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For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion



## 8 Things I Hate about Teaching

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Blog Series: Stories from the Front

January 27, 2015

Tags: vocation of teaching | faculty well-being | mentoring faculty

It's late January in Michigan and I'm in a certain mood. So here for your mid-winter *schadenfreude* are eight (click-baity) things I hate right now, in no particular order. Perhaps many of you can relate.

1. Teaching requires me to dress like a grown-up. While I have male friends who think nothing of wearing jeans and t-shirts to work every day, most women I know feel obligated to put on skirts or trousers or blouses or heels (and perhaps even Spanx) at least most of the time. I do wear jeans now and then, but I try to be judicious about it - and usually pair them with a jacket just to be safe. I would be so much happier in fleece and flannel.
2. A significant minority of my students won't buy books, no matter how miserly I am in



choosing texts. Some will say they can't afford it, but given the thousands of dollars of debt they're carrying (not to mention the

expensive technology they all depend upon), I find it unpersuasive that a \$24 book is going to put them over the edge. Plus, I have discovered that some of them won't read even if I provide them with a copy.

3. Teaching is a bottomless well of ways to feel bad about myself. My classes are small. My evaluations are lukewarm. I've never won a teaching award. I used a reader instead of picking out my own articles. I cursed gratuitously. I lectured (using Power Point). I didn't lecture (using Power Point). I lost my patience. I was too nice. Someone looked sleepy today. I was sleepy today. There is truly no end to the narcissistic ways I can turn anything my students do into something wrong with me.
4. Teaching takes away from energy for research and writing. I don't claim that scholarly production is ever *impossible*, but besides being time-consuming teaching can also be quite intense, such that come Friday evening, binge-watching *The Fall* in my jammies (a totally random example, of course) seems much more attractive than spending the weekend in the library making myself smarter.
5. Teaching often feels pointless. Who cares about the humanities anymore? And anyway,



when I look at the news all I see are horrible people doing horrible things for horrible reasons. What difference does it really make whether I teach religious studies, or whether I teach well?

6. Even though no one cares about the humanities anymore, religious studies inspires particularly weird reactions from students. No one feels threatened by a teacher who deconstructs *Frankenstein* or *Mona Lisa*, but deconstruct Genesis or a gospel and you are suddenly the evil antitheist from *God's Not Dead*. (Do biblicists at Christian schools have the same problem?)
7. The pay is embarrassingly terrible, relative to folks in other industries or at more prestigious schools. As an associate professor, I have yet to earn what my sister earned as a first-year public school teacher back in the early 2000s. Due to market changes, next year's brand-new professors at my own institution will earn significantly more than I do, right out of the starting gate.
8. I can't even enjoy hating teaching because of the insane number of contingent faculty in this country, many of them my dear friends, who live from term to term not knowing where next year's health benefits will come from. For me to complain about my work is to reveal myself for the heartless, entitled brat that I am [KB1]. I should be ashamed of myself for even thinking this stuff, much less saying it out loud (see # 3 above).

I could go on, but you've probably had more than enough of my belly-aching. If you've been kind enough to stick with me thus far, I invite you to comment below with some of your own

mid-winter gripes. I promise not to judge!

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[KB1] <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Ive-Got-Tenure-How/130490>

<https://wabashcenter.wabash.edu/2015/01/8-things-i-hate-about-teaching/>