**Getting into teaching**

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**Why do you want to teach?**

* You have professional experience.
* You want to share it.
* You find that working with young journalists is rewarding.

**Things to think about:**

* **Temperament**: You need to be patient, lively and prepared to explain the same concept several different ways, several times. It helps to be passionate about your subject as well.
* **Time**: Teaching is quite time-consuming outside of classroom hours. It’s not just grading: you need to prepare lessons and exercises, respond to student questions (they email you at all hours) and even write recommendation letters. Know your limits: Balancing a full-time job, family and a class with heavy grading – or two classes – is tough.
* **Money**: You’re not going to get rich doing this, but working as an adjunct can be a nice supplement to a full-time professional job, and teaching full-time at a reputable university won’t leave you poor.

**How to get started as an adjunct:**

* An adjunct is a part-time teacher who is not a graduate student teaching assistant. Often adjuncts are professionals in the field.
* Determine what colleges, universities and community colleges are in your area.
* Determine what they offer in terms of journalism/communications/writing courses.
* What can you offer them? Think about what you'd *like to* teach, and what you *can* teach (these two categories will probably not overlap entirely).
* Be flexible at first. If you accept a course you're only lukewarm about and do well, you're likely to get re-hired. As you build a reputation, you may get better courses and even be able to propose new courses.
* Who do you know? Can you talk to acquaintances connected to colleges and let them know you're interested in adjunct work?
* Nightside schedules often allow for more flexibility for teaching.

**Preparing a course:**

* Writing a syllabus
* Gathering materials
* Choosing a textbook(s)
* Creating exercises

**What to expect in the classroom:**

* Teaching is part performance: you need to be engaging and (dare we say) entertaining as well as knowledgeable.
* Students are plugged in all the time but they tend to use technology only as they need it. Don’t assume that because they’re “digital natives” that they know everything about any computer programs or app. They don’t, and they’ll need to be shown.
* Use current news events as teaching tools – they’re great fodder for discussions on verification, ethics, kinds of language, etc. Don’t assume they know what’s going on in the world; they don’t always read or watch a lot of news.

**Finding a full-time position:**

* Lecturers vs. tenure track: what’s the difference?
* Degrees
* Experience

**The tenure process:**

* Teaching
* Service
* Creative activity/research

**What to expect in academic bureaucracy:**

* Academics from outside your curriculum area will more than likely pass judgment on you for tenure and promotion. These academics typically possess Ph.D. degrees with no experience academically or in the real world in mass communication. Their academic viewpoint will be peer-reviewed publication research as the sole criteria for tenure and promotion. The degree to which you will have to deal with this outside viewpoint will vary with the institution.
* Some institutions will offer credit toward tenure and promotion for interaction with the mass communication industry (for example, participation in ACES) in lieu of or in combination with academic research. The debate over professional experience vs. publication research credit for mass communication professors has been ongoing for decades. If you are aiming for a tenure-track position, research each desired institution thoroughly for specific policies.
* If you are aiming for a lecturer/adjunct position, all bets are off as far as academic research is concerned. The emphasis is on teaching effectiveness.

**Tips for success:**

* Be prepared for a lot of prep work with new classes, even if you're given a syllabus.
* Get your textbook/materials as early as you can, so you can familiarize yourself with it and see where you might need to supplement. Also, at some places you may be able to look at several books and choose the one you want to use.
* Start (or update) a file of good and bad examples to use in class.
* Let your professional experience work for you – you know so much more than any book. Students appreciate real-world advice, especially as it pertains to finding and keeping a job.
* Make friends with the department administrative assistant. This is the person who will help you through red tape and glitches, and tell you who to call or where to go to get things done, like having copies made of your mid-term, or getting your account password.
* If possible, merge your e-mail into one account with labels (such as Gmail) to keep everything in one place.
* Have fun – teaching is rewarding on multiple levels!