

Author conversations

On student accountability

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I mean, I think the key here is that there's so much more in the digital learning environment that we can kind of convey through these materials, and I think that's ultimately where the print textbook of the past is eventually going to die, because of the superiority of the pedagogical environment that you can create with digital materials.

Compared to the print textbooks of the past, we are able to use a variety of pedagogical tools and assessment tools that keep students on task, keep them reading throughout the semester. I have homework assignments that are due before the class where we're going to discuss that particular topic, which really, I think, changes the teaching and learning environment in ways that are fundamental. Certainly in sociology, and I suspect many other fields, college students — smart college students — could kind of coast and get by until the week before the midterm, or a couple days before the midterm. And they're not really grasping and engaging the material the same way they can when there is kind of a regular process of accountability and assessment that comes along.

It's not that punitive. The students can complete a chapter and answer questions in two or three hours. They complain at first, but then once they get the hang of it, they realize, you know, it's not overly burdensome amount of work. But it does really build in this kind of accountability that we didn't have in the past.

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