*How it works*: Faculty can set up a free Flipgrid account at <https://info.flipgrid.com/>. Because SMU uses Microsoft for most things, it’s smoother to create an account with your SMU email address. Once you’ve created an account, you can set up a prompt for students to answer by making short videos on the platform. An email to the class that includes an access code invites them to do so. I asked students to say 1) Their name 2) Where they’re dropping in from 3) One ordinary thing that has brought them joy recently, and 4) One question they have about what they think the class is about. It’s helpful to make your own video so students have a model. You’ll be able to see and curate the videos when they come in to the platform. When they’re all there, preferably *before* the first day of class, assign students to watch them. Even in a Flex classroom, students were able to make connections and refer to topical questions other students had asked during our first meeting. I had seen the faces and heard the voices unfettered by masks before encountering the muffled and obscured versions in the room. A puppy one student pulled out from under her desk as her ordinary thing became our unofficial class mascot.

Joy is contagious, and engaging. It’s a great antidote to the classroom from hell, be it remote, face to face, or some combination of the two.