

The Basics of Building an Effective Teaching Portfolio

As is common knowledge, the academic job market has become overrun with beavies of qualified candidates who all hail from excellent institutions. Departmental search committees, therefore, are faced with the difficult task of culling through so many outstanding candidates who are remarkable not only in their research field but also in the classroom. As a result, the traditional line of interview questioning has expanded from research-centered inquiries such as the staple “What is your dissertation about?” Now, candidates must not only answer these research questions, but also a whole new set focused on their teaching philosophy and experience.

Perhaps the best way for a job candidate to prepare for this line of pedagogical questioning is to produce a teaching portfolio. A teaching portfolio, simply put, is a collection of teaching materials that serve to describe and document multiple aspects of one’s teaching philosophy and ability. Although there are multiple types of teaching portfolios that seek to accomplish a variety of goals, they all share key parts including, but not limited to: a statement of teaching philosophy, a description of teaching experience, course planning artifacts (sample course syllabi, lesson plans, assignments), evidence of teaching effectiveness (evaluations), and teaching awards and recognition.

This paper will introduce the audience to the functions of the teaching portfolio, its basic types, and how to construct one for maximum effectiveness on the job market. In so doing, it will provide a discussion of the basic components of the portfolio and will set the foundation for detailed examination of individual components in subsequent papers.