



# WABASH CENTER

For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion



## Where We Work

Eric D. Barreto, *Princeton Theological Seminary (formerly at Luther Seminary)* | Kate Blanchard, *Alma College*

Blog Series: Stories from the Front

December 23, 2014

Tags: vocation of teaching | balancing teaching and research

*This holiday week, we thought we'd share some of our favorite places where we get stuff done: grading, class prep, research, administrative tasks, service projects, grants and even some occasional writing!*

**Roger:** Back home at George Fox University, I rarely do more than grab a book or journal in the library before I zip back to my office. But here in Korea, my status as a visiting professor at a large university gives me levels of anonymity that I could never have at my home institution so I manage to get a lot done at the university library. (And also, I don't have an office). My favorite spot is the fourth floor, a few steps from reference materials and the biblical studies stacks.

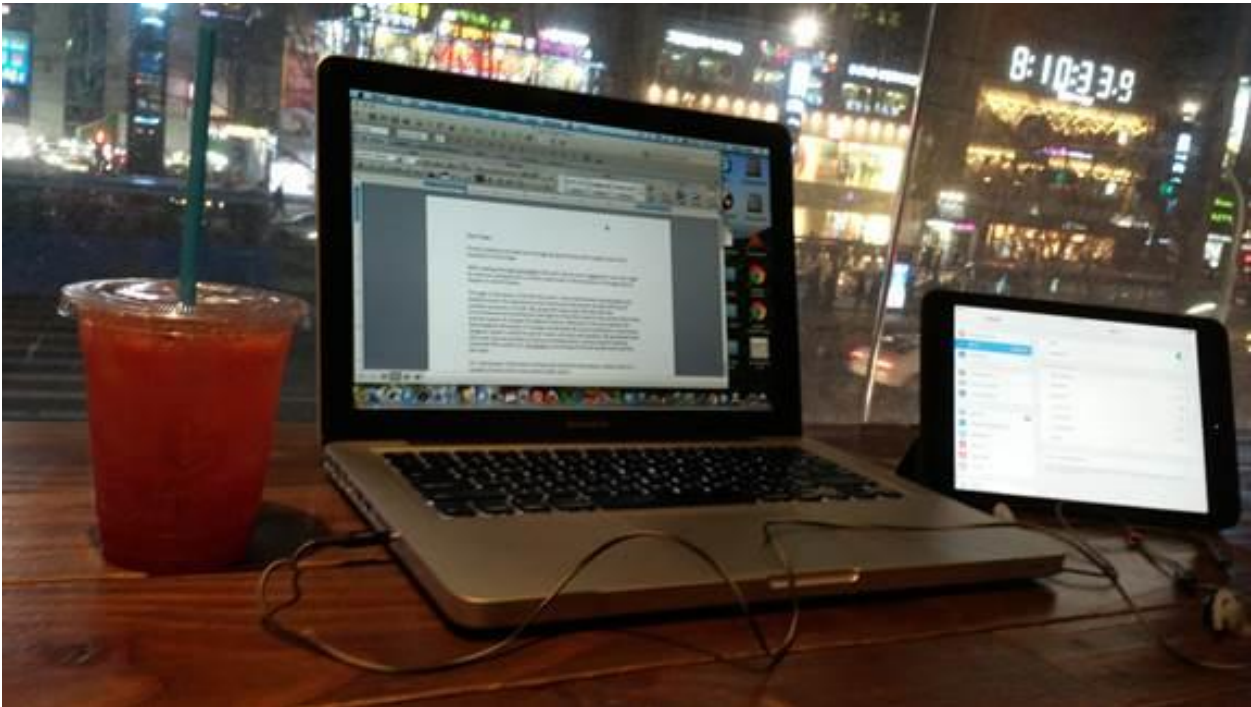


“The Loyola Library at Sogang University”



“Look at that comfy chair! And I may or may not have smuggled in chocolate in my bag.”

Having spent so many years in LA, I miss the energy of urban life. I enjoy being present in the midst of crowds, and apparently, ambient noise helps my creativity. Korea has a great cafe culture and Caffe Bene in Gangnam (yes that Gangnam), is one of my faves.



“The View from Caffe Bene in Gangnam, Seoul.”



“Patrons love the complimentary charge station, the fire department probably less so.”

**Kate:** I do the vast majority of work here in my office. When my kid was tiny, I got into the habit of leaving work at work so I could be fully invested at home. My desk tends to be cluttered (including a bunch of little things that make me happy), though I usually have a pretty good sense of where things are. My favorite thing about this office is the south-facing third-floor window, which looks out at an old pine tree. I love the natural light, and occasionally I even get a visit from a squirrel.





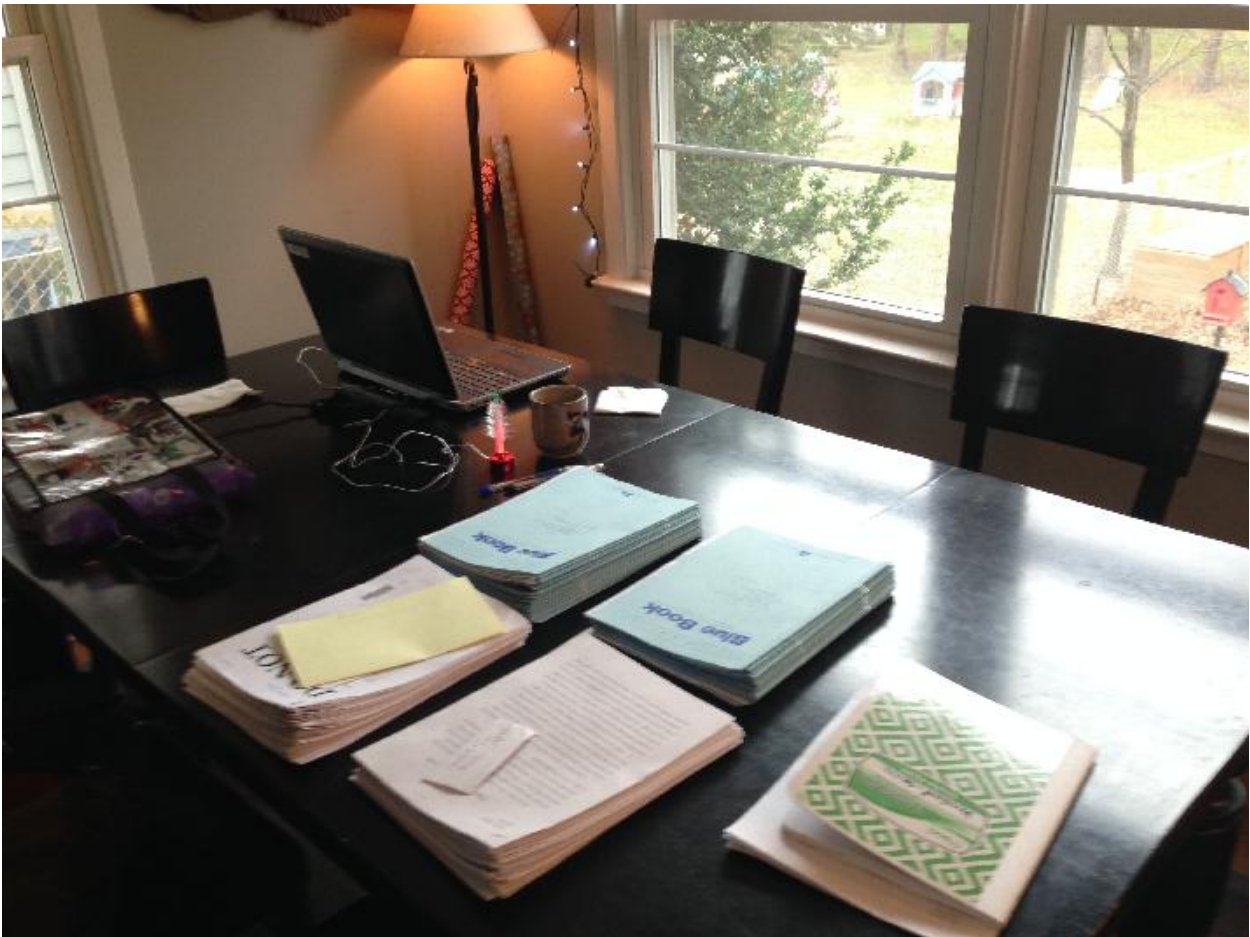
“The squirrels are shy today.”

The only thing I absolutely can't do in my office is grade. I have to be away from my computer and need room to spread out. When I've got a big stack of essays or exams (or essays and exams, as is the case at the end of term), I either go to my local pub or to my dining room table.



“Sometimes, grading is better here”

Home is nice for several reasons: it’s less likely to leave an incriminating bar food smell on the papers and I can work in my jammies.



“Grading requires ample space!”



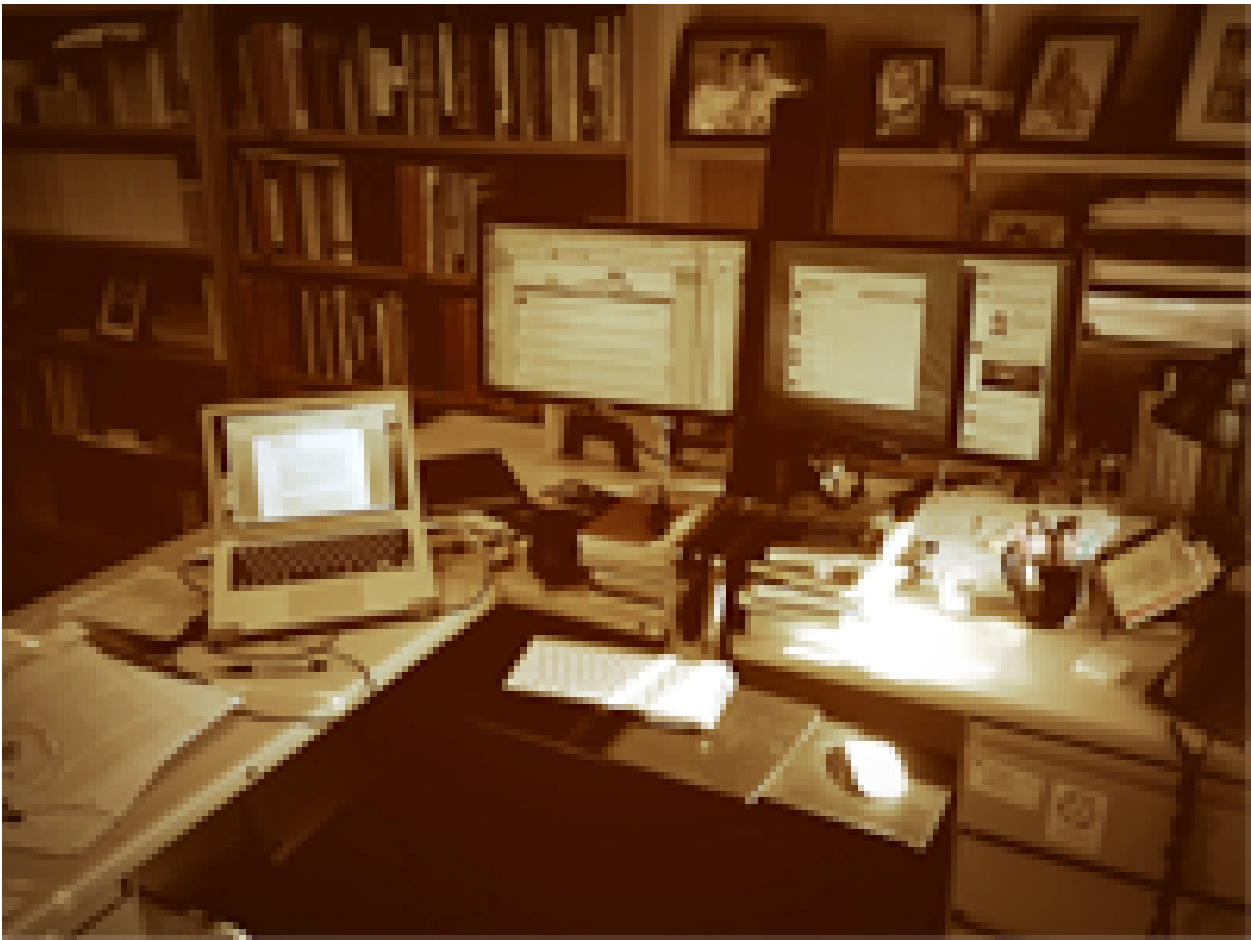


"Sometimes my secretary comes to help with grading."

**Eric:** Most of my work happens in my campus office. Having two little kids at home means that working at home has proven difficult in the last few years. It's hard to explain to two adorable children why my nose is in my computer when there are so many wonderful books to read. And so my office is the place I can focus on work so home life is home life.

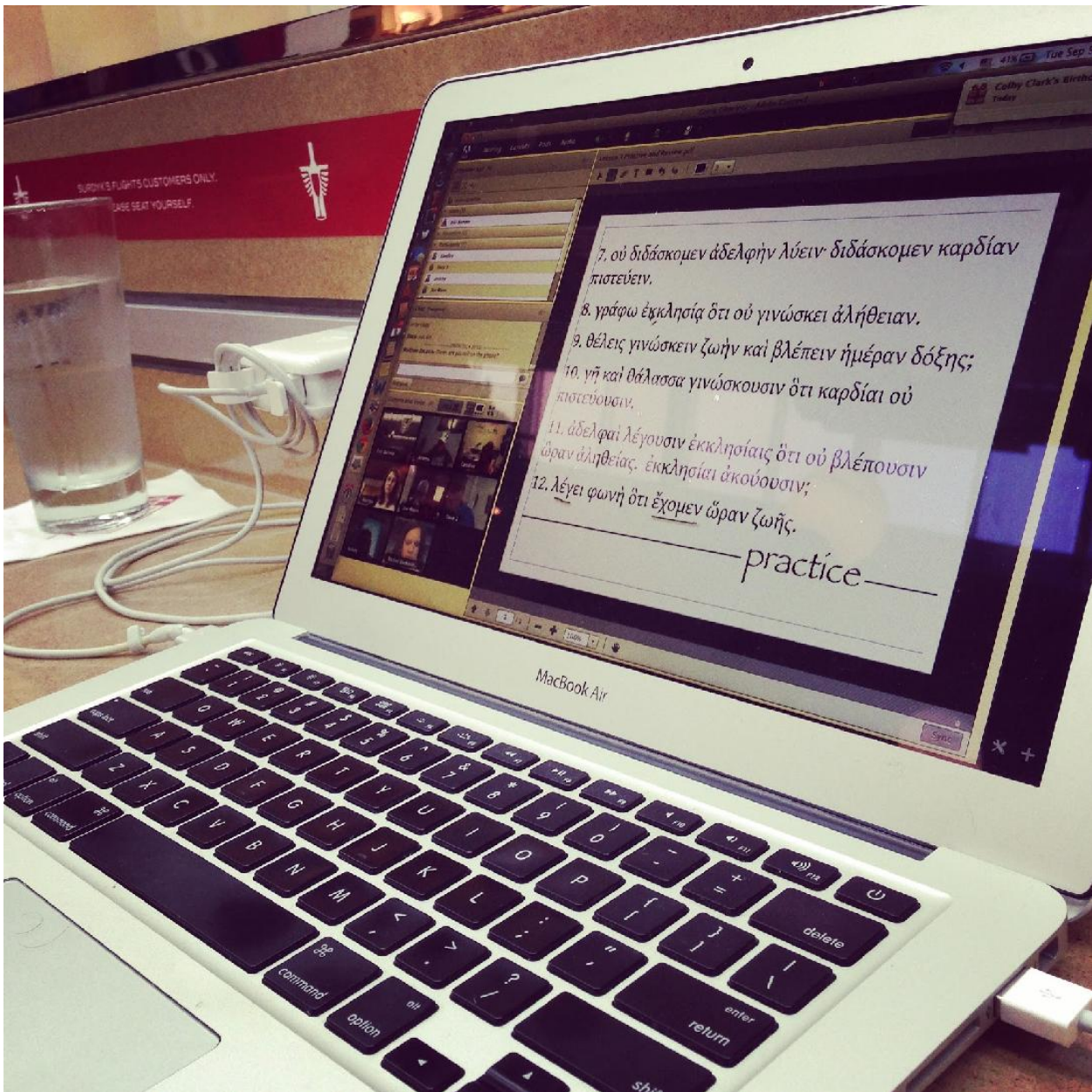
A few years ago, the seminary outfitted a few of our offices with standing desks. That's the big contraption holding the two monitors up. With my laptop, I can have as many as three screens working at once. With an iPad or iPhone, I can involve a fourth or fifth screen. More than one of my colleagues has accused me of living in the movie *Minority Report*. But these screens have become a critical interface for my teaching, both in my office and on the road.





“The movie *Minority Report*? More like the bridge of the Starship Enterprise.”

This semester found me on the road a great deal. I was also teaching all my classes online. So I conducted a number of these class sessions in various hotel rooms while I was travelling or even at my favorite restaurant/wine bar at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport, Surdyk’s Flights. It’s stunning to me how a computer, a cell phone, and some wifi can enable me to teach whenever I need to no matter where I am.



“Just having a ‘favorite’ restaurant inside my local airport terminal is an ominous sign.”

The other big part of our work of course is scholarship. A few years ago, my best friend and I were able to borrow a beautiful vacation home. A beautiful setting, a friendly companion, my computer, a pile of books is all I needed to do my best work. I need to find my way back here somehow. And soon.



"I can get used to this."

<https://wabashcenter.wabash.edu/2014/12/where-we-work/>