



TEACHING TUESDAYS



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BELLISARIO BULLETIN



By [Juliet Pinto](#) | Acting Associate Dean and Associate Professor

Spring (was) in the air, and with spring break right around the corner, we wish everyone safe travels and/or time to relax and unwind. A special shout-out to our students and faculty who will be traveling to Argentina, Ireland, and Scotland to engage in international reporting, documentary production or digital advertising. These experiences can be invaluable and often transformative parts of the college journey.

In today's Teaching Tip, Simon Lichen reflects on the evolution of his teaching style in large lecture courses. Comparing his experience as a student with his perspective as an instructor, he explores an important question: What approach best inspires a genuine desire to learn, rather than simply the motivation to earn a good grade?

Did you know you can change your course homepage in Canvas? Danielle Harris walks through the available options in this edition of the Canvas Cue.

Wishing everyone a great week!

Important Items of Note

- **Accessibility Learning Path** | The Accessibility Learning Path courses have migrated to a single sign on environment. | [Accessibility Learning Path](#) webpage.
- **Spring Break** | March 9-13 | No Classes

Careers/Internships

- **March 4** | 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. | [Hollywood Program Information Session](#) | 62 Willard Building
- **March 5** | 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. | [Hollywood Program Information Session](#) | 62 Willard Building

Upcoming Events

- **March 3** | 11:30 a.m. | John M. Anderson Endowed Lecture Series | [Rebecca Kiger](#) | Images from her [year-long-project](#) covering the toxic train derailment that took place in East Palestine, OH. | Foster Auditorium in Paterno Library
- **March 3** | 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. | [Smarter Not Harder: Organizational Strategies for Teaching](#) | Virtual
- **March 3** | 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. | [Tips for Collaborative Learning with a Career Readiness Lens](#) | Virtual
- **March 3** | 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. | [Getting Started with Penn State's Generative AI Tools: Copilot and Gemini Overview](#) | Virtual
- **March 4** | 1:00 - 2:15 p.m. | [Assessing Student Learning](#) | Virtual
- **March 4** | 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. | [Tips for Collaborative Learning with a Career Readiness Lens](#) | Virtual
- **March 5** | 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. | [Canvas: Optimizing Courses for Accessibility](#) | Virtual
- **March 5** | 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. | [Developing AI Literacy in Students + Optional 30-Minute Design Sprint](#) | Virtual

TEACHING TIP



The Evolution of Teaching Styles

By [Simon Licen](#) | Associate Professor



In the endless pedagogical tension between “teaching concepts” and “learning by doing,” especially in applied sciences such as communication, I usually lean towards the former. History and practice both tend to repeat themselves, so recognizing phenomena in abstract terms gives us a chance to steer their forthcoming manifestations.

Still, to maximize student comprehension and retention, concepts and theories are best illustrated with practical, “real-world” examples.

In preparation for a class activity on the concept of “gatekeeping” and its relevance to sport media, I prompted ChatGPT to produce a list of 10-15 sport-focused story pitches. The list had to include local, national, and international stories; in-season and out-of-season competitions;

“beat” stories and unexpected controversies; and, of course, clearly irrelevant items. The chatbot’s initial list required considerable manual editing, but it saved time drafting stories for different contexts.

Ideally, students then discuss in groups the selection of stories for inclusion in our outlet (or outlets). In COMM 412 Sports, Media and Society, which enrolls over 100 students, group work is impractical (as it is entirely meaningful only if most, if not all, groups can present their conclusions), so we used TopHat to “vote” for each story’s inclusion in ESPN SportsCenter and Centre Daily Times’s sports pages.

The results of the activity, obviously inspired by David Manning White’s classic [study on “gate keeping.”](#) were interesting and segued into a discussion on [news values, criteria of newsworthiness](#), and their application to sport: the concepts I set out to teach.

The following week, a routine comprehension check I conduct before class (“What questions do you have about the course, the previous class, or the assigned reading?”) produced the question (verbatim), “If there were no right or wrong answers on whether or not to include a story, how will this look on an exam?”

At least one, and perhaps quite a few more students, are so concerned with securing “good” grades that they “game out” exam questions and primarily experience class activities as “teaching to the exam.” In this case, the student could not envision an assessment beyond a right-or-wrong question on the inclusion/exclusion of a specific hypothetical headline into an assigned publication.

My academic training derives from continental Europe, where professors primarily *teach*. Especially in high-enrollment courses, instructors are expected to convey as much synthesized knowledge as possible in the limited time available. These basics support later textbook comprehension. Discussion, application, and hands-on activities are completed in weekly tutorials in small breakout sessions. Students thus receive both frontal instruction and opportunities to discuss the application of content.

At my first American university, I learned about “edutainment” and the notion of *making* learning “fun” in a way that differs from the inherent enjoyment of self-betterment through (often challenging) studying. What a fascinating example of contextual, cultural, and even generational differences! And what a contrast from my lived experience.

Teaching styles evolve over the years. I have significantly reduced and slowed frontal instruction and now seek a balance between teaching concepts and deploying activities designed to strengthen comprehension and master application. Students differ (perhaps more than ever in recent memory) in the amount of content they can absorb in a pedagogical unit. Their learning styles also differ, and high-enrollment courses render individualization near impossible.

Over the winter break, my wife encouraged me to scale down my determination to “teach” and rather focus on *inspiring students to learn*. Even skilled instructors can never reach all students in a way that is entirely tailored to their learning styles. But instilling a habit is ultimately more valuable than ensuring a consistent hourly return on tuition investment.

CANVAS CUE



Choosing Your Course Homepage

By [Danielle Harris](#) | Instructional Designer

The [video tutorial](#) below will offer a brief overview of how to choose your course homepage and determine what students first see when signing into your course(s).



SHARE A TEACHING STRATEGY



Share the phenomenal things that you have been doing in your classroom! Do you have a teaching technology or strategy that you've seen succeed and would like to share in the *Teaching Tuesdays* newsletter? If so, please [share your idea](#) for an upcoming issue.