

Nobody Signed Up for This': One Professor's Guidelines for an Interrupted Semester, *By Beckie Supiano* March 20, 2020, Courtesy of Brandon L. Bayne

Religion in America
Spring 2020
Adjusted Syllabus

Principles

1. Nobody signed up for this.
 - Not for the sickness, not for the social distancing, not for the sudden end of our collective lives together on campus
 - Not for an online class, not for teaching remotely, not for learning from home, not for mastering new technologies, not for varied access to learning materials
2. The humane option is the best option.
 - We are going to prioritize supporting each other as humans
 - We are going to prioritize simple solutions that make sense for the most
 - We are going to prioritize sharing resources and communicating clearly
3. We cannot just do the same thing online.
 - Some assignments are no longer possible
 - Some expectations are no longer reasonable
 - Some objectives are no longer valuable
4. We will foster intellectual nourishment, social connection, and personal accommodation.
 - Accessible asynchronous content for diverse access, time zones, and contexts
 - Optional synchronous discussion to learn together and combat isolation
5. We will remain flexible and adjust to the situation.
 - Nobody knows where this is going and what we'll need to adapt
 - Everybody needs support and understanding in this unprecedented moment

Brandon L. Bayne was trying to plot out a plan for a disrupted semester when he took a big step back. Like many faculty members around the country, Bayne, an associate professor of

religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, recently learned that he would soon be teaching his face-to-face courses remotely, as colleges shut down in-person instruction due to the coronavirus pandemic.

For Bayne's students, the crisis is just the latest and most dramatic disruption of their college experience. Over the last couple of years, he says, they have faced two hurricanes, two water-main breaks, and a lot of upheaval over the controversy surrounding the university's well-known Confederate monument, Silent Sam, which was toppled by protesters in 2018.

Bayne was planning to revise the assignments for "Religion in America," a course with 120 students, predominantly juniors and seniors. But he realized that he first wanted to write out some guiding principles.

He came up with five, including "the humane option is the best option" and "we cannot just do the same thing online." Each principle has several subparts. Though he drafted the list for his own use, Bayne decided to share it with his students — and on social media, where it has resonated with instructors of all kinds who are working to connect with students under the same unprecedented circumstances.

Joshua Eyler, director of faculty development at the University of Mississippi, for instance, [tweeted](#) it out with a message that read, in part: "Tip o' the day: Add this to your syllabus. Your students will always remember it, it will help establish community, and it addresses the needs of our current moment perfectly."