



Teaching Matters and Assessment Center (TMAC)

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Director's Note

This time in a semester, it can be daunting to face a weekend of grading papers. Let's face it: responding to student writing is hard work. But there are ways to make the task more manageable and productive. Next Wednesday, November 1, TMAC presents "Minding the Stack" (Faculty Lounge, 11:20-12:20, and we'll feed you). In a tutorial for busy faculty and TAs, we will review best practices for effective and efficient feedback to the writing we assign. (RSVP below).

I also plug a new workshop on November 15 on what we can learn from the teaching evaluation forms we distribute each semester. In "Making Sense of Your Course Evaluations" (Faculty Lounge, 12:45-1:45, again we'll feed you), we will discuss the evaluation of teaching, especially the SIRS (Student Instructional Ratings Survey) data. You won't be asked to share that data with anyone, but together we'll consider how to use it as formative assessment to improve teaching. We will also address the very real challenges these ratings present as one (important) source of evaluation. (RSVP below).

Also in this newsletter, we highlight the increasingly desperate conditions of many adjuncts laboring in higher education; the dismaying perpetuation of stereotypes in textbooks; the battles between researchers and the conglomerates who control the journals and databases where that research is accessed; and the communication gap between millennials and those of us in an older generation.

Your ideas and links to information to share with colleagues are always welcome!

Millennial Multimodality

In a new study of out of MIT Sloan, findings [revealed](#) that the selected group of incoming millennial MBA students have a different approach to writing and communication than their older

counterparts. The polled students see more value in short-form writing and presentation skills, rather than in compiling longer reports.

They additionally reported an interest in [multimodal](#) communication, especially in terms of data visualization. This supports research from North Carolina State University last spring, which [revealed](#) the lasting power of multimodal writing education for both students and faculty. Their findings were [published](#) in 'Across the Disciplines', and branch out beyond composition to the impact of multimodal writing in a variety of programs.

Adjuncts on the Brink

For part-time lecturers and other adjunct instructors, the pay offered can often fall short of necessary living expenses, pushing many long-time teachers into desperation. A recent Guardian [profile](#) looks at several cases of adjunct college instructors who are homeless or just barely scraping by, despite advanced degrees and training.

One woman profiled in the Guardian article has turned to sex work to pay the bills, and a study out of UC Berkley [reports](#) that a quarter of 'part time college academics' participate in Medicaid and other forms of public assistance.

This isn't the first time that public attention has been drawn to the issue. An upcoming [documentary](#), 'Junt: The Trashing of Higher Ed. In America' profiles a number of impoverished professors, and a satirical '[Adjunct Cookbook](#)' both discusses cooking with scraps, as well as food bank resource listings. For a full report on many of these financial difficulties, the [American Association of University Professors](#) has published a [document](#) exploring the current state of the field as of the past academic year, 2016-2017.

Textbook Case of Discrimination

A [screenshot](#) of a Pearson-issued nursing textbook has gone [viral](#) for its' instructions on caring for patients' differently based on ethnic and religious background, prompting the publisher to [denounce](#) the material and plan for its removal in a [video](#) by company president Tim Bozik. In the offending image, the textbook discusses ways that different groups purportedly react to pain and frequency of pain medication request.

Other cases of textbook content criticism have popped up in different age levels across the country. Over the [summer](#), the Texas State Board of Education was [criticized](#) for the inclusion of a 'Mexican American Heritage' [textbook](#) that included offensive stereotypes against Mexican-Americans and a negative portrayal of the Chicano Movement.

As further [reported](#) by NEA Today, this story came on the heels of a 2015 incident in which a Houston mother expressed [outrage](#) over a McGraw Hill World Geography textbook for high

school students in which enslaved Africans were referred to as ‘[workers](#)’. In each [incident](#), the publishers apologized, calling the content unintentional errors.

A Copyright-Gate at ResearchGate

A sharing platform for research documents and academic papers, [ResearchGate](#) has come [under fire](#) for what many publishers say is copyright infringement. [Called](#) the largest academic social network, the site has purportedly published extensive journal content without publisher permission. A [statement](#) from the Coalition for Responsible Sharing says that ResearchGate is profiting from spreading research without appropriate permissions, and often changing the articles for commercial purposes, and ‘undermining research integrity’.

In [response](#), ResearchGate has begun to take down some of the articles from the protesting publishers, though some authors have noted that rather than removing the documents completely, they were instead changed to a ‘private share only’ mode. Searching for a larger change, publishers are moving to take [legal action](#) to protect their copyright rights.

As the controversy spreads, it is not only ResearchGate that is garnering additional scrutiny for its practices: [Academia.edu](#), a platform with a similar business model, is also drawing critical attention. For some scientists, such as those in the [American Anthropological Association](#), a proposed [solution](#) is to move off of the larger databases altogether in favor of ones which are ‘discipline-specific’, in order to maintain better control over access to their content.

TMAC Calendar—Upcoming Events

October 27th | Childhood Studies Teaching Workshop | 11 am - 3 pm

TMAC will be leading the Childhood Studies TAs in a half-day workshop scheduled to cover a range of pedagogical topics. We will review syllabus and assignment design, student learning assessment, and grading. Attention will also be paid to classroom management, course policies, and moderating class discussions.

November 1* | Minding the Stack: Tips and Strategies | 11:20-12:20 | Faculty Lounge

Gone are the days where you must face down a daunting pile of student papers. TMAC presents a series of tips and strategies designed especially for busy instructors to respond quickly and effectively to student work. We will review the best practices for responding to a variety of writing. [RSVP: http://ow.ly/Alu530g5LyP](http://ow.ly/Alu530g5LyP)

November 14th | Making Sense of Your Course Evaluations | 12:45-1:45 | Faculty Lounge

As course evaluations come in each semester, we are provided with opportunities to adjust and improve our teaching practices. How can we best use these evaluations as tools, and what could the impact be for an instructor's classroom and career? Join us for a lively discussion and concrete support. [RSVP: http://ow.ly/4QYu30g5MqH](http://ow.ly/4QYu30g5MqH)

For additional resources, visit tmac.camden.rutgers.edu, or write us at teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu

