

ePistle

Working for Excellence the Teacher Resource Initiative(WE-TRI)

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Some red dot thoughts



Toni Acton, among many other hats, works with new OLLI members. She indicated she had just got a comment from a new member – *“Teachers should wear nametags! I walked in one minute late for a class to hear the teacher say he wasn’t going to introduce himself because everyone already knew him. He didn’t wear a nametag, so I had to check the catalog when I got home.”*

She further noted that she not sure what we can do about instructors who aren’t OLLI members – maybe a clip on nametag like we do for the Holiday Party – but we should encourage all OLLI instructors to wear their nametags.

And on the subject of bios, perhaps it is true that you don’t need a 10 minute bio presentation on yourself, but a line specific to the class might be appropriate – *“I’ve always been interested in John Mosby since I saw the historical marker for the Fairfax Raid a few miles from my house. I have since been on a few Mosby’s Confederacy tours”*

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Editor’s Comments



This edition of the ePistle is coming out on the heels of another successful Teacher Recognition event, this time at Tallwood. More information about the event is later in this newsletter, but a major shout out to Professor Joyce Johnston of Mason for her presentation on copyright issues, and to Shannon Morrow for her information about staff responsibilities.

Immediately to my left is a note from Toni Acton, who works with new OLLI members. I am always interested in their thoughts, as many of us have been involved with OLLI for so long, we just KNOW STUFF! So, it is always good to look at things through new eyes.

OLLI is still in the process of designing a new website, but there are still changes in the current site. In particular, Alice Clark talks about the changes made to the instructor profile. I know for many of you, it is difficult to keep your catalog bios to less than 50 words (and from the other side of the podium, that really doesn’t provide students with sufficient information.) I think the idea of having a limitless bio on the website is a good compromise.

As always, I want to point out the overarching philosophy of WE-TRI – to thine own self be true. We are blessed with a diverse corps of instructors, who use a variety of methods in their classes. So, the idea behind WE-TRI is to present these methods and let instructors pick and choose as to what works best for them. Remember – there is no “approved” OLLI method of teaching!

Alice and Shannon's Corner

There has been much confusion about the instructor profile: how long can it be and where it is posted for public viewing.

OLLI instructor profiles are listed in two places only: the print catalog and the OLLI member portal. In the print catalog, due to space limitations, the instructor profile is limited to about 50 words (300 characters). This helps OLLI keep the length of the catalog shorter, and therefore the cost of printing down. So, when you create your course description, please limit your credentials as needed to promote your offering. In the member portal (registration system – olligmu.augusoft.net), OLLI is happy to post a longer profile of your accomplishments. Contact the OLLI programming staff (program@gmu.edu) and they can upload the extended version to your instructor profile page. The longer profile is accessible to the membership and prospective members when they are searching courses online each term. Once they pull up a desired class, they are able to click on the instructor name and view the electronic profile.

OLLI will no longer be listing instructor profiles on our public webpage: olli.gmu.edu. It was too much content for our volunteers to keep updated. So, visit the member portal today to check your electronic version of your profile. Let us know if you want it updated. And remember to keep the print catalog profiles short. Thanks for your understanding!

Fairfax Teacher Event

Almost 3 dozen teachers showed up for the Second Fall Teacher Event. In addition to free pizza, the attendees consumed some great information.

First, Doris Bloch outlined some thoughts for proper course descriptions. More information about that will be forthcoming in the next ePistle. Next, Professor Joyce Johnston from George Mason addressed an issue that has come up in questions from instructors – exactly what can instructors use in their classrooms without running afoul of copyright laws?

First, she provided the attendees with an excellent series of links discussing in length these issues. For those of you who were unable to attend the presentation, the info sheet is associated with the email sending out the ePistle

Next, she discussed the fundamental issue with regard to use of copyrighted materials in the classroom – the Fair Use exception. This has been considered both in laws and court cases, and there is essentially a four part test (as a former lawyer, whenever there is a multi-part test, you know a lawyer was involved!) The test is to consider:

- 1) the purpose and character of the use, including whether it is of a commercial nature or for nonprofit educational purposes
- 2) the nature of the copyrighted work
- 3) the amount of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and
- 4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

Please go over the links and let me know if you have any specific questions

Shannon Kim Morrow provided a detailed breakdown of staff responsibilities and contact information – that too is attached.

Keep alert for the next Teacher Event – to be held in Reston/Loudoun in the spring!

Timing

When we think about OLLI students, we should realize two things – first, they are busy folks, and second, they are smart enough to know when the class ends. So, it is not surprising when teaching a 940 class to see students start to pack up to leave at 1100 in anticipation of the 1105 end of class.

Nothing is more frustrating to teachers (or students) to come to the end of your time with half of the class to still present. So, what are some ways to prevent that?

First, give some consideration to rehearsing the class. Realizing this may not be possible, consider dividing the class into parts, and then trying to determine if the time for each part will work in the overall timeframe.

Perhaps the easiest way is, if you are using power point, is to number the slides, and then note how many slides you have. So, if you are on slide 60 of 90 with 30 minutes to go, you are in good shape – slide 50 you need to slow down, and slide 70 speed up.

This will not only make the students happy, but also the instructor following you if you don't cut into her prep time!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE OLLI

TIME OCTOBER 13

SPRING 2020 PROPOSALS DUE (GET THEM IN NOW!)

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE TALLWOOD

TIME NOVEMBER 1

TOWN HALL

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE OLLI CAMPUSES

TIME JANUARY 27

WINTER 2020 TERM BEGINS

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE OLLI

TIME FEBRUARY 7

SUMMER 2020 PROPOSALS DUE (GET THEM IN WELL BEFORE THEN!)

TECHNOLOGY

Recently, I led a field trip through Fairfax City through the sites of the John Mosby Courthouse Raid. We were planning to start at the City of Fairfax Library, where I intended to show some slides from my Mosby class.

So, after talking with the staffer who opened the door about AV, she referred me to the information desk, where I was told that they would be happy to help connect any AV projector we had, but they did not have one. So back to the room I went, with no AV for the day.

Luckily, I had brought two books with lots of pictures, so I went old school and walked around showing the students the pictures instead.

Lesson learned (and it is an old one!) Technology is great until it is not great, and so you always have to have a backup plan, because at some point stuff happens!

Questions?

Toni provided me with another set of comments, one particularly directed at questions:

Handling questions from the audience seemed to be a common problem. The instructors were capable of answering the questions, but they were overly polite, didn't want to hurt the questioner's feelings, let the questioner speak too long, make a statement rather than seeking clarification or information. Often the questioners seemed to take over the class; even good questions disrupt the flow of the class.

Another note from a student:

The subject of this class generated lots of audience interest, but since the Coordinator had not asked us to hold our questions until the end, The instructor was faced with lots of interruptions from audience members with questions. When time was up at 11:05, I suspect that the instructor was no more than 2/3 completed of her presentation. ...This is probably not a good way to encourage these talented people to come back.

You have to expect, with the student body that OLLI has, to have questions. One obvious way is to ask to hold questions to the end, and then to make sure you can get through your presentation before classes. If you decide you want to take questions during your presentation, make sure that you are aware of time – how much time is left, and how much presentation is left. You can then gauge how many questions to take and how to respond to them.

This is another good reason, as above, to number slides and then know how many slides you have. So, if you have 90 slides, and begin getting bombarded with questions at the 60 minute mark, take a quick peek as to what slide you are on. If you are on slide 70, you know you have some time for discussion. Slide 30 – well, not only defer questions, but start teaching at ramming speed!

Teachable Moment of the Day

Tip of the Day

At the beginning of each term, I send out an email to students, welcoming them to the class, providing site information and the like. I also provide a copy of the slides – being a good steward of the earth, I no longer print them out.

Sometimes, when I have videos in the class, I provide instructions on how to open the videos from the power point slides. Just did that this semester, and got an email back from a student.

The student asked if she needed to watch the videos before class, or if we were going to watch them in class. I couldn't believe the question, until I went back to the letter, and realized that while I knew exactly what I meant, I had not expressed myself clearly.

So, if a student has a question about something you said or wrote, it is usually because you were not clear with your language. Always remember that the person reading your communication is not the same person that was writing your communication – and make sure you provide enough information so that confusion does not take place.

Last month we spent a pleasant weekend with our son, who is a recent graduate of Wesleyan University majoring in Political Science and American Studies, and works for a think tank in NYC. We were at Rehoboth Beach in DE, but the wind was blowing so hard, the beach was closed for those who wanted to use the water.

So, to make conversation, we fell back on the old “what are you doing these days” and I spoke about how I was teaching at OLLI. He asked me what classes I was teaching, and then said, here are some ideas for classes “Losers of WWII – postwar Germany and Japan;” “The Rise and Fall of the British Empire:” and “Gentrification – boon or bane.”

Well, I thought, these are all great ideas, and they ended up on the future ideas part of my status chart.

So, the teachable moment of the day is that we don't have a monopoly on ideas – always a good idea to ask other people what they would be interested in or what they think would be a good class. I know these three ideas would not have come from me, but by golly, they are mine now!

RANDOM THOUGHT OF THE DAY

LAST EPISTLE I SPOKE ABOUT TRIPS. SINCE THEN, I HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN PLANNING ON TWO TRIPS. WHAT MAKES THESE DIFFERENT IS I AM WORKING WITH ANOTHER INSTRUCTOR ON BOTH OF THESE TRIPS.

IT'S GREAT TO INVOLVE ANOTHER INSTRUCTOR AND HAVE SOMEONE TO BOUNCE IDEAS OFF. BUT ONE THING TO MAKE SURE IS YOU ARE CLEAR AS TO WHO WILL BE DOING WHAT ADMIN TASK – DUPLICATING WORK IS BAD ENOUGH, BUT EVEN WORSE IS THINKING THE OTHER WILL BE DOING A CRUCIAL TASK LIKE A COURSE PROPOSAL. SO AS WITH EVERYTHING ELSE IN LIFE, COMMUNICATION IS KEY.

SEND ANY OTHER RANDOM THOUGHTS TO THE EDITOR AT DUNPHYJJ@AOL.COM

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