

“Loml = love of my life, nvm = nevermind...” When I first saw my students had created a glossary of internet acronyms for me, my first impulse was to ask them how old they thought I was. Yet, after further thought, I realized that it was a generous gesture on their part. In a short, in-class assignment, they took the time to define terms just to be sure that I understood. There were even a few quick explanations of memes and gifs included, even though this was just meant to be a quick and fun assignment to better understand social and political issues in Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*. While I ultimately did not need this thoughtful gesture, it signified that as a group we had fostered an environment in which we were comfortable learning from each other.

When teaching large interdisciplinary arts and humanities courses, I sometimes struggle trying to connect with students who may not be interested in my field. However, after teaching a variety of humanities courses designed for non-majors, I have discovered that some of the most generative moments in the classroom come from learning to engage with materials in the varying ways my students do. When designing learning goals and objectives, I aim to prioritize working together to discover where students find access points into the works we explore in class. Regardless of whether their field is a humanities one or not, students can benefit from literature by learning how to close read, analyze materials, develop an argument, and assess the legitimacy of the sources they encounter.

I often incorporate digital tools and methods into my courses to provide alternative assignments to the essays found in many major literature classes. Since I do not know the extent to which my students are comfortable with technology going into the semester, one way I introduce students to using digital tools in class is through mock Twitter accounts. Students are asked to explore a narrative from a specific character’s point of view and retell the events of the story via a series of tweets from that singular perspective. At first students think this assignment is easy, but they come to realize it is more difficult than it seems. They have to carefully comb through the text to understand who knows what information, then convey their findings succinctly and accurately—skills that are most likely useful in their own field as well.

In framing my courses, I attempt to build an ongoing conversation between myself and my students to encourage them to teach and learn from one another. At the beginning of the term, we work together to set goals and objectives that compliment the ones in the syllabus and create an agreed set of community norms for classroom engagement that can be revised at any point in the semester. While I try to provide regular feedback on both graded and ungraded assignments and activities, I also distribute anonymous assessment forms students can fill out to tell me how I can better support their learning throughout the semester. Students are also encouraged to engage with and provide feedback on their peers’ work. I incorporate at least one workshop day where they can share ideas and discuss drafts of their own final research projects with one another.

When teaching courses for students of diverse backgrounds and from different majors, I strive to design activities that incorporate a wide range of skills that are applicable to a variety of situations across fields. It is important to me that students recognize how the humanities are a critical part of everyday life; even if they are not in a humanities specific field, I hope to help my students realize that being able to participate in humanistic thought is invaluable.