MASTER CLASS

TEACHING ADVICE FOR JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTORS

THE AEJMC ELECTED STANDING COMMITTEE ON TEACHING | *Edited by Chris Roush*

"This book provides excellent, down-to-earth information—and wisdom—on teaching. Everyone who teaches would improve by reading it."

—RICHARD COLE, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

"What a treasure trove of tips, guidance, examples, quotes, resources and, above all, encouragement for today's journalism and mass communication educators from some of the best teachers in the field. *Master Class* is a readable, well-organized guide that is just as valuable for the first-time instructor as it is for the senior faculty member looking for new ideas. Reading this was a guilty pleasure, as it was downright fun but also an investment in my personal growth as a teacher."

—JENNIFER D. GREER, University of Alabama

"This publication is timely and needed. Mass communication instruction is becoming more challenging because of unprecedented changes in the professions we serve, the technology we use, and the students we engage in the learning process. Every component of instruction and advising should be carefully developed and tested for greater impact. This book will be a great addition to teaching classes at both the master's and doctoral levels, as well as training programs for junior faculty and professionals who transition from the practice to academia."

—JUAN-CARLOS MOLLEDA, University of Oregon

"This compilation offers inspiration and practical advice for anyone who is new to the academy and especially adjuncts and lecturers. Even someone who has been in higher education for years will find useful suggestions. I am going to buy this book for all our new faculty."

—ANN M. BRILL, University of Kansas

In *Master Class: Teaching Advice for Journalism and Mass Communication Instructors*, members of the AEJMC Elected Standing Committee on Teaching take readers behind the scenes to explain the teaching strategies, preparation tips, exercises, and project ideas that have, in many cases, earned them university and national teaching awards. It is designed to benefit everyone from instructors-in-training who are about to teach their first class to more experienced professors who are looking for [illegible] oom. A companion website with additional resour[illegible] ome /resources/teaching-help/.

The Association for Education in J[illegible] ion Elected Standing Committee on Teaching is devoted to improving the quality [illegible] teaching at colleges and universities in the United States and the rest of the world.

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Edited by

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Introduction

Chris Roush, UNC-Chapel Hill

If you're reading this, that means that you're about to teach some form of mass communication course at a college or university and you're looking for suggestions, ideas and tips. You've come to the right place.

The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's elected standing committee on teaching has put together this textbook to improve the "standards of academic and professional preparation for teachers in the field." That statement is in the AEJMC bylaws, and until recently the committee has performed that task in a variety of ways. It has held panels and seminars at AEJMC events, and for the past 10-plus years it's also conducted a teaching contest to promote and encourage innovative teaching methods in the field.

This textbook takes those efforts a big step further. It combines—in one place for the first time—the best practices and tips for teaching journalism, advertising, public relations and other forms of mass communication. And it's written by some of the top teachers in the field, people who have won awards for their teaching at the campus, state and national level. In addition, they have interviewed their friends and colleagues across the country about teaching and culled those ideas into the following chapters.

This is a book I wish I had when I started teaching as an adjunct back in 1999 at Georgia State University and then at Washington and Lee University and the University of Richmond. As a professional journalist, I had no formal training in how to teach a writing or reporting class, and I had no idea where to go to get advice on what I need to do in the classroom or how to put together a syllabus. I had some vague ideas about how to

grade, but no real understanding of how to prepare to teach each class session.

My lack of training for higher education teaching continued when I became a tenure-track professor in 2002. I was shown a sample syllabus of one of the classes I was scheduled to teach, and even given some sample exercises. But the "training" consisted of a 90-minute session with other instructors teaching the same course, and then I was given the keys to the classroom. I was scared and felt unprepared. I got better throughout the years by trial and error, by recognizing my mistakes and constantly fine-tuning my lectures and assignments.

Things have changed today at universities and colleges. Many of them now have more formalized training for their new instructors. And if you're in a doctoral program, most of those now require a pedagogy class where different teaching strategies and styles are examined.

The AEJMC teaching committee hopes that these efforts to improve the quality of mass communication instruction will be helped by this textbook. Those of us who contributed to this book love what we do. We love interacting with students, and we love seeing the quality of their work improve as the term goes on. We get a lot of psychic satisfaction out of what we do, and we hope that comes through in the pages you're about to read.

Thank you for your interest in teaching future generations of mass communicators. We can't think of a better calling.

To find teaching materials that will help you in the classroom, please visit our website at http://www.aejmc.com/home/resources/teaching-help/.

Contents

Introduction v
Chris Roush, UNC-Chapel Hill

1 So, You're a College Instructor. Now What? 1
Karen M. Turner, Temple University

2 Preparation Is the Key 17
Catherine Cassara, Bowling Green State University

3 Writing the Syllabus 33
Chris Roush, UNC-Chapel Hill

4 It's Your Classroom: Have Fun 51
Charles N. Davis, University of Georgia, and Earnest L. Perry, University of Missouri

5 Exercises and Projects 65
Mary T. Rogus, Ohio University

6 Taking Your Class Online 83
Leslie-Jean Thornton, Arizona State University, and Susan Keith, Rutgers University

7 Evaluating the Class 101
Jennifer Jacobs Henderson and William G. Christ, Trinity University

8 Preparing for Next Semester 125
Carol B. Schwalbe, University of Arizona

9 Beyond the Classroom 143
Natalie T. J. Tindall, Lamar University

Index 155

About the Contributors 163

Proceeds from Master Class *will go to fund programs for the AEJMC Elected Standing Committee on Teaching*

1

So, You're a College Instructor. Now What?

Karen M. Turner, Temple University

"Teaching is surprisingly difficult." That's what first-time instructors often say—be they newly minted PhDs, someone transitioning from industry or those who want to give teaching a try as an adjunct. But if you take a deep breath and keep in mind you *really do* have something to offer your students, you'll be fine. The challenge is how to effectively convey your knowledge and experience. Through the chapters of this book, we'll help you become a better teacher—and maybe even a master! Congratulations! Teaching is an admirable profession.

IT'S A CALLING, NOT A JOB

Everyone has heard the adage, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." This has always sounded like a criticism of those who choose the teaching profession. However, when people are asked who most influenced their life, it's usually a teacher. Oprah often talks about the impact her fourth-grade teacher Mrs. Duncan had on her life. And so it shouldn't be surprising that for many instructors, teaching is viewed as a calling.

When interviewing several journalism and mass communication instructors, the common theme was they're "in it for the students." Many of us are passionate about our charge to develop the next generation of respected, responsible, intelligent and socially aware news gatherers and communicators. We're preparing students for evolving communication professions in a multicultural global environment. Desiree Hill is a media instructor at the University of Central Oklahoma. She says teachers can

have a big impact on young lives. "There are students sitting in the classroom with low self-confidence or anxiety or they may be first-generation students who don't have a roadmap of what college should be," she said. "A little bit of attention can help students blossom who might otherwise be overlooked or become frustrated and drop out."

Lydia Timmins, who teaches at the University of Delaware, says for her teaching is clearly a calling. "A job to me is a thing you do that doesn't mean anything to you. You show up, do what someone says, and go home," she said. "A calling is employment that you care about and think about and want to do well. Like journalism, teaching is a calling. Lord knows you don't do it for the money, you do it for the meaning."

But Texas Christian University journalism professor Aaron Chimbel says teaching can be both a calling and a job. "It's a calling in the sense that to do this well you have to be able to get the most out of your students, which usually requires you to connect with them in some way. You are not just providing information, you are mentor and someone they will look to for the rest of their lives," he said. "On the other hand, there are some arduous tasks that are like so many jobs, but, as I often say, the students are what make it so great and worthwhile."

Mississippi State's Deb Wenger sums up the sentiment well: "The best teachers are energized by the idea of learning themselves and excited by helping others to learn. Perhaps it is that enthusiasm that marks the differences between a 'calling' and a 'job,'" she said. "We often associate the word 'job' with something arduous and potentially unfulfilling, and though teaching can sometimes feel thankless, more often than not, teachers find themselves feeling pride in their students and end each semester with a sense of having done some important things right."

Long-time Philadelphia television reporter Walt Hunter, who retired after 45 years in the business, began adjunct teaching in 2017. He's new to teaching and says he's found his calling. "A job puts money in your wallet. A 'calling' fills your soul," he said. "The thrill of walking into that Immaculata University classroom last January, looking at those 12 faces, and realizing that maybe I could share some thought, some insight that could change their lives, still fills my heart." He adds, "Jobs come and go. But a calling stays somewhere deep inside, all your life, and, if you are very blessed and lucky, like me, someday you answer it."

University of South Carolina's Laura Smith says she always knew she would teach because teaching was in her blood. "My great grandfather was a teacher, my grandmother was a teacher, my great aunt was a teacher," said Smith. "Once he retired from the military, my father became a teacher. It's a deep and rich tradition in my family." But Smith said before she embarked on a teaching career she wanted to have substantial professional experience so her students would take her seriously.

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"I felt that way about my own professors," she said. "I especially trusted the ones who had worked in the industry before entering the classroom. Those were the kind of teacher I wanted to be. So I worked in TV for about 12 years and then, when the time was right, I entered a PhD program."

A beauty of this calling is the opportunities to be innovative—we are limited only by the lack of our ability to think outside of the box! It's important to try to reach all student learners; to create a comfortable class atmosphere; to connect with students in a way that develops in them a thirst to learn, not to just get a good grade; and to foster the development of research and inquiry. Also, you will not always know the answer, and that's OK. What's important is to be a lifelong learner and model this behavior for your students.

Take chances to grow, and you'll become a better teacher.

YOU'RE NOT JUST TELLING WAR STORIES

Oftentimes, especially for those transitioning from industry, there's a tendency to tell war stories. The classroom can be a comfortable space to share our experiences with students. But as Pete Watkins, Temple University associate director in the Center for the Advancement of Teaching says, such stories must be relevant. "We remember stories better than facts," he explained. "Make sure the students make the connection as to why it was important." This sentiment was echoed by many seasoned instructors such as University of Missouri-Kansas City journalism professor Peter Morello. He spent 36 years working in the profession and 18 years in the classroom. Morello says he uses his war stories as a teaching tool. "Once students know I have been around the block, I find they are more likely to pay attention," he said.

Morello, who teaches global journalism, said sharing his experiences is a way of getting his students to understand how the coverage of local issues is effective in reporting on crises abroad. "It is often not about the conflicts themselves, but the triggers . . . such as ethnic/religious bias and division, political dysfunction, hunger and hopelessness," he said. "Over time, I have further developed more of a 'solutions-based' approach to a student's reporting skills . . . how conflicts can be resolved, how groups can learn to understand each other, steps that can be taken to avoid future conflict."

Temple University's David W. Brown maintains an active public relations practice. As such, his war stories always find their way into his teaching. "Because public relations as a profession in a city like Philadelphia is something that is always evolving, I find that my active involvement in the field allows me the opportunity to bring real-life examples

into the classroom in real time—as they're happening," he said. "The war stories provide a degree of authenticity with the students that helps to provide context to the theory of the practice. For me, theory without practice provides only half of the picture."

Brown added being a practitioner and professor of color enables him to bring his unique experiences into the classroom. "That distinction adds an even more interesting twist that will help my students appreciate different perspectives in becoming more adept at navigating increasingly diverse terrain," he explained. So telling recent and not-so-recent war stories can be an effective teaching tool. The challenge is whatever stories you tell must be relevant.

FROM THE TRENCHES

Talking Shop in the Classroom

Jennifer C. Thomas, Howard University

There was a time when I was hesitant to "talk shop" outside of the newsroom. Journalists are a strange yet wonderful fraternity. We don't flinch when discussing coverage of unnerving stories. We have all worked cruel and unusual schedules and have had crazy behind-the-scenes encounters in control rooms, studios and newsrooms. We have met people in the field who give credence to the saying that "truth is stranger than fiction." We are tough, but humane. As a journalism professor, sharing "the real deal" is crucial. Discussing the stories that you've encountered in the field is a necessary part of your teaching philosophy. It helps shape the student and brings to life the stories and anecdotes in the journalism textbooks. It shows the student that you are the master of this topic, because you've "been there, done that."

I often begin my journalism courses by stating: "If your feelings get hurt easily, if you don't like getting up to report to work at 4 a.m., if you can't accept working holidays, weekends and birthdays, and if you can't accept making

low salary for a high-pressured stressful job, then this may not be the career for you." I then transition to share how journalism shapes history and how we hold some of the most important roles in society.

My first year teaching was the fall of 2011. I had just earned an MA degree in journalism, after working 20 years full time as a broadcast journalist. As I was preparing the syllabus, I realized one class was taking place on the 10-year anniversary of Sept. 11. I was the 9 a.m. newscast producer at CNN on this fateful day, and hitherto had not discussed my feelings in depth. It was just too emotional. However, I decided to share and also discuss some of the ethical implications of showing graphic images then and now (the anniversary). We then shifted gears to allow each student to share a reflection of that day. To my surprise, it was one of the most impactful classes of the year. Several students were from New York City and had vivid recollections of the tragedy. We were able to discuss the media's coverage and put it into perspective. I learned valuable lessons that day—that sometimes going off-script is necessary, that students appreciate really being heard, and that experience shapes education.

Telling war stories can also be a way of sharing what not to do—your failures. Robert (Ted) Gutsche Jr. teaches at Florida International University. He said such stories "become lessons for students on how to succeed." Timmins of the University of Delaware agrees. The former news producer says her approach to sharing her war stories has changed over the years. "The students like the stories, but now I do more than just tell, I explain," she said. "I admit the wrong decisions I made, and how I tried (and sometimes failed) to correct them. I think the war stories act as a peg to hang the theory on, to show them that it's all connected."

Gutsche cautions we shouldn't overuse our war stories as a supplementary teaching tool. "If the course turns into a war story a period or the stories are dated and the stories do not focus on how students themselves can operate, improve or reflect, then the tales do nothing more than create a divide between students, the instructor and proposed innovations for the future of the profession," he said. So be mindful that war stories should be relevant, timely, to the point and short. It's not about you! Long elaborate stories can be interpreted as braggadocios.

University of Central Oklahoma's Hill said the only time she breaks the "keep-it-short rule" is when she does a breaking news module in her television production class. "I do several days on this topic, and spend one day on the Oklahoma City bombing," she said. "I was an EP at a local station during the bombing, so I share video, then do Q & A with the students after." Steve Doig of Arizona State says his war stories tend to be self-deprecating. He tells them to illustrate what students can learn from

his 23 years as a newspaper reporter. "For example, in talking about the dangers of using voice recorders, I told about the time I did a high-stakes interview in a target's office and my recorder had picked up a hum from his fluorescent desk lamp that wiped out his voice," said Doig. "Luckily, I also had taken notes, which was the lesson I wanted my students to learn."

The sharing such stories doesn't have to be limited to you as the instructor. Guest speakers often bring their "real-world" current experiences to their presentations. But provide them with ground rules too. You don't want them to be long on telling war stories and short on sharing technique. If you've taught for a while, no doubt you have student war stories you can also add to your teaching toolkit. Kim Fox teaches at The American University in Cairo. She says she shares success stories with her students and provides examples of plagiarism cases. Providing student examples can be an effective way for current students to learn from the success and failures of their not-so-distant peers.

FEARS OF A NEW INSTRUCTOR

Anytime you begin a new adventure, there's some trepidation. And this is expected when you begin teaching. Even though many of the instructors and professors I spoke to are now old hats at teaching, the anxiety of being a newbie isn't easily forgotten. What if you've prepared a great lesson, anticipating a wonderful robust discussion, and the students just sit and stare? No conversation. What to do? Don't worry, it's happened to all of us. Just stay focused. You'll get through it.

TCU's Aaron Chimbel advises new teachers to play to their strengths. "Some people are great lecturers, some are great discussion leaders, some are great at breaking down examples, some are great in a lab environment," he said. "Your students will get the most out of your class if you are doing what you do best. If at all possible, don't try to teach the class how the last person did it unless that fits you or you just have to."

Smith, who teaches journalism at South Carolina, says she tells newbies that imparting knowledge takes a lot of hard work. "When we first get out of the field and into the classroom, we tend to think it's easy to learn a core skill. But it takes time and effort to teach a core concept well," she said. "You really need to sit down and think to yourself, 'how did I learn that?' 'How can I break that idea down into little, discernible bits of knowledge?' 'How can I create a hands-on assignment that helps students practice that one, small skill?'"

Arizona State's Steve Doig agrees. He said he quickly learned that "teaching isn't the leisurely semiretirement" job some of his former

newsroom colleagues think it is. Michelle Bradsher-McHugh began her teaching career as an adjunct and now teaches television management full time at Drexel University. She advises as a new professor you have to "have it all together" from the beginning. You don't want to have your students start off on the first day confused or overwhelmed. She said it's important to set the right tone that first day by having everything mapped out. Bradsher-McHugh, who also teaches online, said being organized is critical when you're not having face-to-face meetings with students.

Now don't stress. Obviously, you want to be as organized as possible. But many faculty find that, depending on the course, their syllabus is a living and breathing document. (More on this later in the book.) A resource that is sometimes overlooked is the campus instructional support center. If you have one, use it. The professionals there can help make your initial teaching experience less scary.

However, as you're thinking about organizing your course, there are logistical issues you need to address. To help you get started, departments, schools and colleges usually host a new-faculty orientation event. A similar activity is often held for adjuncts, or perhaps it's held in conjunction with the new-faculty event. This is where you'll discuss and get clarification about a variety of teaching issues such as the academic calendar, code of conduct, course add and drop deadlines, mid-semester breaks, campus online and office resources, faculty policies and handbooks, classroom time requirements, canceling class, grading rubrics, awarding extra credit, midterm reports and student evaluations, exam schedules, incompletes and final grades.

Something that isn't talked about enough is what to do in case of an emergency. You should know what to do if there's an active shooter, fire or other emergency. More and more universities are proactively addressing this issue by holding simulation drills.

Another fear new professors have is balancing one's teaching with the obligation and desire to do research, especially if you're on a tenure track. Having your research inform your teaching is something new instructors hear often. But how to do this? FIU's Gutsche is well published. Over the years he says he developed a way to marry his research with his teaching. "To make it work, I matched my learning outcomes of my classes to my research objectives," he said. "If I was working on a project related to a particular set of theories or case studies, these would become central to the topics of class discussions, assigned readings, research projects of the students or reporting efforts—it engaged students in discussion and action, thoughts and debates that were well beyond themselves and that pushed their coursework and involvement in the classroom. In the end, we all won."

FROM THE TRENCHES

Overcoming the Jitters of Being a New Instructor

Soomin Seo, Temple University

I felt like a fraud. Here I was, teaching my first class as an assistant professor straight out of a doctoral program. I did attend a new-faculty orientation, but it was more about what not to do from a legal and administrative perspective, assuming we knew how to teach. It terrified me that I did not know much about the local history or culture. It scared me to think that students were paying thousands of dollars to take my class. Is it even possible to give my blue-collar students their money's worth?

Due in part to my insecurities, I created an open-ended syllabus: I told students it will be updated frequently online, reflecting the dynamic world of journalism we were studying. This turned out to be a very good thing, allowing me to calibrate the workload and difficulty of assignments as I got to know my students better. In an effort to memorize the names of my students, I made a printout of student photographs with names, carrying it around with me everywhere.

I wish someone could have told me that I should spend less time preparing class materials (i.e., reading books and articles) and more time talking to fellow professors and students to become familiar with the social fabric of my department. What did the other professors teach? What jobs do students get after graduation? Knowing these things proved crucial in boosting teaching effectiveness.

Newbie professors tend to teach dense classes with too many readings, and I was no exception. Gradually, I did learn to ease up a little, pacing my class by alternating hard materials with softer examples and narratives. I also overcame my reluctance to share personal experience, thinking I should avoid becoming the lazy journalism teacher who talks endlessly about the good old days. As it turned out, however, my students lit up when I shared my stories covering North Korea and sub-Saharan Africa as a foreign correspondent.

Still, there were days when I felt insecure or downright incompetent. On those days, I put on my best clothes and thought of the wonderful teachers I have had over the years. The professor who had more faith in me than myself, the professor who always provided two-page feedback for my essays. Some of them are no longer around, but I reminded myself that they will continue to live in me as long as I am teaching.

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