The V. James Renda
Faculty Resource Center for Academic Excellence
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News & Professional Development
May 2021

ACE

ACE Tutors Available for End of Semester Assignments
Do you have an end of semester assignment for your students? Encourage them to meet with an ACE tutor! If any instructor would like to provide extra-credit for meeting with a tutor (online or in-person) we can track student usage for you. Please contact Madison Ebsary mebsary@niagaracc.suny.edu for further details.

Tracking Student Learning Assistance
Have you been assisting students outside of regularly scheduled class time? If you have reporting of this, please contact Madison Ebsary mebsary@niagaracc.suny.edu before the end of the semester. We would love to add this information to our SUNY Learning Center Report!
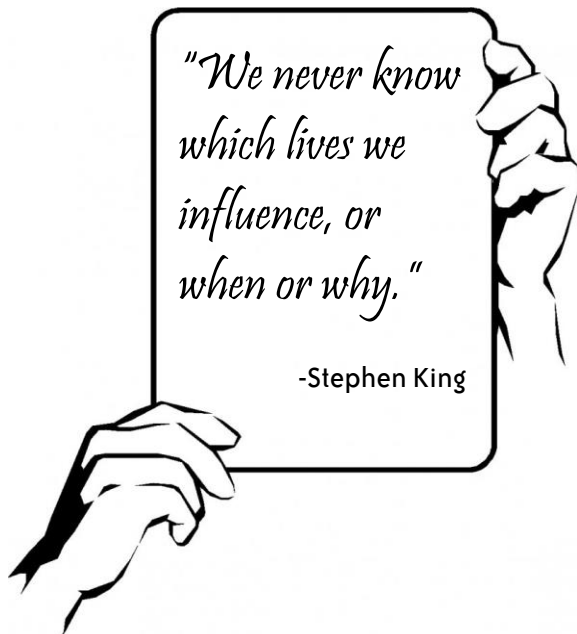
ACE Important Dates:
May 7th – Last Day of Tutoring Services (In-Person/Online)
May 24th – Summer Module I Tutoring Begins*

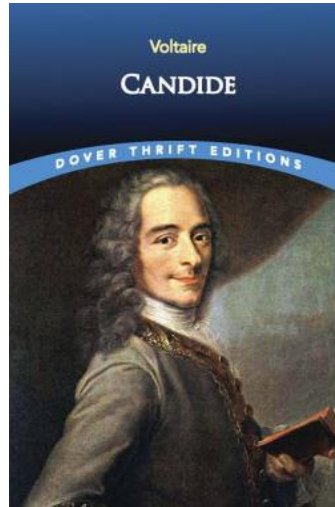*Please check the ACE webpage for updated summer tutoring hours/offerings

Summer Hours Begin Monday, May 17th
Monday – Thursday   8:00am – 4:00pm

Reflection

"We never know which lives we influence, or when or why."

-Stephen King

Reading Matters

Monday, May 10 @ 1 pm
Via Zoom Meeting (Link to follow)

The Reading Matters Group announces the next book for discussion hosted by Suzanne Buffamanti, Humanities & Social Sciences Division.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: "Voltaire" is the pen name under which French author-philosopher François-Marie Arouet who published a number of books and pamphlets in the 18th century and a key figure in the European intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment. Voltaire was quite controversial in his day, in no small part because of the critical nature of his work.

Before *Saturday Night Live* and similar satirical sketch comedy, there was Voltaire and his hilariously incisive (and compact) *Candide.* When things go pear-shaped for the naive title character, who has been taught that he is living in "the best of all possible worlds," his encounters with colorful folks make for an illuminating journey--especially for the reader.

Join the Reading Matters Book Group for a discussion of this classic work in the context of social satire.

*Copies of the book will be available in the Faculty Resource Center D106 Suite – watch for email and System Message Alerts. The HG Lewis Library will have copies for borrowing purposes. Personal Purchasing Info: $4 for the paperback with book code ISBN13: 9780486266893 at Barnes and Noble available for the nook or nook app for $.99
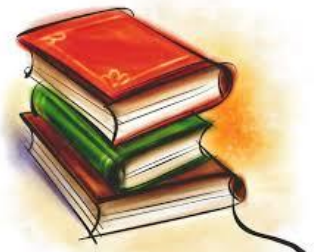
An Argument for Accepting Late Work

By Steve Wyre, EdD, August 21, 2019

With over a decade in training and management of college teachers, I saw late policies ranging from "not one second late, period" to "any time before the last day of class, no penalties." It is easy to do a Google search and see a plethora of comments at both ends of the spectrum, and most folks are pretty convinced their individual strategies work. What I have noticed in my administration experience, and some 19 years in the classroom, is that balance leads to a better experience for both the students and faculty.

With that in mind, I proffer several principles for accepting late work and address two concerns of the "no late work ever" folks. Additionally, I share an epiphany one of my faculty members had after changing her policy.

A Standard Policy
First, I am not suggesting accepting late work of *any* kind in *any* subject. There are many assignments that build on earlier work, and there would be no sense in accepting an outline after the actual paper is submitted. I am addressing assignments where each one is a stand-alone effort with a specific learning goal that does not impact later papers or essays. I am also not suggesting zero penalties. My standard policy is 10 percent deduction for tardiness; this seems enough to reinforce the need to be on time but not enough to discourage completing the work.

For any written assignment the primary goal should be learning. I teach philosophy, critical thinking, and humanities, and my papers are designed to reinforce the learning of tricky concepts, philosophies, or historical developments. If I deny a student the opportunity to do a paper, I am denying them the opportunity to learn. This seems like a paramount goal. I do realize that different subject matters might require different types of learning, but if there is learning to be had, it would be counterproductive to deny the student the opportunity to research and contemplate the themes involved in each assignment.

Relationship Building
A second reason for accepting late work is relationship building. As a teacher, should there not be some compassion for students in need? While some excuses are bogus, most are real, and if you take into consideration that many students are working (maybe full-time), taking several classes, dealing with families, and perhaps handling other obligations, these students need a bit of compassion and empathy. Knowing that the instructor is looking out for the student's best interest can go far in terms of building long-lasting relationships. One can hardly expect time conscientious students if the student is delivering a baby, helping a significant other in the process, or after losing a loved one.

I have lost both of my parents and know I would not have been able to do my best work shortly after each event. Additionally, many students I teach are active military, and when they get the call to deploy or go on an unexpected mission at sea or in the field, expecting timelessness is impossible and perhaps unpatriotic.

Best for Last
Lastly, I find I get some of my best papers when they are submitted late. I have no empirical evidence to back up this claim, but when the pressure is alleviated, the penalty is seen as fair, and when they are allowed to complete the research, thinking, and writing, the work is often better. I let students know I would rather have a late paper they are proud of, than an on-time and incomplete paper.

Some of the main reasons offered by the "no late work ever" folks imply matters of fairness and teaching responsibility. I will concede the notion of fairness, but that is why there should be a late penalty in effect for assignments where the student did not have an adequate reason or seek an extension before the due date. In comparison, I do not recall ever hearing of a person who got fired the first time they had a flat tire on their way to work.

A Successful Penalty
At one time, one of my best HR faculty held fast to the draconian "no late work ever" thinking for the few years she was teaching for me. We talked about how this impacted students' GPAs, but she held fast to the idea she was "teaching responsibility." I convinced her to take one class and modify it to have a 10 percent penalty for work that was up to one week late. Even before the class was over, she commented on how much happier the students seemed and how much better they seemed to master the material. She learned that if a student could not devote enough time to create a good paper under her old system, they simply didn't try and no learning took place. As this continued, she also saw that some of the late work was stellar.

While there may be some reasons or subjects where the "no late work ever" thinking might be better, in many subjects, in order to maximize learning, foster better relationships with

students, and allow struggling students the chance to do research and write stellar papers, accepting late assignments is the way to go.

Steve Wyre, EdD, started teaching at Tarrant County Community College in 2000 but moved to the University of Phoenix in Dallas in 2001. He worked full time in administration from 2003-2013, managing faculty in Nashville and Chattanooga. In Nashville, he was College Campus Chair for General Education, and in Chattanooga, Wyre was Director of Academic Affairs. Wyre currently also teaches for Mohave Community College and Chattanooga College of Medical, Dental and Technical Careers.

Online Learning

Online Learning – N2OL Summer Course Starts May 11th
The Online Learning Department will once again offer our Online Teaching Academy: N2OL blended six-week course starting Tuesday, May 11th running through June 21st. This course is facilitated in a blended format over six weeks. Each week there is a one-hour live zoom session along with online activities for each weekly topic. The weekly live sessions will be held on Tuesdays from 11:00-12:00. The recordings will be shared in the event you can't make the live session. The course covers best practices and instructional design tips, templates, courses for observation, and strategies to create an engaging course that meets quality and compliance standards.

[N2OL Course Information Flyer](#) (About, Audience, Benefits, and more)
[Summer Schedule](#)
[Registration Form](#)

Below is some feedback received from your colleagues who have completed the training series in the fall or spring cohorts:

** **Robert Tyrrell** - You all have perfected the delivery of this material over many years. I think having taken several SUNY-sponsored courses prepared me for the systematic approach of 2nOL. I was also able or forced to take the time to implement changes that I have wanted to make over the last couple of semesters. Preparing an online training course as you did, using the online observational form felt very logical. A benefit that is often not considered is that this course and this type of PD also plays into a better curriculum and maybe better teaching in face-to-face courses. The discovery of several Blackboard ideas has as promised given me a few time saver ideas. These include the use of Blackboard testing, rollover of due dates into next semester, the ability to nest folders, and use the calendar as a springboard to modules. Other ideas helped to engage students including the use of Blackboard groups, Remind,

and Padlet. The introduction to Grammarly has been a godsend. I always thought it cost money, but the free version has worked well. Great for science types! Finally, I think the course allowed enough time and space to develop what an individual instructor felt was needed. There were no demands for the perfected product at the end. I think that is a great lesson in lifetime learning and one that I need to pass on to my students. Thanks again for your almost perfected course and training. I look forward to a few-week refresher next semester.

** **Carolyn Stanko** - This course has been very valuable in improving my blended classes. It provided numerous examples of practical tips and tricks along with the rationale as to why taking the time to do this is so important.

** **Myriah Meyer** - I found this training to be a great tool when building/revising a current course for next semester. I learned some new tricks along the way, and things that saved me a lot of time. I also learned new ways to interact and engage students which was something I was looking to do a better job with the next time around. I really have no negatives or things that you could improve - maybe as I go through and finish building and altering the modules I may think of something - but you did a great job covering all the basics when it came to compliance and rubrics and quality standards. I think my class will be better for having gone through it. Thank you so much!

** **Maria Sebastian** - I would not change a thing as to how you design and deliver this course. I enjoyed it so much I am considering going back to school and taking courses online. It reminded me how much I love learning (minus the debt). I have no critique! (Maybe just to do it more so I can come back?) :) Thank you both so very much.

** **Tad Krupa** - This course was tremendous. The time, energy, and expertise that Donna and Lisa have invested into this course is unparalleled. I was continuously amazed at the herculean task that Donna and Lisa accomplished by creating countless videos and links to resources to educate us about best practices in teaching online and in general. The course was a bit overwhelming at times, but the weekly meetings and continued guidance made it palatable. I have been teaching online since we used Lotus Notes and I gained a great deal of information from taking this course. Not only did this course give me ideas on how to structure and run my online course, but it has certainly made me think of ways that I can improve all of the courses that I teach.

I cannot thank you enough for this great experience and I am sure that my students will benefit from all that I have learned and all that I plan to incorporate into my classes.

** **Suzanne Schnure** - This course was extremely helpful to me. Unfortunately I was not able to attend the live zoom sessions, but the recordings were wonderful. It was great to get some insight into better methods of teaching online. I don't have much experience as an online educator, so this

was great to get some ideas on how I can improve my course for the future. The information, while being geared to online teaching, will also be useful for in-person classes as well. I am hoping that I will be able to take all of the information I learned through this course and utilize it in the future to make all of my courses accessible for all students, while also pushing them to think more creatively. Thank you so much

** **Estelle Steiner** - I definitely learned a great deal - I was concerned that a lot things wouldn't apply to a lab-based course, but I found some things that were quite relevant (Muddiest point discussion being my favorite!)

HG Lewis Library

OER and Low Cost Course Materials
Are you using OER or low cost course materials? Please make sure the appropriate attribute is applied to your courses in Banner. The OER attribute signifies classes, which use free, open-source textbooks. The low cost attribute is used for classes with materials costing $50 or less. If you have a class, which meets either of those requirements, please reach out to Patty Daboll with the CRN and attribute to be applied.

If you are interested in pursuing OER and low cost options for your classes, reach out to Andy Aquino or Jean Linn in the Library. We would be happy to help you search for resources.

Introduction to Anatomy.TV Database

Anatomy.TV is an accurate, graphic three-dimensional (3D) rendering of human anatomy contained in a user controlled interactive platform. This database is freely available to all faculty and students through the Lewis Library.

Learn how to access and navigate Anatomy.TV, the different aspects of the platform, as well as benefits and challenges when it is used as a teaching tool with Professor of Biology, Yvonne Baptiste-Szymanski. Instructors in all disciplines are invited to register and see how Anatomy.TV can be used within a course.

Registration is required. Please register through the link below with your name and NCCC email. You will receive an email with the Zoom link for the workshop the morning of the presentation. Deadline for registration is 30 minutes before the start of the program.
https://niagaracc.suny.libcal.com/event/7689695

Noontime Knowledge
The Lewis Library is launching a summer programming series, Noontime Knowledge. The series will run every Wednesday at noon from May 26 - August 18. These events will be open to all College employees, students, and the Niagara County community. Topics include Overdrive/Libby, streaming film services, and using Ancestry library edition. See http://bit.ly/noontime_knowledge for a list of currently scheduled classes and to register.

Summer Reading
Browse the most recent additions to the Lewis Library here: https://suny-nia.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/collectionDiscovery?vid=01SUNY_NIA:01SUNY_NIA&collectionId=8124959940004845. The new books are located on the second floor near the circ desk. Check them out!

New Publication

A book about Anime fans, *Transported to another world: The psychology of anime fans,* written by Dr. Kathy Gerbasi's research team and based on their numerous studies, of which she is a co-author, was just released. It is available for free on line to anyone who wants an electronic copy. Printed copies are available through Amazon. Appropriate links are included below.

PDF:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XKMZa88C74ONyHpTN09slqZ6eUGJi0gB/view
Google Books (PDF):
https://books.google.com/books/about?id=15cqEAAAQBAJ
Amazon (Print version):
https://www.amazon.com/dp/0997628812?ref_=pe_3052080_397514860

Reysen, S., Plante, C. N., Chadborn, D., Roberts, S. E., & Gerbasi, K. (2021). *Transported to another world: The psychology of anime fans*. International Anime Research Project.

Why I'm Saying Goodbye to In-Class Tests

By David Perry, May 24, 2016

As I turn in my grades at the close of the spring semester, I am not only bidding farewell to a delightful crop of students and a beloved colleague who is retiring. For the first time, I am also saying goodbye to in-class testing.

I've been inching away from the blue book for years, but it's time to go cold turkey and match my praxis to my principles. Whatever pedagogical gains the in-class test might bring — and I'll argue they are few and increasingly less relevant — I can no longer justify forcing people with disabilities to disclose their conditions in order to receive basic test-related accommodations.

Although protections for disabled students date back to Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act spurred widespread change throughout academe. Compliance with the ADA and with Section 504 — for any institution receiving federal funds (including financial aid) — requires providing reasonable accommodations to students with diagnosed disabilities. It's become routine, rather than rare, for students to begin the semester by presenting their professors with documented requests for accommodation.

That it's become routine is great but far from perfect. Not only do students have to disclose disability to their professors —who are no more immune to ableism than to any other sort of bias — but the most common form of accommodation extends the disclosure to classmates. Many students with invisible disabilities (such as anxiety disorders or ADHD) require quiet rooms and extra time to work on a test. I'm thrilled to provide both. On the other hand, when the whole class gathers to take an exam, with one student conspicuously absent, everyone notices.

Why do we give in-class exams? Psychologists have been arguing for the "testing effect" since at least the 1890s, showing strong evidence that exams boost retention when students must retrieve information from their memories and produce output, rather than merely studying the same material over and over again. As Jessica Lahey discussed for *The Atlantic*, though, not all tests are created equal and cramming is useless when it comes to long-term retention.

The most useful tests, she explains, are "formative assessments" that "are designed to discover what students do and do not know in order to shape teaching during and after the test." It's not at all clear to me that an in-class exam works especially well in such contexts.

I've long since stopped giving tests that evaluate whether students have memorized certain facts and dates. I want to know whether they can quickly sort and assess a lot of information, and craft arguments based on evidence. That's a skill poorly tested in the classroom, and best practiced through a well-crafted take-home exam that requires students to access their notes, books, and even the Internet. Still, I used open-notes or open-book in-class tests, mostly just out of inertia. I had always given tests, especially in intro classes.

Meanwhile, around the country, many colleges and universities are trying to move beyond the era of reasonable accommodation and embrace the principles of "universal design." That term — coined in the 1970s around architecture and public space —advocates that systems be designed to accommodate the widest range of function and ability possible. Universal design asks us to try and build accessibility into the fabric of our institutions and culture, rather than wait until individuals make their needs known.

In-class tests are the antithesis of universal design. They're built to serve only those people who can: (a) hold a writing implement; (b) see written text, and (c) concentrate in a crowded room for an extended period of time. Anyone outside that range of function must seek accommodation, which, as philosopher and ethicist Joe Stramondo writes, ends up medicalizing the whole process. He argues that the operational nature of reasonable accommodation, with its many gatekeepers, turns the ADA from a law based on changing the social structure around disability into a system that conceives of disability as an individual medical problem. We can do better than that.

The great thing about universal design is that it helps people in ways that the designers never considered. Take the curb cut — the most famous basic example of universal design. It's a feature that made it possible for wheelchair users to move through public spaces, but people without mobility disabilities, like me, use curb cuts to push strollers across a street or drag our rolling suitcases into a conference hotel.

The same is true of take-home tests. Those students who have a diagnosis granting them quiet space and extra time will get both without asking. Those who don't, yet whose neurodiversity leads them to struggle with in-class tests, will also benefit. And even people who are pretty good at taking tests in a classroom will benefit from quiet spaces and extra

time — if only because, as a professor, I can ask more meaningful questions and push them to do deeper analysis on a take-home test than the in-class format allows. I'll benefit, too. I won't have to use my medieval paleography skills deciphering handwriting in a blue book, and I expect to get better answers.

So this summer, I'm revamping every in-class test remaining on my syllabi, starting with that most basic class: "History 101 — Western Civilization." It won't be a smooth process for me. I expect to encounter resistance, especially from my busy students who often work 20 to 40 hours a week and who may prefer to take quick in-class tests rather than be asked to work on lengthier assignments. I'm making no claim that every teacher, every institution, or every discipline should follow my lead.

I just know that come September, fewer students will feel forced to disclose disability, as together we try to erode the stigma of neurodiversity.

David Perry is an associate professor of history at Dominican University in Illinois.

Student Engagement Strategies

By Brian Morris

Students learn information in many different ways, which makes engaging diverse student populations challenging. In this lesson, we will define what it means to be actively engaged and explore several best practice strategies for engaging students.

Active Engagement

No two students are alike, and this often creates a difficult task for teachers with regards to engaging students. Student engagement level has a direct correlation to student outcomes. For the purpose of this lesson, **active engagement** is defined as both the amount of time that students spend on-task during a lesson and their level of participation during that time. This varies from student to student and lesson to lesson, but there are a number of factors within the teacher's locus of control that can increase opportunities for students to fully engage. Engagement strategies must fulfill the following criteria to ensure the greatest chance for students to process and retain information:

1. Students must be active participants, as opposed to passively receiving information
2. Activities must be relevant and meaningful
3. Some level of critical thinking must be involved

The research efforts of notable educators such as Dr. Robert Marzano, Charlotte Danielson and many others have sought, for decades, tangible methods to create and measure student engagement. The strategies explored in this article represent a small sample of those years of educational research and are most common in elementary and middle school settings. Adaptations of the techniques are equally effective for engaging students through college level.

Teacher-Student Engagement

Getting and keeping students' attention leads to accountability in the classroom. Students must believe that they are required to participate, yet they must also feel comfortable taking risks. The following strategies can be used by the teacher to gain and sustain student attention:

Do-Now

The tone for class should be set the moment that students arrive or when students transition to an activity. This can be accomplished using the Do-Now strategy. One effective way to create this structure is by having an engaging short assignment (quick write, challenging math problem, controversial question, etc.) that is ready for students to work independently on prior to beginning the lesson. While these assignments are not often graded, the teacher can circulate to check in as a means to make sure students are on task during the activity.

Chunk and Chew

This strategy is often referred to as '10 and 2,' which simply means for every 10 minutes of content or information delivered by the teacher, the students should be allowed 2 minutes to process that information. Breaking up the content into chunks allows for a greater level of engagement with and retention of information. This is similar to memorizing a telephone number, where the ten digits are broken into chunks of 3 to 4 digits. The two minutes of processing creates opportunities for students to think critically about the information based on questions or tasks that the teacher gives during that time.

Non-Verbal Cues

Time on-task is a major component of active engagement. Maximizing the time allotted for lessons requires teachers to develop quick and efficient ways to regain student attention if they become off-task. Non-verbal cues, such as rhythmic clapping, hand signals, chimes, and other creative techniques, create a way for teachers to discreetly and respectfully regain the attention of individual students and groups. One example would be *Give Me 5*, where the teacher raises an open hand and waits for students to respond appropriately to signal they are ready to learn.

Cold Calling

To create a culture of being ready and accountable, teachers randomly call on students during the lesson whether their hands are raised or not. This is done in a respectful way, and effort is validated even if the answer is incorrect. Teachers must safeguard against making this an "I gotcha" moment, which may cause embarrassment.

Phone a Friend

Even the brightest students need assistance at times. This strategy empowers students to seek the help of a classmate when they are called on to answer a question or solve a problem. This forges interdependence and collaboration in the classroom. The student seeking help hears the correct answer, and the teacher returns to that student to repeat the correct answer so that he or she is still fully participative in the process and accountable to the information.

Higher-Order Questioning

With a primary goal of education being to encourage critical thinkers, the types of questions being asked of students impact their level of critical engagement with the content. In alignment with Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy (levels of questions), the goal of higher-order questioning is to move students beyond basic remembering and understanding to more rigorous thinking; for example, asking the student to create an analogy for the cell wall in an animal cell, versus simply labeling the organelles.

Student-Student Engagement

These strategies are structures put in place by the teacher that enable students to collaborate and interact around academic content:

Partner Share

There are a number of partner share strategies that create student-to-student engagement. Two of the more commonly used are *Turn and Talk* and *Think, Pair, Share*. There is a problem, question, or task to be resolved, and students are allowed think time to process, work with a partner to refine their thinking, or gain new insights and then share them with the class. In many variations of these strategies, students must summarize their partner's learnings to the class, increasing the rigor of the activity. These multiple exposures to the content create rich and authentic engagement that aid in retention of information.

Get Up and Go

To encourage movement and collaboration, students respond to questions by moving to different areas of the room, discussing their rationale and sharing with the class. For example, students are reviewing for an exam, and each of four corners in the room represent one of the multiple choice answers on the assessment. When prompted, each student moves to the corner that reflects the answer he or she thinks is correct. They will discuss why they selected that answer, and eventually a few students will share the group's rationale with the rest of the class.

Jigsaw

The Jigsaw strategy works well for group work to ensure that there is a fair distribution of work amongst group members and to build accountability into the process. Students are assigned to home groups where they receive their assignments. They then move to expert groups where they are responsible for gaining knowledge to take back to their home groups. The expert pieces are put together for the final group product.

Lesson Summary

While this is not an exhaustive list of student engagement strategies, these are all effective ways to get and keep student attention. **Active engagement** is defined as both the amount of time that students spend on-task during a lesson and their level of participation during that time. These strategies are especially useful when coupled with a set of routines and procedures that have been implemented, practiced, and internalized to create a classroom culture of respect and that encourages risk-taking. The most successful educators assess the needs of their particular students and apply the strategies that are a best fit for the group of students that they serve.

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