

Teaching Reflections Fall 2021

This was my first semester back from my sabbatical, and the first semester the university was back to face-to-face classes. Overall, it was a wonderful semester.

Things that went well:

- Tutorial attendance was solid across the semester and the decision to give student course credit for attending, was a success.
- Students continue to appreciate that I record my lectures. I am glad that something so easy appears to help students when they miss a class or need to “brush up” on some course content while studying.
- While there is still some TA grading inconsistency, having the TA exam prep + TA grading sessions combined with the TA mentor program we implemented this semester, seems to be helping. Further, having consistent exam prep slides (prepared by the TAC) further helped reinforce our expectations.
- This semester, perhaps even more than in previous years, I was impressed by my Soci 100 students’ dedication and commitment. They no doubt struggled with being back in a classroom, but they were always wearing their masks and were an absolute pleasure to teach.
- I have really enjoyed working with my 5 MA students (1 of whom defended their thesis in early December!). Their passion and dedication to sociology is inspiring.
- The 439A class seemed to start a little slow (the first time I was teaching the course over 2-semesters) but by the end of the term, there was a very positive sense of community emerging. Most of the students are in their 4th year and I am really enjoying seeing how far they have come since taking Soc100.

Things that I need to work harder on:

- The final exam was cancelled the day before students were supposed to write – the move online was the best that could be achieved in such a short time. I felt disappointed for the students (and myself) that we did not get a chance to “finish” the course together. Like so much about the pandemic, was just another thing that we all had to get through.
- While students are incredibly forgiving, I must up my game with my command of the gender/sexuality terminology. This was made clear when an anonymous student wrote me a 3-page letter explaining some of the new terminology – I saw this as a wonderful gesture of support for me to improve the currency of my lectures and I noted my appreciation in class. I also reinforced that I was sorry that they felt they needed to remain anonymous as they feared how I might react. For me, a student willing to help someone who was not as familiar with the area as they were, was exactly what I would like all of us to do more – help each other out. I was gratified when after the final lecture, the student came up and let me know they were the author of the letter – thank you for trusting me and I am so thankful for your help (I will incorporate all the suggestions/information in future lectures!).
- My 439A students had some good suggestions on how to improve the assignments for the class – will be making these adjustments in future deliveries.
- I need to figure out a better way to support our community partners to develop suitable projects for our students. Ideally, I would like to have 4-5 community partners who need help with larger projects that I could assign 2-3 students to, right now having 14 community partners, with 14 different projects, for 14 different students isn’t fair to all students nor is it sustainable for me.

As always, thanks to all my students and my TAs who made the semester such a pleasure.

/Bruce