

Bortree, Denise Sevick

From: Mailing list for information relevant to Bellisario College of Communications faculty. <L-COMM-FACULTY@LISTS.PSU.EDU> on behalf of Bortree, Denise Sevick <dsb177@PSU.EDU>
Sent: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 3:33 PM
To: L-COMM-FACULTY@LISTS.PSU.EDU
Subject: Teaching Tuesdays - Getting Creative by John Affleck
Attachments: Importing Learning Surveys from Canvas Commons into Your Course.docx

TEACHING



TUESDAYS

Welcome to Teaching Tuesdays. We're in week seven and still motoring ahead. The leaves are turning, and the mornings are brisk. Thanks for your ongoing commitment to deliver the best courses possible for our students during this time. This week John Affleck shares a few original ideas he uses to engage students inside (and outside) of the classroom during this time of social distancing. You'll also read a bonus teaching tip, a creative tactic that Bill Zimmerman introduced to Zoom classes to increase meaningful student participation. So many great ideas in this edition of Teaching Tuesdays!

Importing Canvas Learning Surveys

Do you want to know how your students are learning in modes of instruction (CP, CM, CR, or CW) that you are using this semester? The university has created a series of learning surveys. You can import them directly into Canvas, using the steps [here](#) or in the **attached document**.

Gathering and Responding to Student Feedback

Keep Teaching Faculty Development Group is hosting a session on collecting student feedback and assessing it in the the current instruction modes. Session will be held October 8 at 12 pm. See more information here:

<https://keepteaching.psu.edu/webinars/gathering-and-responding-to-student-feedback/>

(Bonus) Teaching Tip: The sound of student excellence by Bill Zimmerman, Lecturer, Advertising/Public Relations

During a recent virtual conference, I was inspired by the host's use of a call bell in response to useful insights from speakers and responses during engagement activities such as trivia questions. This is now a part of my Zoom sessions. Students have received dings for things like offering high-quality comments, winning Kahoot! quizzes and giving useful suggestions for in-class activities. Ringing the bell offers a jolt during morning or slow classes, enforces participation and can make it easier to note exceptional contributions when deciding participating points. When students earn a ring, I add them to a list I call "The Bell Bunch." Toward the end of the semester, these students will earn a few bonus points. [A variety of bells are available on Amazon](#), and I purchased one at our Staples for about \$8.

Reporting Restrictions Mean a Chance to Get Creative

by John Affleck, Knight Chair in Sports Journalism and Society, Professor

Imagine if you were an expert on stuffed animals and they closed the toy department. What would you do? That was essentially my position when we opened the Fall 2020 semester as the person who runs the sports journalism program at Penn State.

I had chosen to go masked but face-to-face with my students, thinking it would be the best experience for everyone concerned. But, like all choices this year, there were problems built into that decision. The restrictions on student reporters, while essential, are challenging. And then there was the little matter of the Big Ten postponing the fall season.

The COMM476 Triathlon

A little context: Nearly every semester, I teach sports writing, which I see as a course where students get in-depth training in reporting and writing, along with a sampling of multimedia, social media, investigative work and ethics. Sports is just (awesome) context for a course that one student described recently as “COMM 260 on steroids.” I use events, meaning games, to teach hard news ledes, advances and follows, columns, sidebars and copy block writing – the key to all advanced journalism.

To help build a good spirit both with my students and among them, and to put them in a space where they aren’t nervous about trying and failing, I traditionally start the semester with a bowling and pizza event called the COMM 476 Open, where the class bowls a game at Northland Bowl, then the male and female winners do a news conference and everyone has to write a game story on deadline. In a Dad-humor sort of way, I’ve built up the event over time so the students have more to write about. Now we do a bit in the class before the tournament where everybody has to give their bowling histories, and I put together game notes, including all time high and low scores. We even have a trophy – a used pin I got from Northland. The winners sign The Pin with a Sharpie in a post-game “ceremony.”

This year, with no live sports at all to cover, I doubled down on goofiness and created the COMM 476 Triathlon. Instead of just one event, we had three, to practice three different skills.



The first was minigolf out at Tussey Mountain. That was the game story. The top four finishers of each gender then made teams of two for our next event, cornhole, which we could do outside Carnegie and used to do a copy block assignment called “Three Takeaways from the COMM 476 Open.” The winners of cornhole then advanced to a bocce ball match we held Thursday, which we used for a video storytelling exercise.



In class, I would hype the events, telling students before them what special moments we had coming up and playing the old “Monday Night Football” theme to introduce the next leg of the Triathlon.

I expected the students to be gently amused and indulgent of it all. To my surprise, by the time bocce came around, the students took the competition really seriously. There was no wisecracking, virtually no talking, as they filmed their classmates playing. Our winner, Kristin Gjelej, said her heart was pounding down the stretch. But it all ended well, with a trophy for Kristin and applause.



The Lesson Is ...

So what’s the point of all this? I’d say there are four reasons I did it this way, when we could have just watched pro sports on TV all semester:

- Students have been through what we all have. They need something lighter to look forward to in a day of Zoom meetings.
- When Penn State students compete, they get engaged.
- What are they more likely to remember? The 112th power point lecture they sat through, or the story they wrote for minigolf?
- Despite everything that’s going on, it’s OK to have a little fun.

Hope you enjoyed this issue. Keep an eye out for Teaching Tuesdays every Tuesday this semester. Want to read an earlier issues? You can find it in the Faculty/Staff Resources: <https://www.bellisario.psu.edu/faculty-staff-resources/teaching-tuesdays>

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