing courses. It's not that any of the content, activities, assignments, or resources (such as readings) is irrelevant; it's more likely that there is simply too much. And the effectiveness of decluttering is influenced by the organization of what remains. As Marie Kondō shares, "It's human nature to take the easy route, and most people leap at storage methods that promise quick and convenient ways to remove visible clutter. Putting things away creates the illusion that the clutter problem has been solved. But sooner or later, all the storage units are full, and the room once again overflows with things" (2014, p. 36-37). So, when decluttering a course, it is also important to reconsider storage.

Relating this idea to course redesign, it is important to step away from the learning management system (the storage unit) to resist leaping at a particular structure or layout (the storage method) for the course.

It can also be detrimental to students' learning and overall experience in an accelerated course if a course is not intentionally designed to work well in a shorter time frame (Holzweiss et al., 2019; Lee & Horsfall, 2010; McDonald et al., 2017). Accelerated courses are typically more intensive and require committed, uninterrupted time; going on vacation during an accelerated course, for example, is not recommended because even missing only a week is the equivalent of missing an eighth of the course. The intensiveness of an accelerated course can have some positive effects on student learning; when designed well and for the appropriate content and audience, the immersion into the content that takes place in accelerated courses can support students' learning (Lutes & Davies, 2018). However, there are also significant challenges associated with accelerated courses, especially for accelerated online courses (Holzweiss et al., 2019; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2010). Important to the success of online courses, establishing social presence and building a safe and supportive learning community can be difficult to achieve with limited contact and time. It can also be challenging to design courses that involve students in feedback and revision cycles, such as composition, for an accelerated delivery (Colclasure et al., 2018; Collins et al., 2013). Finally, foundational undergraduate courses, such as General Biology, can be challenging to design for accelerated delivery because of the amount of required content that students must work with before they can move on and/or into the major (Brandt et al., 2015; Harwood et al., 2018).

The need to create a version of the Creative Designs course that worked equally well for students in both an eight-week and 16-week term and the need to examine the current content and assignments to update and improve students' learning experience in the course were compelling reasons to start from square one as Marie Kondō suggests. Instead of copying over the existing course shell in Canvas, Joni started with an empty course shell. And to avoid designing the course based on the inherent structure, flow, and layout of Canvas, she designed the new version of the course outside of Canvas before making decisions about how to structure the course within Canvas. Following Marie Kondō's advice —". . .tidying must start with discarding. We need to exercise self-control and resist storing our belongings until we have finished identifying what we really want and need to keep" (2014, p. 37) —Joni set aside thoughts of structure, flow, and layout and began the hard work of decluttering and discarding.

Focus on Categories of Belongings Instead of Rooms

The root of the problem lies in the fact that people often store the same type of item in more than one place. When we tidy each place separately, we fail to see that we're repeating the same work in many locations and become locked into a vicious circle of tidying. To avoid this, I recommend tidying by category. For example, instead of deciding that today you'll tidy a particular room, set goals like "clothes today, books tomorrow." ~ Marie Kondō

Online courses that are delivered with the help of a learning management system such as Canvas help instructors efficiently set up the equivalent of rooms full of stuff (e.g., lectures, readings and other digital resources, assignments, quizzes, and projects). These rooms are established as modules, units, and/or weeks within a typical online course. This is how Joni's Creative Designs course was structured: weekly modules with guiding agendas and associated content and resources within each module. This means that the course's content on presentation design, for example, was spread out across multiple weeks and modules.

To follow Marie Kondō's advice, we defined the categories as the course's learning objectives. Instead of categories such as coats, shoes, and books, the course had four categories aligned to the course's learning objectives:

1. *Creative design*: Embrace the creative side of instructional-materials design; embrace the disposition of creative designers.
2. *Learner-centered inclusive design*: Design inclusive instructional materials for a chosen audience and in a chosen subject area.
3. *Informed design*: Apply research- and theory-based principles to the design of inclusive instructional materials.
4. *Design decision making*: Support design decisions with specific reference to principles, objectives, outcomes, and context.

A fifth category—*social presence and learning community*—was added because supporting the social context of learning and creating a supportive learning community were critical to Joni's online courses whether accelerated or not.

Next, Joni went through the entire course and created "piles" for each category. Below is an example of the "pile" for the *creative design* category. Joni pulled into one "pile" all of the resources, activities, and assignments associated with the *creative design* category (see Table 1). The items in this "pile" came from eight of the 16 weeks and from across two out of four modules.

Table 1

Original pile for the Creative Design category

	Resources	Activities & Assignments
Creativity	• Chip Heath & Dan Heath: Made to Stick, Introduction • Chip Heath & Dan Heath: Teaching that Sticks • Chip Heath & Dan Heath: The Power of Moments, Chapter 1 Defining Moments • Ira Glass: On Being Creative Genius (video approx. 2 minutes)-in Vialogues • Elizabeth Gilbert: Your Elusive Creative Genius (video approx. 20 minutes)-in Vialogues • Stefan Sagmeister's TED Talk on Happiness by Design	• Visual Design Challenge-in Slack (weekly) • Ideation Journals and Journaling • Soundtrack of Our Lives • Ideation Journal Revisited • Project: Gallery Show & Celebration
Visual design	• Introduction to Graphic Design - Design principles (basically CARP) (3:33 length video) • Robin Williams: The Non-Designers Design Book (4th edition), Chapters 1-7. • Ruth Colvin Clark & Chopeta Lyons: Graphics for Learning (2nd edition), Chapters 2 and 4. • Fair Use Checklist, Copyright Law for Instructional Designers, Finding Public Domain & Creative Commons Media	• Zoom session • Personal Logo • Design that Causes Lower Back Pain • You Belong in a Museum • Photos, Photos, Photos • Design Exploration Mini-Project: Visuals for Speech • Personal Logo Revisited
Storytelling	• Garr Reynolds: Why Storytelling Matters (video approx. 15 minutes)-in Vialogues • Garr Reynolds: Crafting the Story, Chapter 4 • Garr Reynolds: Using Images to Tell Stories, Chapter 4	• Zoom session • Design Exploration Mini-Project: Five Photo Story Part 1 • Design Exploration Mini-Project: Five Photo Story Part 1
Drawing	• TED Talk video as an example of how hand-drawing can help deliver an instructional message-in Vialogues • Scott McCloud: Making Comics, Intro & Chapter 1 (pp. 1-57) • Scott McCloud: Understanding Comics (video approx. 18 minutes)-in Vialogues • Dan Roam: Back of the Napkin, Chapters 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14 (pp. 13-45 & 147-234) • Dan Roam: Problem solving with simple pictures (video 6:18 min)-in Vialogues • The Boat (interactive graphic novel)	• Zoom session • Picasso Self-Portrait • Dinosaurs vs. Humans • Instruction by Fingerprint • Design Exploration Mini-Project: How to Make Toast Job Aid • Lessons Learned on the Back of a Napkin

Creating these piles for each category was eye-opening. The piles helped to illuminate what was valuable and important as well as where there were duplicates, gaps, inconsistencies, and inefficiencies. It was surprising to see what had ended up over time being over emphasized and what lacked the emphasis needed. And it was precisely what Joni needed to do before making any decisions about the course's redesigned structure and flow.

Choose Only Those Belongings that Spark Joy, or Have a Clear Function

Keep only those things that speak to your heart. Then take the plunge and discard all the rest. By doing this, you can reset your life and embark on a new lifestyle.

To truly cherish the things that are important to you, you must first discard those that have outlived their purpose. ~ Marie Kondō

Often the act of decluttering a course or designing a course for an accelerated delivery is approached with apprehension because of concerns about having to eliminate valuable content and learning experiences (Lutes & Davies, 2018; Anastasi, 2007; Hyun et al., 2006; Kretovics et al., 2005); the lack of time for feedback, revision, and reflection; and the inability to give attention to social presence and community building (Colclasure et al., 2018; Ferguson & DeFelice, 2010; Karpicke & Roediger, 2007; Lutes & Davies, 2018; Sousa, 2017). Addressing this in terms of decluttering household belongings, Marie Kondō shares, "I had been so focused on what to discard, on attacking the unwanted obstacles around me, that I had forgotten to cherish the things that I loved, the things I wanted to keep" (2014, p. 57). This is a shift in thinking from fear of what will be lost to appreciation for what is intentionally kept. The KonMari Method encourages us to have gratitude for what we discard, giving us closure to our relationship with what we discard in order to make it easier to let it go and focus on the value of what we keep. As Marie Kondō states, "We should be choosing what we want to keep, not what we want to get rid of" (2014, p. 57). This mindset is helpful when decluttering a course and/or designing an accelerated course because initially everything—all content, activities, projects, and resources—seem of critical value. It can be hard to let go.

In the spirit of picking "up each book, one by one" to determine if it sparked joy or was functional, Joni considered each item in each of the piles (based on the five categories), and reexamined its relevance given the learning objectives and the social presence/learning community instructional goal. For example, for the *creative design* category—which includes four unique components: creativity, visual design, storytelling, and drawing—Joni reviewed each reading and video to have a fresh perspective on its contribution to student learning. She also reread the instructions and assessment tools for each activity and assignment. This led to her discarding a number of items from the pile and noting where there were obvious gaps, as reflected in Table 2 below:

- For creativity, several readings and videos were discarded, one video was moved to be used during a Zoom session instead of reviewed independently, and three activities/assignments were reviewed. For example, although Joni believed that ideation journaling was a valuable activity, students never seemed to warm to it as part of their practice which made the assignment feel like busy work. Also, Joni realized she had an activity she felt was quite impactful—a weekly visual design challenge—that she had not previously prioritized because there were many other activities that received more attention. This decluttering process helped Joni see the lost opportunity and recommit to it as a valued activity. Finally, Joni realized that she wanted to include an activity that encouraged students to reflect on their hobbies and explore how the creativity involved in pursuing their hobbies was relevant to learning/instructional design; she wanted to have an activity that would activate students' prior learning about creative design and their preexisting creative spirit and know-how.
- For visual design, one video was discarded, one activity was discarded, and one activity was realigned to be used during a Zoom session instead of completed independently. Also, because learner-centered design—including inclusive design and universal design for learning (UDL)—is such an important part of the course, it was glaring to see that there was no mention of it in the pile. Therefore Joni made note of the need to address the gap, a gap she did not see before and likely would have missed if she had approached the redesign of the course within Canvas. Joni definitely found the following advice from Marie Kondō to be true: "The best way to find out what we really need is to get rid of what we don't" (2014, p. 218).
- For storytelling, Joni noted a gap in the storytelling literature related to creative design of instructional materials so made note of the need to address the gap in the resources provided to students.
- For drawing, the Marie Kondō-inspired approach led to several adjustments. For example, instead of requiring students to both watch a presentation and read a set of chapters on making comics, Joni made note that since they cover the same ideas that students could choose one or the other. Another video was discarded in favor of a more detailed reading, and another video was moved to be part of a Zoom session instead of being completed independently. Finally, three activities/assignments were discarded, and Joni noted a gap that required a new activity on comic creation.

Table 2

Decluttered pile for the *Creative Design* category

	Resources	Activities & Assignments
Creativity	• Chip Heath & Dan Heath: Made to Stick, Introduction • Chip Heath & Dan Heath: Teaching that Sticks • Chip Heath & Dan Heath: The Power of Moments, Chapter 1 Defining Moments • Ira Glass: On Being Creative Genius (video approx. 2 minutes)-in Vialogues MOVE: To Zoom session activity • Elizabeth Gilbert: Your Elusive Creative Genius (video approx. 20 minutes)-in Vialogues • Stefan Sagmeister's TED Talk on Happiness by Design	• Zoom session, include Ira Glass: On Being Creative Genius (video approx. 2 minutes) • Visual Design Challenge-in Slack (weekly) • GAP: Reflection on Hobbies • Ideation Journals and Journaling • Soundtrack of Our Lives • Ideation Journal Revisited • Project: Gallery Show & Celebration
Visual design	• Introduction to Graphic Design - Design principles (basically CARP) (3:33 length video) • Robin Williams: The Non-Designers Design Book (4th edition), Chapters 1-7. • Ruth Colvin Clark & Chopeta Lyons: Graphics for Learning (2nd edition), Chapters 2 and 4. • Fair Use Checklist, Copyright Law for Instructional Designers, Finding Public Domain & Creative Commons Media • GAP: Learner-centered Design: Inclusive Design, University Design for Learning (UDL)	• Zoom session, include Photos, Photos, Photos • Personal Logo • Design that Causes Lower Back Pain • You Belong in a Museum • Photos, Photos, Photos MOVE to Zoom session activity • Design Exploration Mini-Project: Visuals for Speech • Personal Logo Revisited
Storytelling	• Garr Reynolds: Why Storytelling Matters (video approx. 15 minutes)-in Vialogues • Garr Reynolds: Crafting the Story, Chapter 4 • Garr Reynolds: Using Images to Tell Stories, Chapter 4 • GAP: Duarte on storytelling	• Zoom session • Design Exploration Mini-Project: Five Photo Story Part 1 • Design Exploration Mini-Project: Five Photo Story Part 1
Drawing	• TED Talk video as an example of how hand-drawing can help deliver an instructional message-in Vialogues MOVE to Zoom session activity • Scott McCloud: Making Comics, Intro & Chapter 1 (pp. 1-57) • --OR, student choice-- • Scott McCloud: Understanding Comics (video approx. 18 minutes)-in Vialogues • Dan Roam: Back of the Napkin, Chapters 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14 (pp. 13-45 & 147-234) • Dan Roam: Problem solving with simple pictures (video 6:18 min)-in Vialogues • The Boat (interactive graphic novel)	• Zoom session, include TED Talk video as an example of how hand-drawing can help deliver an instructional message • GAP: Comic creation activity • Picasso Self-Portrait • Dinosaurs vs. Humans • Instruction by Fingerprint • Design Exploration Mini-Project: How to Make Toast Job Aid • Lessons Learned on the Back of a Napkin

Joni approached the *learner-centered inclusive design*, *informed design*, and *design decision making* piles in the same way. However, when she began working on the *social presence and learning community* pile, Alexis reminded her that the items in this pile needed to both spark joy and be functional in the accelerated version of her online course; in other words, the activities needed to serve her instructional goal of creating a supportive learning community and also further student learning related to one or more of the learning objectives. Because she values social presence and community building so much in her online courses, Joni had several activities in the original course primarily designed to bridge the transactional distance and minimize the associated isolation that can happen in online courses, help the class get to know each other in preparation for collaboration, and develop a professionally-respectful connection that would allow them to feel safe sharing their work for peer critique. However, in an accelerated time frame, there would not be time for those social presence-focused activities unless they also were included in one of the other decluttered piles. For example, after a first pass of decluttering the *creative design* pile Joni had eliminated the *Dinosaurs vs. Humans* activity. But because this activity was also in the *social presence and learning community* pile, Joni reinstated it because it served two purposes in the course: the activity reinforced student drawing and was a playful, less stressful way to share and critique each other's work. From that point forward, Joni eliminated all s*ocial presence and learning*

community items from the pile unless they also supported one or more of the course's learning objectives. To help her reflect this in each of the piles, Joni underlined activities and assignments that addressed s*ocial presence and learning community* interests as well (see Table 3).

Table 3

Decluttered pile for the *Creative Design* category with *Social Presence and Community Building* items underlined

	Resources	Activities & Assignments
Creativity	• Chip Heath & Dan Heath: Made to Stick, Introduction • Chip Heath & Dan Heath: Teaching that Sticks • Chip Heath & Dan Heath: The Power of Moments, Chapter 1 Defining Moments • Ira Glass: On Being Creative Genius (video approx. 2 minutes)-in Vialogues MOVE: To Zoom session • Elizabeth Gilbert: Your Elusive Creative Genius (video approx. 20 minutes)-in Vialogues • Stefan Sagmeister's TED Talk on Happiness by Design	• Zoom session, include Ira Glass: On Being Creative Genius (video approx. 2 minutes) • Visual Design Challenge-in Slack (weekly) • GAP: Reflection on Hobbies • Ideation Journals and Journaling • Soundtrack of Our Lives • Ideation Journal Revisited • Project: Gallery Show & Celebration
Visual design	• Introduction to Graphic Design - Design principles (basically CARP) (3:33 length video) • Robin Williams: The Non-Designers Design Book (4th edition), Chapters 1-7. • Ruth Colvin Clark & Chopeta Lyons: Graphics for Learning (2nd edition), Chapters 2 and 4. • Fair Use Checklist, Copyright Law for Instructional Designers, Finding Public Domain & Creative Commons Media • GAP: Learner-centered Design: Inclusive Design, University Design for Learning (UDL)	• Zoom session, include Photos, Photos, Photos • Personal Logo • Design that Causes Lower Back Pain • You Belong in a Museum • Photos, Photos, Photos MOVE: To Zoom session • Design Exploration Mini-Project: Visuals for Speech • Personal Logo Revisited
Storytelling	• Garr Reynolds: Why Storytelling Matters (video approx. 15 minutes)-in Vialogues • Garr Reynolds: Crafting the Story, Chapter 4 • Garr Reynolds: Using Images to Tell Stories, Chapter 4 • GAP: Duarte on storytelling	• Zoom session • Design Exploration Mini-Project: Five Photo Story Part 1 • Design Exploration Mini-Project: Five Photo Story Part 1
Drawing	• TED Talk video as an example of how hand-drawing can help deliver an instructional message-in Vialogues MOVE: To Zoom session • Scott McCloud: Making Comics, Intro & Chapter 1 (pp. 1-57) • --Student choice, either/or-- • Scott McCloud: Understanding Comics (video approx. 18 minutes)-in Vialogues • Dan Roam: Back of the Napkin, Chapters 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14 (pp. 13-45 & 147-234) • Dan Roam: Problem solving with simple pictures (video 6:18 min)-in Vialogues • The Boat (interactive graphic novel)	• Zoom session, include TED Talk video as an example of how hand-drawing can help deliver an instructional message • GAP: Comic creation activity • Picasso Self-Portrait • Dinosaurs vs. Humans • Instruction by Fingerprint • Design Exploration Mini-Project: How to Make Toast Job Aid • Lessons Learned on the Back of a Napkin

Keep Feelings of Nostalgia at Bay

When you come across something that you cannot part with, think carefully about its true purpose in your life. You'll be surprised at how many of the things you possess have already fulfilled their role.

By handling each sentimental item and deciding what to discard, you process your past. If you just stow these things away in a drawer or cardboard box, before you realise it, your past will become a weight that holds you back and keeps you from living in the here and now. ~ Marie Kondō

One of the most significant challenges of decluttering is when sentimentality clouds whether or not an item truly sparks joy and/or is functional. For example, some people find it hard to part with items that represent important past events and experiences such as a high school basketball jersey, an unread book gifted by a good friend, or a notebook full of worked math equations completed while in middle school. These items don't quite spark joy and they certainly no longer serve a functional purpose, yet the nostalgia associated with them can often lead to them being stowed away until the next decluttering effort. For items that are hard to let go of Marie Kondō offers this valuable advice:

> During the selection process, if you come across something that does not spark joy but that you just can't bring yourself to throw away, stop a moment and ask yourself, "Am I having trouble getting rid of this because of an attachment to the past or because of a fear for the future?" Ask this for every one of these items. As you do so, you'll begin to see a pattern in your ownership of things, a pattern that falls into one of three categories: attachment to the past, desire for stability in the future, or a combination of both. It's important to understand your ownership pattern because it is an expression of the values that guide your life.

Nostalgia and sentimentality can also play a role in course redesign. Some resources, content, activities, and assignments can be difficult to set aside because historically they served a purpose in the course. When Joni was decluttering the Creative Designs course there were a number of resources and activities that were hard to part with because she enjoyed their playful characteristics. For example, although the *Soundtrack of Our Lives* and *You Belong in a Museum* activities that were part of the Creative Design pile reinforced specific concepts, their primary role in the course was fun and play. Although she recognized that the redundancy with other activities was unnecessary, it was hard for Joni to remove these activities from the course because of her fond memories of students' great contributions. Another example was Joni's decision to let go of a set of readings from Heath & Heath's *Made to Stick* book. These readings had served a clear purpose in the past, but the course's focus and learning objectives had changed over time and they were no longer in alignment. It was hard for Joni to let go of these readings because she loved them so much, but they no longer served a clear purpose for students.

Following Marie Kondō's advice, Alexis encouraged Joni to review each of the "hard to let go of" items in the Creative Designs course and ask herself why she was having trouble letting it go. This allowed Joni an opportunity to go back to the course's learning objectives and review what else was in the *creative design* pile to reassure herself that the items were really unnecessary and were in fact taking up space that she needed for other items that aligned with the learning objectives. Because Alexis had no emotional attachment to the course activities in the same way that Joni did, she was able to provide an outside perspective that focused more on learning objectives rather than sentimentality. This is one of the assets an instructional designer provides: by asking key questions, they can help get to the heart of what's relevant and meaningful in terms of a course's learning objectives.

Care for and Respect Your Belongings

All you need to do is take the time to sit down and examine each item you own, decide whether you want to keep or discard it, and then choose where to put what you keep.

The essence of effective storage is this: designate a spot for every last thing you own.

Storage, after all, is the sacred act of finding a home for your belongings. ~ Marie Kondō

After decluttering all of the piles it is time to organize them and put them in their place. To this end Marie Kondō provides much advice on how to organize and store household belongings. For example:

> The most basic rule is to hang clothes in the same category side by side, dividing your closet into a jacket section, a suit section, and so on. Clothes, like people, can relax more freely when in the company of others who are very similar in type, and therefore organizing them by category helps them feel more comfortable and secure.

The process of organizing and storing is just as important as the decluttering process because the aim is to create a structure and space that makes it easy for you to locate, use, and enjoy the items you possess. Ultimately, if the KonMari Method is embraced and diligently followed, people can experience a shift in their mindset about their belongings and limit the need to engage in major decluttering and reorganization in the future.

This is the same for setting up an online course in a learning management system such as Canvas, Schoology, or Slack —it is time to organize all of the items from the decluttered piles to create a structure and space that makes it easy for students to locate, use, and learn from and with the course content, resources, activities, and assignments. We found it very helpful to work together on this because Alexis is well-versed in instructional strategies and technologies to support student learning and engagement in online and accelerated online courses. In collaboration, we went through the decluttered piles and discussed various ways to physically structure the course in Canvas; how to incorporate additional platforms such as Slack in support of student learning, communication, and collaboration; and how to organize everything for ease of access and use. As Marie Kondō shares, "Once you have an image of what the inside of your drawers will look like, you can begin folding." Alexis helped Joni get an image of what the course could look like so she could begin folding, hanging, and tidying up all of the course content in its proper place.

Marie Kondō is also known for promoting a specific way of folding clothes not only for better organization but also to encourage appreciation of the clothing: "The act of folding is far more than making clothes compact for storage. It is an act of caring, an expression of love and appreciation for the way these clothes support your lifestyle. Therefore, when we fold, we should put our heart into it, thanking our clothes for protecting our bodies" (2014, p. 93). We were inspired by this approach to preparing items for storage and, therefore, applied it to the redesign of the Creative Designs course. This required Joni to revisit each existing activity and assignment and rewrite the introduction and instructions for clarity and completeness. She also made note of any needed modifications to support materials. Finally, she outlined how she wanted the activity or assignment to be presented to students, including what tool or functionality was needed and the look-and-feel of the physical space in Canvas. It was only after all of this had been completed with Alexis' support that Joni began building the decluttered, reorganized course in Canvas.

Conclusion

> People cannot change their habits without first changing their way of thinking. ~ Marie Kondō

Joni taught the redesigned accelerated version of the Creative Designs online course in Summer 2021 to a group of 22 students with very positive results. Via the end-of-course evaluation, students gave her 5 out of 5 for her effectiveness as an instructor and gave the course 5 out of 5 for the effectiveness of the course as a learning experience. Although the end-of-course evaluation does not include specific questions about course structure, students shared:

> The course was well-organized, and for each assignment, the instructions were thorough and very helpful in understanding what was expected.

> The whole organization of the course was fantastic! I enjoyed all the assignments and the way they were broken down, the Zoom meet ups were helpful and the way we utilized other students was also well orchestrated.

> I believe that the way the Joni has the course set up and the projects and her teaching strategies were a great way to learn creative thinking and graphic design.

Students also shared their perspective of the learning experience which helped to reinforce Joni's own sense of the course as effective in the accelerated online format:

> Joni's teaching techniques are amazing. Honestly at the beginning of some assignments I would think "Why are we doing this?" and by the end I always had 'aha' moments, seeing great value in everything that we did. My design skills were upgraded several levels.

I appreciate Joni's flexibility, willingness to adjust assignments to personal needs, always providing frequent, timely, and meaningful feedback, and building a sense of community with synchronous learning opportunities.

Your flexibility during this accelerated course was much appreciated!

Joni was very supportive and provided good feedback to help me grow as a learner.

With one course left in the program, I am super sad that I won't have Joni as an instructor anymore. She has been my favorite teacher in the program and I have gained so much from the three courses I've taken with her. I truly aim to model many of my practices after her style. Thank you so much Joni!!!

The effectiveness of the accelerated version of the course has led to valuable adjustments to the 16-week version of the course as well. Joni did not want there to be two distinct versions, so she used the redesigned accelerated version as the template for the 16-week version. She intentionally continued with the Marie Kondō-inspired structure and decluttered content, avoiding the temptation to add more content and activities in response to having double the time. The new-and-improved Creative Designs online course works well in the 16-week format because the elimination of clutter and the associated restructuring means that students can take two courses in the 16-week term and continue with their full-time employment and other responsibilities; the bloated version of the course made it much more challenging for students to pursue the typical two-courses-per-semester schedule.

Although only midway through the semester, Joni has already found that the students are more interactive and more deeply engaged in the work and with each other than has been her experience in the last couple of years. In addition, she is enjoying the course more than she had been and believes her re-ignited enthusiasm for the course is reflected in her engagement with students. After teaching the same course for so long, Joni was no longer as excited to teach the course as she had once been. So Joni's renewed interest in and recommitment to the course has been an unexpected benefit of completing the Marie Kondō-inspired redesign. Joni plans to continue to monitor students' experiences in both the accelerated and 16-week versions of the course to ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes for students regardless of course timeframe.

COVID-19 caused us all to rethink the physical spaces we lived and worked in. Reorganizing and decluttering our online courses followed. The thought of cutting out content that you have spent valuable time cultivating is never an easy task. To many educators, it indeed feels like a loss. But remember, students are not going to miss what they did not know existed. By focusing on ensuring every item and activity in your course serves a meaningful purpose (ideally multiple purposes), students are getting an elevated learning experience that truly focuses on what you want them to achieve.

This shift from thinking of a course as a set of individual tasks to holistic outcomes requires a huge change in mindset. Similar to how decluttering your home does not work by focusing on one room at time, decluttering your course does not work by cutting or condensing one activity at a time. This requires a full and complete redesign of a course—something that cannot be accomplished overnight. In fact, Marie Kondō suggests decluttering your home takes about six months. Your course redesign may take the same.

The benefits are well worth the time. Students are less likely to be overwhelmed, and they are more likely to be motivated because of the clear purpose behind each activity. Also, do not be surprised if redesigning your accelerated course has a positive effect on multiple courses. Once you have experienced the joy of reorganizing and tidying-up, the effect is contagious. Once we simplify what is in front of us, all things seem possible.

References

Anastasi, J. S. (2007). Full-semester and abbreviated summer courses: An evaluation of student performance. *Teaching of Psychology,* 34(1), 19-22. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15328023top3401_4

Brandt, C. L., Boelllaard, M. R., & Zorn, C. R. (2015). The faculty voice: Teaching in accelerated second baccalaureate degree nursing programs. *The Journal of Nursing Education* 54(5), 241-247. https://doi.org/[10.3928/01484834-20150417-0](10.3928/01484834-20150417-0)

Caskurlu, S., Maeda, Y., Richardson, J. C., & Jing, L. (2020). A meta-analysis addressing the relationship between teaching presence and students' satisfaction and learning. *Computers & Education,* 157, 103966. https://doi.org/1[0.1016/j.compedu.2020.103966](0.1016/j.compedu.2020.103966)

Colclasure, B. C., LaRose, S. E., Warner, A. J., Ruth, T. K., Bunch, J. C., & Thoron, A. C. (2018). Student perceptions of accelerated course delivery format for teacher preparation coursework. *Journal of Agricultural Education,* 49(3), 58-74. https://doi.org/[10.5032/jae.2018.03058](10.5032/jae.2018.03058)

Collins, A., Hay, I., & Heiner, I. (2013). Start with the end in mind: Experiences of accelerated course completion by pre-service teachers and educators. *The Australian Journal of Teacher Education,* 38(10). https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2013v38n10.4

Demmans Epp, C., Phirangee, K., & Hewitt, J. (2017). Student actions and community in online courses: The roles played by course length and facilitation method. *Online Learning,* 21(4), 53-77. https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v21i4.1269

Ferguson, J. M., & Defelice, A. E. (2010). Length of online course and student satisfaction, perceived learning, and academic performance. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning,* 11(2), 73-84. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v11i2.772

Harwood, K. J., McDonald, P. L., Butler, J. T., Drago, D., & Schlumpf, K. S. (2018). Comparing student outcomes in traditional vs intensive, online graduate programs in health professional education. *BMC Medical Education,* 18(1), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-018-1343-7

Herrmann, M., & Berry, K. (2016). An investigation into graduate student preference for compressed courses. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal,* 20(2), 23-32.

Holzweiss, P. C., Polnick, B., & Lunenburg, F. C. (2019). Online in half the time: A case study with online compressed courses. *Innovative Higher Education,* 44(4), 299-315. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-019-09476-8

Hyun, E., Kretovics, M., & Crowe, A. (2006). Curriculum characteristics of time-compressed course in a U.S. higher education institution. *Educational Research and Review*, 1(2), 29−39. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-012-9226-z

Karpicke, J. D., & Roediger, H. L. (2007). Expanding retrieval practice promotes short-term retention, but equally spaced retrieval enhances long-term retention. *Journal of Experimental Psychology. Learning, Memory, and Cognition,* 33(4), 704-719. https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-7393.33.4.704

Kondō, M. (2014). *The life-changing magic of tidying up: The Japanese art of decluttering and organizing*. Ten Speed Press.

Kretovics, M. A., Crowe, A. R., & Hyun, E. (2005). A study of faculty perceptions of summer compressed course teaching. *Innovative Higher Education,* 30(1), 37-51. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-005-3295-1

Kyndt, E., Berghmans, I., Dochy, F., & Bulckens, L. (2014). 'Time is not enough.' Workload in higher education: A student perspective. *Higher Education Research & Development,* 33(4), 684-698. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2013.863839

Lee, N., & Horsfall, B. (2010). Accelerated learning: A study of faculty and student experiences. *Innovative Higher Education,* 35(3), 191-202. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-010-9141-0

Lutes, L., & Davies, R. (2018). Comparison of workload for university core courses taught in regular semester and time-compressed term formats. *Education Sciences,* 8(1): 34. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci8010034

McDonald, P. L., Harwood, K. J., Butler, J. T., Schlumpf, K. S., Eschmann, C. W., & Drago, D. (2017). Design for success: Identifying a process for transitioning to an intensive online course delivery model in health professions education. *Medical Education Online,* 23(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1080/10872981.2017.1415617

Richardson, J. C., Maeda, Y., Lv, J., & Caskurlu, S. (2017). Social presence in relation to students' satisfaction and learning in the online environment: A meta-analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior,* 71, 402-417. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.02.001

Saxon D. P., & Martirosyan, N. M. (2017). NADE members respond: Improving accelerated developmental mathematics courses. *Journal of Developmental Education,* 41(1), 24-27.

Sousa, D. A. (2017). *How the brain learns*. Corwin, a Sage Publishing Company.

Vlachopoulos, P., Jan, S. K., & Lockyer, L. (2019). A comparative study on the traditional and intensive delivery of an online course: Design and facilitation recommendations. *Research in Learning Technology,* 27, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.25304/rlt.v27.2196

Walsh, K. P., Sanders, M., & Gadgil, S. (2019). Equivalent but not the same: Teaching and learning in full semester and condensed summer courses. *College Teaching,* 67(2), 138-149. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2019.1579702

Wlodkowski, R. J., & Ginsberg, M. B. (2010). *Teaching intensive and accelerated courses: Instruction that motivates learning.* Jossey-Bass.

Additional Resources

Kondo, M. (2014). The life-changing magic of tidying up: The Japanese art of decluttering and organizing. Ten Speed Press.

Kondo, M. (2016). Spark joy: An illustrated master class on the art of organizing and tidying up. Ten Speed Press.

Kondo, M. (2021). Sparking Joy with Marie Kondo. Video series produced by Netflix.

Kondo, M., & Sonenshein, S. (2020). Joy at work. Little, Brown, Spark. Links to many articles written about Marie Kondō's work and information about her Sparking Joy Netflix Series can be found on her website: https://shop.konmari.com/pages/press

Acknowledgement

Joanna C. Dunlap

University of Colorado - Denver

Joanna C. Dunlap is a Professor of Learning Design and Technology at the University of Colorado Denver. Her research and teaching focus on postsecondary pedagogy and learner-centered instructional design.

Alexis S. Bjelica

University of Colorado Denver

Alexis S. Bjelica currently teaches at the University of Colorado Denver and works as a training and development specialist. She has also worked as an instructional designer in higher education for nearly a decade. She is finishing her doctorate of education with a focus on designing accelerated online courses.