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“Teaching with Technology”  
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**REFLECTIVE PORTFOLIO**

**1. Define your teaching philosophy.**

I want my students to leave any course I teach with their skills improved, their minds piqued by big ideas, their horizons widened and, most importantly, their ability to teach themselves enhanced.

**2. Have you ever observed a master teacher? If the answer is yes, what do you recall most from the experience?**

As a student, yes, but not since I’ve started teaching myself. However, I do gain great insights from talking about teaching with other professors. The online seminars and courses offered at FIT, especially over the past year, have allowed me to continue learning from and staying connected with my colleagues. Sometimes, it’s that offhand comment that resonates and clarifies. For example, in a Diversity & Inclusion webinar I attended last semester, one professor mentioned that not everyone enjoys school, but that most of us teachers likely did enjoy it and that’s why we went into academia. It was an “aha” moment for me. (And a “duh” one too!) That casual observation gave me a needed nudge to shift my perspective, and become more empathetic and sensitive to the point of view of many of my students.

**3. Give an example of your most successful lesson. Why do you feel it was successful?**

Honestly, any lesson where I can get the students talking and then step out of the way while they hash out a problem or share their experiences feels successful to me. As I’ve said before, one of my main goals as a teacher is to teach the students how to teach themselves. I will only be with them for 15 weeks, but they have a lifetime ahead where they need to learn how to find their own answers and figure out their own solutions.

**4. Do you have an example of an unsuccessful lesson? How did you address the challenges?**

Without a doubt, my most unsuccessful lesson was the freshman English class where I assigned Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal." Written c. 1730, it's a vicious satire about how poor Irish families could help themselves by selling their children as food to wealthy English men and women. It's a masterpiece of deadpan irony, groundbreaking for its time, but if you can't understand the dated language and don't understand the context, it's dreadfully, dreadfully boring. So no one read it. I then had us read it together in class and it didn't help. When I tried to explain what it was about, the students were horrified, disgusted and completely turned off. When I tried to explain that it was considered a brilliant, innovative example of satire, they were no longer listening. I should have shown them an SNL skit at that point, but no, I continued to try to explicate the essay and the concept of satire with an example that had no resonance or connection to their lives. Lesson learned.

**5. Why are you introducing and/or expanding the use of technology into your teaching?**

Primarily because if I ever have to teach remotely again, I want to be conversant with and comfortable using all sorts of different tools to help engage my students. And even if I choose not to use any of them, I think it's still important to stay up to date with all the technology that's out there.

**6. How do you feel these technology innovations will affect the student experience? How do you think it will affect your experience?**

Though I still don't use that much technology in my classroom (other than Blackboard), I do find that technology can help ease the administrative load (Qwickly attendance is one that comes to mind.)

I also think that since our students are so tech savvy, it is essential to meet them at least halfway. I feel that to teach a class to today's students that doesn't utilize at least some innovative learning app can make the content seem irrelevant and outdated to them. Plus, many of these apps help engage students far more than just calling on them in class or having them write a paper does. And that's what it's all about – capturing their attention and their imagination.

**7. Please describe new teaching ideas you plan to implement as a result of this technology certificate program.**

- Padlet – I can see how this will give the students a low stakes opportunity to write and share their thoughts
- Library research guide – I had no idea this existed! I plan to embed this in all my Blackboards going forward.

- Learning about voice to text – I cannot believe I didn't know that I could access it from my keyboard with just two keystrokes. Mind blown.
- Faculty Research Space - I will definitely keep an eye out for any workshops offered. I have no idea what I might learn there that I could use in an English Composition class, but just knowing that this exists is inspiring and intriguing.

**8. How will these new technology tools/approaches contribute to your classroom practice?**

Taking the time to learn about new technology always gives me new ideas about how to teach my content better. I'm inspired to make my classes more immediate, more interactive and, I hope, more engaging. While I still only tend to deploy technology sparingly in my composition classes, knowing what's out there has made me much more aware of what motivates and excites students. I've gradually re-structured all my classes to focus on this, and have found that the response from students has been overwhelmingly positive.

**9. How will you evaluate the success of your activities?**

I suppose one way would be to see what the students say in their evaluations, both the official College ones at the end of the semester and also the informal evaluations I take halfway through the semester.

But I feel the best way to evaluate the success of a class comes from the engagement the students have with both the material and in the classroom. There's nothing quite as exhilarating as standing in front of a class that's actively discussing a topic amongst themselves with very little help from me. That's when I know I've presented something in a way that intrigues and inspires.

**10. What do you consider to be the bigger picture items with regard to technology and learning?**

Technology can be enormously helpful in streamlining the administrative portion of a class. But I also think that it helps us teach the whole student better. Being able to review the totality of a student's work on Blackboard allows me to drill deeper into where they need more help. And for the student, having all their completed assignments kept in one place allows them the opportunity to review comments and feedback.

But mostly, I think approaching material from several different angles helps clarify concepts and cement ideas, allowing students to understand and retain more information. Using technology gives teachers the tools to do this in an almost sneaky way – we can create a Padlet to have students share their worst job stories, set up a discussion board for them to post a list of every job they've ever held, and then have them write up a formal resume for a graded assignment. The first two activities get them thinking and sharing about their work history in a low stakes way, and the last puts it all together.

## 11. Final Thoughts

Thanks for the opportunity both to take this class and to write up this reflection on it. With so much coming at me from all sides – the seemingly endless alerts and memos and reminders that come with the beginning of every semester, not to mention the complications due to COVID -- being able to sit in a seminar and concentrate on just the one thing – teaching with technology – allowed me to relax and open my mind to new concepts and methods of teaching. I'm both encouraged and excited to get started with the semester.