Time Savers: Teaching

PREPARING

- *Don't reinvent the wheel.* Use the textbook architecture to your advantage. Emulate past syllabi (or related syllabi online or in the program review) for the course you're preparing. Consult with veterans and senior faculty about the history of the course.
- *Don't over-prepare.* There's only so much material you can fit into an hour-long class. And if you're prep-to-teach ratio is 8 hours for every 1 hour of class (not including grading and other matters), then perhaps you're overdoing it. Trust your knowledge base and ability to work "off the cuff" if you run out of material during class. Remember that the students need to do their own intellectual work…plan to give them the opportunity.
- *Let the objectives be your guide.* Don't try to take on too much -- if an activity or lesson doesn't meet a course objective, save it for another class.
- *Mix it up.* Occasionally substitute activities for prepared lectures to tame prep time: films, guest speakers, class trips, small group projects, student performances, research days in library, office conferences, etc.
- *Stagger your due dates.* Collect major tests/papers from different classes on different weeks so that there's only one major task to complete per weekend. (e.g., WCT test collected this Thursday, STW term paper due next).
- *Use templates.* Create a "master" syllabus with the boilerplate text and calendar dates. Save it. Then add the original material to it and "save as" a different file.
- *Make tomorrow's prep a gift*. Don't leave your office at night until you've taken a few moments to prepare for the next day's classes. Make those copies a day early as a gift -- a "one thing you won't have to worry about" present -- to yourself.
- *Keep a log*. Reflect on class activities and events in a log or journal so that revising the syllabus for the next time you teach the course will be a snap.
- *Copy efficiently.* Avoid return trips to the copier -- do batches of more than one course at once. Make transparencies or "one sheets" you can reuse without spending time waiting for copies.
- *Keep a Teacher's Toolkit.* Keep supplies (markers, chalk, stapler, pens) and common tools that you routinely have to fetch in one satchel that you can bring to the classroom without having to "pack" for the trip every time.

GRADING/MARKING

- *Pace yourself*. Dedicate only X amount of time per paper/exam. Use an egg timer if you have to.
- *Take baby steps.* Plan to grade in small chunks -- don't let the height of the stack scare you away. I do five papers at a sitting before I take a break. For sections of twenty or more, I sometimes spread grading over a week this way, doing five papers a day.
- *Plan.* Schedule your grading sessions in your calendar and "punch the clock."
- *Take your time.* Give yourself permission to not return papers immediately (the following course meeting). But don't procrastinate, either. Avoid taking longer than a week, if you can help it.
- *Use commenting shortcuts.* Limit your endnotes to X number of sentences for each paper. Use abbreviations/codes for marking papers and give the students a "key."
- *Use technology.* Technology is a tool you can use to your advantage: if you type faster than you write with a pen, type your paper comments on a computer or portable device (label maker?). You can use keyboard shortcuts and macros to save steps, too. Some teachers tape oral feedback on cassette tapes.
- *Turn grading into teaching.* Have students grade each other by swapping papers and then going over answers as a class. Hold the "grader" accountable for their grading (I threaten to take points of their test for every question they grade incorrectly on another's). This turns quizzes into teaching tools and saves you marking afterward.
- *Take advantage of "between time."* Carry papers/quizzes with you everywhere so that you can work on them in "between time" (e.g., waiting room, if lunching alone, awaiting meeting members).

Time Savers: Scholarship

- *Write what you know.* Teaching a new course in Egyptology, based on your recent trip to Egypt? Write a paper about hieroglyphics for the Journal of Egyptology. Write an article for the alumnae magazine about your trip. Present a paper about your teaching experience at a conference. Write a teacher's guide to accompany your new textbook. Turn your inventive syllabus into a book outline.
- *Interact with your associations.* Renew your memberships in your field. Don't just pay your dues -- get something out of them. Join a new group. Sign up for their listserv. Read their newsletters/journals and get actively involved in current discussions in your field. Network to socialize your passion.
- *Return to the library regularly.* Set aside sacred time to think and keep up with current issues in your field. Surround yourself with the sanctuary of books and yearn to join the silent conversation they're having on the shelves.
- *Keep a journal.* Being in conversation with yourself will record and stimulate ideas you wouldn't otherwise be able to have (or remember).
- *Write daily*. If you dive into the water, you swim. Write daily and you'll get things done. I try to routinely work on a writing project of some kind for two hours every morning before I come to campus.
- *Keep a notepad or voice recorder handy*. Capture ideas like butterflies.
- *Plan it*. Put writing sessions in your daily planner. You'll commit to it.
- *Invite deadline pressure*. Submit abstracts to conferences which commit you to finishing a writing project by a deadline.
- *Actively research calls for papers.* This may spark a paper topic or alert you to a publisher's need that you can easily meet.
- *Subscribe to journals or trade magazines.* These will keep you current, but also remind you that your scholarship is part of a national conversation.
- *Share with colleagues and students.* Help celebrate your accomplishments -- and get feedback on works-in-progress.
- *Synthesize scholarship with teaching*. Run courses in your research area. Build research into course material or get student assistance/feedback on research tasks. Write/research <u>about</u> teaching.
- *Synthesize scholarship with service*. Write for the community; publicize your findings through forums or performances; share your research with a colleague's class.
- *Apply for grants or funding*. This may result in paid time releases or travel residencies.
- *Collaborate*. Share the burden of scholarship with a colleague to lighten both your loads.
- *Consult with colleagues*. Get editorial feedback from colleagues in your discipline. Offer to buy them lunch or to swap articles.
- *Participate in a reading group*. Create a scholarly book club or research sharing group or join a reading group at the community library/bookstore.
- *Get broadband at home*. If you write a lot at home, get online access that is equal to the campus'. It'll save you research time and you can get a jump on the e-mail.

Time Savers: Service

- *Limit Committee Work.* Serving on committees are a form of academic labor just like teaching. Think of committee work as a discrete part of your load. Don't become a committee junkie; don't become a recluse, either.
- *Know What You're Signing Up For*. Some committees meet more than others; some produce many documents and tasks. Ask veterans on a committee what the workload is really like, and what time of year it gets hardest.
- *Limit independent studies.* Don't allow individuals to monopolize your time. Proctor independent studies in groups, if possible -- have students sharing office time or exchanging paper feedback. Or integrate independent study into a class you're currently teaching (as a TA role, or lab assistant, or…)
- *Volunteer first.* If you're proactive about service, you'll be energized about it and possibly in control of the service's timetable.
- *Multitask.* Some service activities have free time built into them -- take advantage of this time to grade or read. Other activities don't require much mental work. You might be able to read while manning the hotline, or plan a class while peeling potatoes. Avoid grading during meetings -- it sends the message that your time is more valuable than everyone else's or that you're woefully disorganized.
- *Learn when and how to say "no."* Service should be as voluntary as possible, serving the mission of the college while at the same time meeting your own goals or developing your distinct talents. Saying "yes" too often means sacrificing something else. Keep balanced.
- *Establish clear boundaries with students.* Close the office door when your open office hours aren't in session if you need to get things done. Set rules regarding your willingness to work via e-mail or other methods. Be accessible, but respect your own need for time to administer other tasks.
- *Keep the meeting on track.* Stick to the agenda and bring the conversation back to the topic if things seem to stray for too long.
- *Don't hold up the meeting.* Respect the time of others if you want them to respect your time. It pays to become more time-conscious at meetings and gatherings. Are you following the agenda? Are you raising new questions when everyone else is packing up? Are you pontificating off the cuff when you should be thinking through a topic on your own first? Are you debating a colleague in the meeting when you could better discuss it in the hallway? Are you robbing yourself of time in this incidental way?
- *Seek out opportunities to meet constituencies.* Integrate your committee work with your faculty life so that you don't need to go out of your way to communicate with constituencies in ad-hoc extra meetings. If you're the "humanities" representative on a committee, be sure to talk up committee issues at the humanities division meeting, the evening poetry reading, the history club forum, and other events where you would normally go and your constituencies are likely to attend.
- *Request time release if the service warrants it.* If the service is important enough for you to staff it, and your workload is quantifiable, you may get to exchange service for teaching. Advising a student publication, chairing a division, running the Executive Committee all qualify for time adjustment to your workload.