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My dear, determined colleagues,

Good morning. Good thoughts to you all.

My friends and peers, many of you have shared that you feel exhausted and overwhelmed beyond your capacities. Many of you have shared stories of community through your students' successes and ordeals. And many of you are quietly, persistently making your lives function in the midst of griefs and challenges and uncertainty while giving more of yourselves to your students than you might have believed was possible. Thank you. Wherever you have found yourself in the pandemic, thank you. Whatever you believe you have or have not done well or enough, thank you. In your own ways and in your own times, you have been human and humane.

Today is Monday, May 4, and there is a fitting irony in the catchphrase, "May the 4th be with you." (a reference to the Star Wars franchise) With 10 days remaining of regularly scheduled classes, a week of final examinations, and just over three weeks until grades are due, a mystical, benevolent, and powerful force we could call on to transform our realities might be welcomed. As academics, we tend to call on, rather, reason and discourse to resolve our challenges.

With these in mind, honoring reason and discourse partnered with our humanity and humane inclinations, let's face these questions of capacity and community that call for our attention now:

- How will we guide our students through our final class meetings and deadlines?
- How will we manage the grading and feedback needed before classes end so that students can improve their performances in the final exercises that may determine their course grades?

Some of us may feel on track with these challenges. Others may be seeking reassurance and advice.

Perhaps now more than at any other time in our teaching careers, external circumstances influence our decisions (and those of our students). There are understandable variations in how we teach and how we are communicating with our students about how they can learn and complete their courses. Each of us thinks about developing capacity differently in our courses, and each of us approaches creating teaching and learning communities differently.

Given these differences that make your courses unique to you and your students, I encourage you to view the next 10 days as a time not only for arriving at the finish lines of your syllabi and schedules but also as a time for quick and repeated reflective questions such as these:

- What was happening in my course(s) by March 10?
- What happened in my courses during the 1st & 2nd mandated breaks?
- What has happened in my courses since we resumed more consistent yet remote methods of learning?

Please consider these questions as you attend to other tasks. Please share these questions with your students and encourage them to do the same. In response, you may find a short writing exercise helps you and your students to voice their anger, fear, sorrow, and senses of strength and achievement. Or you may prefer to leave the conversations outside of your class activities and suggest them as tools for creating perspective and strengthening memory. In either case, merely thinking through these questions will have a positive effect on increasing learning capacity and deepening engagement as a course community. Please remember that critical reflection reinforces practice and expands working memory (we remember what we think about). Similarly, critical reflection about shared experiences reinforces senses of connection to ideas and other persons as well as broadening the understanding of the experiences.

We develop our individual and shared senses of force through these cycles of reflection and repetition. In a course, small or large, as you may have experienced, the connections that we and our students make to the assigned material, the learning objectives, and the communal experience of following the same paths to problem-solving and presentation develop our efficacy, which might be another term for force. May this sense of force be with us through the next week and a half.

Thank you for staying with these emails during the past two months. After May 18, I'll take a break and then return a few times for those teaching summer sessions. Please continue to reach out with questions and suggestions in addition to comments.

Announcements

Flexible Standards: How Do I Know What's Fair?

TLC Open Conversation: Tuesday, May 5, 3pm (tomorrow)

Join URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85920033132>

Getting Started with Blackboard Learn Original Course Experience - [Do I have Learn Original?](#)

Webinar, Monday, May 4, 9:00–9:30 am (today!)

Check your faculty email for the link

John Jay Effective Practices in Online Teaching Workshop (May 18-June 5)

Please complete the application form found at <https://forms.gle/HjcAZwcaLZFuToTC7>

Applications are due by Friday, May 8, at 11:59 pm

CUNY FAQ Resource for Faculty:

<https://www.cuny.edu/academics/faculty-affairs/faculty-related-academic-continuity-guidance/>