

Teaching Reflections Spring 2022

What a great semester. Seriously, was so much fun. Even with the semester starting online, the students really “leaned-in” to the classes this semester. This was partly because many had me last semester but also because most were feeling more comfortable being on campus and in face-to-face classes. For most, the pandemic went from something that was feared, to something that was an inconvenience.

Things that went well:

- Tutorial and lecture attendance remained high over the semester. The fact attendance was high even though I record lectures reinforced my belief that students feel they benefit from a “live” lecture more than a recording or a video. There is so much more to a university lecture than just the content. It is the prof’s timing, their use of examples to explain concepts, ability to answer questions in real-time, and the students’ ability to sit next to their friend in class and going for coffee after. A lot of learning occurs going to, and coming from, classes.
- While there is still some TA grading inconsistency, having the TA exam prep + TA grading sessions, seems to be helping. Further, having consistent exam prep slides (prepared by the TAC) further helped reinforce our expectations.
- The 439B class really came together this semester. The artefacts assignment was the most powerful teaching experience I have ever had. Students’ ability to connect sociology to their lives was empowering and humbling.

Things that I need to work harder on:

- The final exam format (7 questions provided in advance, and I choose 4) might be too overwhelming for students and TAs (lots of material to remember, lots of grading in a short period of time). I am thinking about an online, mid-semester assignment, to lessen the burden of the final exam.
- My 439B students had some good suggestions on how to improve the assignments for the class – I will drop the number of article discussant assignments as well as the rubric assignment in future deliveries.
- I am still struggling need to figure out a better way to support our community partners to develop suitable projects for our students. There was too much variability in the partners’ commitment and support for students. However, this is the reality of working with overextended colleagues, but I “think” I have a list of excellent partners for next year.
- My CES results and comments were really gratifying. Students are enjoying my classes which is wonderful, but there were also comments suggesting that our class helped them see the world around them differently. As a teacher, and as a sociologist, this is exactly what I hoped to achieve. Mills would be pleased to know we continue to show others the beauty in the grey.

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

/Bruce