



WABASH CENTER

For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion



(Video) On Teaching v. Scholarship

Roger S. Nam, *Candler School of Theology*

Blog Series: Stories from the Front

March 17, 2015

Tags: vocation of teaching | faculty well-being | balancing teaching and research

I'm a bit annoyed at the professorial mantra of "teaching, scholarship, and service." I understand that categories are needed for the various steps of promotion, but I think that this grouping unnecessarily promotes an adversarial relationship between "teaching and scholarship." The pairing feels analogous to such opposites as "Democrats and Republicans," "urban and rural," or "Taylor Swift and Def Leppard."



Teaching v. Scholarship? Really?
(Photo Credit to Saint Joseph)

This unfortunate rivalry of "teaching v.

scholarship” plays out in multiple ways. There are heavy teaching positions with minimal scholarship requirements and research positions with little regard to teaching, as if one cannot excel at both. Many of us organize our schedules adhering to this division, as we set distinct times for writing and distinct times for course prep. Minimally, you probably understand that you shouldn’t finish those rewrites for *JAAR* in the middle of your own lecture.

But I’d like to encourage us to see teaching and scholarship as complementary rather than adversarial. I’m specifically referring to scholarship in the form of peer-reviewed journals and books, both of which require extensive literature review and advancing a conversation. In my own experience, I find that engagement in scholarship deeply *enhances* teaching. If you write a peer-reviewed article on Jeremiah, you need to become a mini-expert on Jeremiah, and that expertise will benefit your students much more than a perfunctory reading solely for course prep. Scholarship also puts you in the place of learner, as you need to listen first before you present an argument.

And our classes should be fresh. Based on what I hear, there are plenty of Hebrew Bible intro



Together Forever
(Photo Credit to Travis Nep Smith)

classes that have not been revised since the Reagan administration. The peer-review process allows professors to keep current on their classroom content. If I teach Wellhausen’s articulation of JEDP as the main understanding of the Pentateuch’s origins, the students will take notes. If I do the same thing before a group of scholars, there will be blood.

So perhaps we should replace the binary view of teaching v. scholarship with a more complementary relationship like “chips and salsa.”

Better yet, you can consider how Taylor Swift and Def Leppard collaborated for a stunning live show via CMT’s Crossroads. Not convinced? Maybe you should just watch my conversation with Kate Blanchard and Eric Barreto.

<https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/2015/03/video-on-teaching-v-scholarship/>

