



Keeping Office Hours ‘Real’ in the Facebook Age

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Our students email us questions, they send us “instant messages,” and even “friend” us on Facebook. Yet those very same students who invite us to join their social network may not consider a visit during our office hours. Given the importance of face-to-face communication, I’d like to offer a few suggestions for keeping office hours “real” in a time when we are a “click away” from our students:

• Include office hours in “class participation”

If “class participation” is evaluated as part of the final grade, then consider allowing students to “participate” via office discussions. This will create an incentive to use office hours and offer those students who feel uncomfortable speaking in class an opportunity to talk about their ideas. You can then encourage those students to share their insights in class. Having spoken with you first and having received positive feedback, shy students might feel more confident about contributing in class.

In the course syllabus, offer examples of an office discussion that would be considered participation—for example, sharing a relevant experience, explaining an opinion formed or challenged by the course, or discussing a topical current event. I recommend expressly excluding students’ queries regarding grades, assignment requirements, and exam formats from this expanded definition of participation.

• Schedule “office discussions” at the beginning of the semester

Pose a question to students in class that will be the topic for these office visits—such as “What are your career goals?” or “What helps you learn?” Circulate sign-up sheets in class listing your office hours and “otherwise available” times broken into something like 10-minute increments. For larger classes, encourage small groups of students to jointly schedule an office discussion. Without identifying individuals, consider sharing in class what you have learned from students during these office discussions. This lets students know that your efforts to engage them and encourage communication are sincere.

• On a weekly basis, circulate office hour sign-up sheets in class

Include in the sign-up sheet not only your office hours but also the times you are available for an appointment that upcoming week. The act of circulating sign-up sheets reminds students that you have office hours and can be contacted this way.

• Require office visits on a “rolling deadline”

Requiring each student to visit during office hours when classes are large seems to be a daunting—if not impossible—undertaking. Connecting the required office visit to an assignment with a “rolling deadline” might be the answer. For example, you might create a discussion question for each chapter, topic, or module, and ask students to select one

such question during the semester to which they will submit a written response by a certain date. Students must then schedule an office visit with you to discuss their written response. Have rolling deadlines to avoid a “pileup”—for example, students selecting the Module 3 discussion question must submit their response at or by Class Session 8 and discuss their response with you in your office within the following two weeks.

Discussion questions that are experiential or opinion-based can enhance the dialogue during the office visit. For example:

- Would you have handled differently a workplace issue you have faced, because of what you have learned in this module? Why or why not?
- Have you personally observed or experienced an application of the theory presented in this chapter? Explain.
- Did you agree or disagree with a viewpoint expressed in class discussion on this topic? Explain.

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Debating: Beneficial for Students

Some instructional strategies have withstood the test of time. Take debating, for example. Protagoras first proposed it as an instructional strategy 2,400 years ago. In recent years, classroom debates appear to have fallen out of favor, or at least they're not an instructional strategy regularly advocated in the pedagogical literature. Even so, Ruth Kennedy finds research showing that in-class debates have been used successfully in fields as diverse as dentistry, economics, marketing, and sociology. She points out that they are an example of active learning at its best. And she argues that given how frequently people change careers, much of the content knowledge they learn in college may not be relevant. "However, if we focus on critical thinking skills, these will be useful no matter how many times individuals change careers." (p. 226)

Kennedy's education students participate in five different debates. Six students—three on each side—debate a proposition. Each side presents an opening argument and a rebuttal to the opposing side's opening argument, they respond to questions from members of the audience, and then they present a closing argument. This means each student participates as a member of the debating team once, asks questions once, and functions as a conciliator once. The conciliator is tasked with proposing a compromise or alternative position that he or she presents before closing arguments. Kennedy develops the propositions. Students select which proposition they will debate, but they draw cards to determine which side of the proposition they will argue.

Despite what debating does for students' critical thinking and oral communication skills, it isn't an activity they greet with great anticipation. Almost 60 percent of Kennedy's students indicated that they felt nervous before the first debate. Comments such as these were common: "I get nervous about them because public speaking in front of my peers is hard for me." "I am a little ner-

vous about doing this debate. I am not very good at thinking on my feet quickly. I am also no good at arguing." (p. 229) Only 16 percent of the students had a positive outlook before the first debate.

But after the fifth debate the benefits of the activity are clear, even to the students. For each of the debate topics, students assess their knowledge of the topic before and after the debate. Before the first debate less than 10 percent of the students reported that they were "very knowledgeable" about four of the five topics. After the debates that percentage increased from 35 percent to 54 percent, a statistically significant difference. Those who rated themselves "not very knowledgeable" dropped from 46 percent to 14 percent. And more than 90 percent of the students attributed this gain in knowledge about the topics to the debate activity.

The debates were also successful in changing students' opinions about the topics. More than 37 percent of the students changed their opinions on their topic after participating in the debate. Nearly 60 percent of the students changed their opinions upon listening to the debate.

Debates can be formatted in a variety of ways. Beginning students who might be very nervous about public debates could exchange single arguments and perhaps be allowed to prepare their argument in writing first. In larger classes where having everyone debate would consume too much class time, debating could be an assignment option selected by those interested. Arguments can also be exchanged in online formats.

It's hard to argue against the value of this instructional strategy. Having to defend a proposition, especially one you don't believe in, is a powerful impetus to considering other possibilities.

Reference: Kennedy, R. (2009). The power of in-class debates. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 10 (3), 225-236. 🍀

Banning Laptops from the Classroom

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The classroom should be a consecrated place—a dedicated space for attending to ideas not normally addressed as ardently elsewhere. Strange, good, and serendipitous things happen there. Questions are newly formed, puzzlement gives way to intellectual pursuit, and insights arrive serendipitously. But classrooms are changing and something is threatening these positive potentials: the laptop computer and its spin-off portable Internet-connected devices. I'd like to offer some battle-scarred reflections on their presence in the classroom.

I teach two different kinds of students. I teach philosophy full-time at the graduate level at a theological seminary. Here most students can afford expensive technologies. I also teach as an affiliate faculty member at a large city college in downtown Denver. There students are younger and less affluent, and almost never bring laptops to class. Still, they can be distracted by handheld devices, and so my syllabus states that no device should be used to get access to any outside source. (I do allow students to use laptops for taking notes.)

I'd like to begin by recounting an experience I had with one of these undergraduates. A young Latina woman sparkled with philosophical curiosity and asked some bang-up questions. After I raised a seeming contradiction concerning atheistic Existentialism's difficulty in asserting any moral meaning for conduct in a meaningless world, she asked, "Is there any worldview that doesn't contradict itself?" A philosophy professor can live a few weeks on such utterances. That comment came when she did not bring her laptop. With it, she sat silently in the very back of the room and all but disappeared into the machine.

My graduate students are a different

story. About 10 years ago, laptops began to appear in the classroom here and there. Those busily typing seldom looked at me, at other students, or at their books. In recent years the percentage of laptop users surged to over 50 percent, and the classroom began to change in ways I had never before experienced. As Neil Postman would have put it, the changes were *ecological*, not merely additive. That is, the very nature of the classroom was changing, not just a few isolated elements of it.

The laptop users were often absorbed in their machines, and their activities often distracted others. I vainly tried to counter this threat by calling for "laptop down" interludes. When I came to a particularly important point, I would ask that all laptops be closed, so that the students could look up and listen more intently.

But matters worsened. Many students in my ethics class were sending and receiving emails, shopping, and even checking their eHarmony accounts. This violated the conditions of the syllabus. So, I gave a fifteen-minute lecture (perhaps sermon) on the ethics of the classroom: We are here to learn together, to reflect on the texts, to pursue truth through rationality. We need to attend to each other, develop dialogue, and create a "truth zone." Laptops threaten all of this.

This impassioned message did little good so I drew up a short "covenant" for students to sign, stating that students would only use their laptops for taking notes. As I handed this out, a student publicly rebuked me for being so heavy-handed. My resolve to do something about the creeping plague of digital distraction deepened. (I have since gotten more ammunition from John Medina's *Brain Rules*, which argues that our brains are simply not designed for multitasking, in the classroom or elsewhere.) I now put the following statement (somewhat edited) in my syllabi.

No laptops are allowed in the class-

room. While many students will use them responsibly, many will disappear behind the screens. For this reason, I am banning them from the classroom. The classroom needs to be a zone for knowledge and inspiration. Knowledge needs students and students need knowledge. We need to breathe ideas together without the distraction of alien mediation. Therefore, please print out the class notes for the day and be ready to take notes and discuss the material face-to-face, voice-to-voice, soul-to-soul.

My ban did foreclose some good that happened with laptops in the classroom. Students would sometimes search online for items that were pertinent to class. When I mentioned that a Hindu priest had opened a session of Congress in prayer for the first time, a student asked, "What exactly did he pray?" I gave a rather inadequate summary. Then another student replied, "I found it. May I read it?" He did, and it contributed to our discussion as we analyzed the theology of the prayer. Those kinds of episodes enriched our environment; but they were all too rare and did not offset the significant losses caused by digital diversions. However, if a disabled student needed a laptop to compensate for a sensory difficulty, I would gladly allow for that.

It has been two years since I banned laptops. No complaints have appeared on the anonymous student evaluations. Students say they are less distracted and more focused in class. I note that without laptops they are more engaged with both me and other students. I believe that my step backward into the pre-laptop era was really a step forward into a better classroom. Consider joining me.

Coursecentricism: New Word, New Idea

There's a tacit rule that most college teachers abide by: I won't mess with your course if you agree not to mess with mine. Gerald Graff observes and asks, "This rules suits the teacher, but how well does it serve students?" (p. 155)

In his article (referenced below) Graff asserts that we know very little about each other's courses. He's not writing so much about the instructional strategies we use, but about what we teach, including those policies and practices that govern conduct in the classroom and set learning parameters for students. He's coined a term for the way we teach in self-isolated classrooms: "coursecentricism," which he defines as a "state of mind that insulates us as teachers from the consequences of the curricular system in which we work." (p. 157) Elsewhere he calls it a tunnel vision that makes us oblivious to the fact that teachers conduct courses within a department, sometimes even the same course, very differently.

He points out the irony of this instructional isolation: "At a time when our online technologies make amazing new forms of connectivity possible, and when much of our cutting-edge academic research insists on the inherently social and collaborative nature of intellectual work, we still think of teaching in ways that are narrowly private and individualistic, as a practice naturally enacted behind classroom walls that allows us to tune out the classroom next door or in the next building." (p. 157)

But is this diversity of approach a problem? Graff sees it as a large issue for students. "With coursecentric logic, we assume that if we all teach our courses conscientiously, each making sure that his or her demands are spelled out as clearly and transparently as possible, then our students will make coherent sense of our diverse perspectives. They will put it all together for themselves even if we do not or cannot." (p. 158) He finishes the argument by pointing out that just

because courses are individually coherent, that does not guarantee coherence among a collection of them.

Almost every teacher is confronted with evidence that this diversity of approaches confounds students. When assigned to write a paper, they ask things such as whether they should write in the first person and whether they should summarize the author's idea or share their own opinions. Across a variety of courses they have learned that teachers want different things and that part of the education game involves figuring out what the teacher wants. Graff quotes a student who crudely shared his assessment of different requirements in humanities and science courses: "In humanities, I B.S. In science, I regurgitate." (p. 158)

Graff asserts that the vast majority of students don't construct anything like a coherent wholeness out of their various

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Truly Collaborative Teaching

It's not "serial teaching" or "a lot of little mini courses stuck together" or "sequenced solo teaching" as team teaching too often is, but rather teaching where "we are both planning, we are both making sure we understand the material as it needs to be presented, and we are both standing up there." That's how Jessica Lester and Katherine Evans describe their goal for team teaching a senior-level educational psychology course for preservice teachers. (p. 375)

Using a phenomenological method that included detailed analysis of unstructured, open-ended interviews with each of them, Lester and Evans report one "grounding," or overarching, theme out of which five other themes emerged. Together these themes reflect those collaborative teaching experiences that stood out for each of them.

Grounding theme: We didn't have a manual for finding our way through. Despite previous experience in teaching, both teachers were unfamiliar with the practical aspects and personal interactions that this kind of team teaching required. "We had no idea what this was going to look like and feel like ... and we didn't know each other well enough by that point to even ask what it was going to look like." (p. 376) As might be expected, the process was most unfamiliar at the beginning of the course. "We were very individualized when we first started, and we didn't really mesh at first because we weren't sure how until we actually started doing, and then we figured it out as we did it." (p. 377)

Theme 1: You can't just shoot from the hip. This kind of truly collaborative teaching demands a major time com-

mitment. "There's just a lot more involved in making sure you are prepared ... You can't assume that you know what you are going to say and roll with it as easily." (p. 377) This kind of teaching takes more time than it takes to teach a course solo. Lester and Evans do report that their perception of the time required changed. They don't know if preparation took less time as the course progressed, but as they became more efficient in how they worked together and with their students, it seemed as though it did.

Theme 2: Following and leading ... all of us together. The teachers discovered a kind of "flow" that occurred as each of them moved from leading what was happening in class to following as the

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Educating the Teacher: Thoughts on Teaching New Material

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I have discovered over 18 years of teaching that one of the most difficult and rewarding parts of my job is figuring out how to teach new material. New material often presents challenges born of the teacher's unfamiliarity with a text or a subject, but new material also provides a way for the teacher to grow and learn. As it is with students, though, so it is with teachers: growing and learning take time. Teachers cannot expect to be comfortable with new material in short order. Rather, the process begins with study and review and, more importantly, bears intellectual fruit only in the classroom, where again and again students educate the teacher, showing him or her what *limits* to place on new material.

The program in which I teach is interdisciplinary and in the past two years has revamped itself, so I have had to familiarize myself with some new texts and subjects. Although the program emphasizes critical skills, and the courses are not discipline-specific, preparing to cultivate critical skills using new texts on subjects such as disease and urban planning can be challenging for someone trained in English. One of the texts I teach, for instance, is *Vaccination against Smallpox* by Edward Jenner. I first taught this text at the beginning of the 2008–2009 academic year, and the experience was unique. In preparing to teach it, I made plentiful annotations, inserted scraps of paper between pages that contained material I thought was worthwhile to cover, and generally tried to learn something about the smallpox virus. In short, I planned my classes on *Vaccination against Smallpox* in a sort of pedagogical vacuum, having no classroom experience with this specific text or subject to guide me.

I have now taught the text several times and have become more fully aware of something that I have known for a long time: The best preparation for

teaching is teaching. Given the limited contact time I have with my students each week, I have to focus on those areas of texts that will help me to fulfill my critically based mandate. Before I taught *Vaccination against Smallpox* for the first time, I let my overall teaching experience guide me in determining which parts of the text would best help me achieve this goal. Much of what I focused on for use in the classroom had value, but I focused on *too much*. It was classroom experience that taught me what parts of *Vaccination against Smallpox* to emphasize. Most classes, for instance, have responded well to Jenner's thoughts on the speciation of diseases, smallpox in particular, or to his attempts to falsify his hypothesis in his case studies. Experience, in other words, has given me a better idea of what parts of the material will pique students' interest and involve them more readily in the critical analysis so important to my pedagogical goal.

Before actually teaching this text and others on my interdisciplinary list, I could only surmise what would be effective and what would not. To have held too rigidly to my surmise would have been to neglect an important preparatory tool: student reaction. To teach is to learn how students are responding to a lesson and to alter one's approach accordingly. This is not to gainsay the value of annotation, research, or faculty workshops in preparing to teach new (or even old) material, but to highlight the importance of classroom experience in effectively honing pedagogy. In this sense, teacher preparation is continually occurring, both in and out of the classroom.

In summary, before there is classroom experience a teacher has to depend on his or her overall experience, on research, and on peer wisdom. However, once the teacher has classroom experience with material, what happens in the classroom becomes an indispensable tool in preparing to teach that material the

next time. Sticking rigidly to a preconceived plan or trying to cover too much, leads to poor teaching. After 18 years my urge is still to teach this way, but I am learning that fighting this urge and paying more attention to students' comments and reactions as part of my ongoing "preparation" yields pedagogical rewards for the students and me. 🍀

COURSECENTRICISM

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course experiences. Rather, "taking courses for these students becomes a process of serially giving teachers whatever they seem to want—assuming the students can figure out what it is—jumping through hoops takes the place of deep socialization into an intellectual community." (p. 159)

And what does Graff propose as a solution to coursecentricism? "I am a believer in outcomes assessment," which he sees as the only trend that seriously challenges current course isolation and the only trend "with the potential to make the college intellectual world transparent and accessible to all undergraduates." (p. 160) He thinks the best assessment criteria are few, simple, and well-focused. He offers an example of a single question that could be asked: "Are students able to summarize a central assumption or claim in their major discipline and respond to it articulately in writing?" (p. 163)

Graff isn't proposing that teachers develop lesson plans that must be submitted for approval to some central authority. He isn't arguing that courses must share the same requirements for students. But he maintains we cannot remain as ignorant as we are of each other's teaching and courses.

Reference: Graff, G. (2009). Why assessment? *Pedagogy*, 10 (1), 153-165. 🍀

OFFICE HOURS

FROM PAGE 1

Consider making these written responses and follow-up visits pass/fail to avoid having the office visit devolve into an exchange about how many points the response is worth.

- **Continue “e-conversations” in office hours**

Just as email should not replace office hours, neither should students’ emailed questions be ignored or dismissed. Emailed responses can be used to promote office visits. In concluding your response to a student’s emailed question,


invite the student to visit during office hours or make an appointment if he or she wishes to discuss the question further.

In order to communicate to students that this offer is sincere and not intended to discourage their questions, add a follow-up question and suggest that it be discussed during an office visit. If relevant, ask them to bring their homework assignments or paper drafts with them to your office. Of course, if the emailed question is, “So when is the paper due again?” this strategy would not work.

- **Use positive peer pressure**

If a student poses an interesting ques-

tion or raises a pertinent point in an office hour visit, then share it in the next class meeting. Introduce the question this way: “I was asked a very interesting question during office hours the other day ...” That lets students know that their classmates are utilizing office hours, and your positive feedback encourages them to do the same.

Note: A version of this article first appeared in a CSU Northridge blog, “Ideas for Faculty.” 

COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

FROM PAGE 4

other teacher and sometimes the students were leading the action. There were times when the flow really worked, becoming a beautiful cord of connection. However, there were times when they reported falling totally flat on their faces. They learned that the flow was hard to find when each followed her own agenda too resolutely.


Theme 3: If we walk away disagreeing, is it okay? Conflict is an inevitable part of this kind of teaching, and “working through such disagreement is not about conforming or about assimilation.” (p. 378) Committed to preserving their relationship, these teachers discovered that they could learn and grow from their disagreements. They could walk away not agreeing, recognizing that they wouldn’t have done something the way they had if they were teaching alone, but still seeing value in what occurred for the students and the other teacher.

Theme 4: The presence of another pushed us to go deeper. When there was conflict, both teachers reported that they learned much about their own teaching. “When you collaborate with someone else you see yourself ... you see a lot about your assumptions ...” (p. 379) Ultimately both teachers ended up understanding themselves better.

Theme 5: You build something bigger. The course and the knowledge gained from the experience of teaching it were bigger, and these teachers would say better, than what teachers can create when they teach on their own.

Here’s how Lester and Evans sum up their experience: “As we found our way through this process, the time spent allowed us to deepen our understanding of the course content, improve interactions with students and each other, develop a capacity to embrace differences, and work toward a more collaborative approach to teaching and learning.” (p. 379) This interesting account of two teachers who truly collaborated as they

jointly taught shows how much teachers can learn when they work together. Their endeavor was time-consuming, but it provided a commensurate amount of personal growth and development.

Reference: Lester, J. N. and Evans, K. R. (2009). Instructors’ experiences of collaborative teaching: Building something bigger. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 20 (3), 373-382. [Electronic journal: www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/] 

Student-led Garden Tours: Fertile Ground for Interdisciplinary Collaboration

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If you are like us, you find it important yet challenging to work interdisciplinarity and collaboration into your courses. We'd like to share our experiences in designing an authentic task that accomplishes both.

Our students, from two different majors, lead public tours of the Teaching Gardens of Saint Michael's College. Our classes in biology and education have developed three gardens: an arboretum, a children's literature garden named Books in Bloom, and The Native Plants of Vermont Garden. These gardens serve many pedagogical purposes in our courses and across campus, but we think the most powerful learning may be what happens when education and biology students partner to lead public tours of the gardens. This seemingly simple exercise helps students from both disciplines see that the world is a complex place that is better understood through multiple lenses. Through leading these tours the students not only apply what they are learning in their major, but they also get to see how the gardens look to someone who's studying a different field. We'd like to explain how our project works. It's based on three elements: a compelling task, deliberate teaching about collaboration, and post-task reflection.

The task: designing and leading tours of the college's Teaching Gardens

In our courses students are required to design and lead garden tours for specific audiences, a task best accomplished by blending and applying various types of knowledge. Alumni, schoolchildren, senior citizens, and families arrive at the Teaching Gardens, where pairs of biol-

ogy and education students lead them on a tour that intends to enrich the experience by sharing both perspectives. A Books in Bloom tour might feature lupines, with an education student providing a synopsis of the picture book *Miss Rumphius* (Cooney, 1985). The biology student contributes by explaining how the biology of lupines appears as a botanical backstory in this work of literature. For example, the lupine life cycle and seed dispersal are an integral part of the plot as the main character seeks a way to make her world a more beautiful place.

Sowing the collaborative seeds

Collaborative skills can be learned; we have been able to model a productive collaboration while mentoring our students in developing their own skills. The topics we discuss with our joint classes while preparing for the tours include communicating across disciplines, dealing with limits imposed by subject-bound courses, and contributing and listening to the needs of your collaborator.

Mark is a plant molecular biologist and has technical information about plants and running a garden, while Valerie focuses on literacy development in elementary classrooms and nontraditional settings such as museums and other field-based sites. After modeling a discussion where we share our distinct perspectives on a children's book and its botanical backstory, we invite students to do the same.

As students of the natural world, the biology students interpret botanical phenomena and processes, and consider how to share this information with peers who have a different educational experience. The education students, who will eventually teach all subjects, benefit from collaborating with biology experts. The new biology information

they learn must be incorporated in the lesson designs they have been assigned to create. Working through a practice session with our support, both students then develop and lead tours on their own. This endeavor requires that students communicate, teach, and learn beyond the traditional boundaries and discourse of their chosen fields. It takes work to understand and broaden individual perspectives. To quote one of our students, "It was a symbiotic relationship."

Reaping what you sow

As you can imagine, the tours are a busy and exciting time for our students, and much to our delight the life experiences of the individuals attending vary dramatically and often challenge the boundaries of the tour guides' knowledge. This past fall we had a family with young children and the director of a botanical garden in New York City join the same tour. Situations like this require students to move beyond their prepared texts to react and respond to their individual guests. They often remark on their partner's ability to step in with relevant information. "It was good to have two different perspectives on the garden. I enjoyed having a partner to explain different unique points that I could not." Interdisciplinary collaboration manifested in garden tours provides rich and dynamic interactions for students at the edge of their knowledge. 🌱

The Last Five Years

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Much is written today about new faculty and those in their midcareer years. The literature for newcomers is about how to teach, and for those who've been teaching for a while it's about new strategies and keeping vital in the classroom.

Those of us well past that professional midstage wonder why these groups get all the attention. What about those of us who are considerably older, who are pushing hard against the upper limits of midcareer, and who may have some of the same concerns about not drifting toward obsolescence or prematurely slinking off into some imaginary sunset where there are no students, exams, papers, departmental reports, or annual reviews to plague us. Isn't staying intellectually alive and effective in the classroom just as much—or more—of an issue for those who can count on their fingers the number of semesters they have left?

Two examples encourage me.

The first is the renowned Shakespeare scholar Stephen Greenblatt of Harvard University. I loved reading in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (October 26, 2007) about his plunge into the new world of digital humanities! The Chronicle reports that his new course “Travel and Transformation in the Early 17th Century” takes full advantage of Web and digital technologies to link the standard stuff of lecture with visual, auditory, and interactive elements that deliver a far more robust and rich look at the past than does the ordinary humanities course of the 20th century. Greenblatt is no midcareer scholar; he was born in 1943.

The second example is from my own college. I had a colleague whose strengths were his intellectual keenness and physical energy, but not his teach-

ing. It was rumored that he fell asleep in his own classes. Yet in the final semester of his career, by good luck as much as by design, he was discovered by a group of three students whose passion was studying fantasy literature as their senior capstone course. Would he take them on, they asked. Certainly, he replied, not missing a beat. And so a colleague in his final semester of teaching embraced a new challenge, stretched his own boundaries, engaged for probably the first time in collaborative course design, and finished with some of the best classroom experiences of his career.

From these two examples and from my own reflections as I traverse my seventh decade, I share three lessons about the end stages of my classroom career.

First, embrace the new technologies. This is not easy. While I am comfortable acknowledging that there are some elements of technology that I will never master, I know that the new digitized world is replete with good additions to my work. In my case I have had to insist on help—sometimes with departmental or institutional funds, sometimes from adept administrative assistants, sometimes from students themselves. I am immune to pitying looks and slight condescensions; it does not bother me one little bit that 19-year-olds are better than I am at working techno magic. Spreadsheets, Excel grading, Web-based surveys, clickers, YouTube, Moodle, Google Earth—just give me time and patient assistance, and I'm happy to add these to my repertoire.

Second, find the energy to go out at the top of your game. Do not succumb

to the temptation to repeat old patterns. Seek out new assignments. Propose a course you have not done before. Explore a minor interest that you have been wondering about. Take a faculty development workshop. Audit a colleague's course. If none of that is possible, then at the very least lose your old notes, syllabi, and files. Try something—anything—from scratch, just as you did when you were young and dewy-faced.

Finally, begin now to have a new life. So accustomed are we to immersion in the academic world we inhabit that we sometimes forget that there is a bigger pond outside. Moreover, once tenure is earned, a reputation is built, and children have left the nest, we are inclined to live in a smaller and smaller world, one circumscribed by the boundaries of our campus and our professional selves. Not me. I have vowed to have a life that extends beyond my job, starting today, before my career ends. This involves the active pursuit of leisure; all those books on my “must read someday” list are finding their way into my home and onto my nightstand. I have resolved to be intentional about my physical well-being—usually accomplished by daily walks with my dog, rain or shine. And I am looking quite seriously for my next position, most likely as a volunteer in some place where I will meet new people, where I will be someone else's gofer, and where I can find myself a new place to do what, after all, I am doing right now: living with purpose and making a contribution to the world around me. 🍀

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