Teaching in the Time of “The ‘Rona”

So “The ‘Rona,” as many of the students in my Blogging class are calling it, seems to have us in a tizzy. Every post on the Facebook page, Angry and Not Angry Teaching Resources, refers to how the Coronavirus is changing the way they teach.

And I’m certainly no exception. I’m in my sixth year in my tenure-track position; my university doesn’t quite have the resources to offer many online courses, so I haven’t taught online since my days in graduate school. Needless to say, this past week was a crash course in that, as I experimented with Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, the neat tool for synchronous video conferencing.

More importantly, I find myself becoming more compassionate. My students understand me to be a bit of a drill sergeant when it comes to deadlines and following directions. However, in these times, I’m lightening up. Students at my school were suddenly yanked from their ivory cocoon and told they had to leave campus. For my classes, they had to show up through virtual sessions through Bb Collab Ultra, complete discussion boards, and send assignments. Some just didn’t do it because they were self-quarantined or they were traveling to different time zones, and, well, with respect to all the stress they’re facing, class is just one thing on their minds. So I’m being flexible with submission dates. Same deal with attendance; some students don’t have access to the needed technology, so I’m working with them on alternatives to “showing up” on a case-by-case basis.

I’m also conversing with students about their situations more when we speak on the phone. Normally, I’m a “down to business” kind of guy, but I’m concerned that students are taking care of themselves, so I’m asking them how they’re holding up and reminding them to take care of themselves. It seems small, but I’m hoping students remember these seemingly small acts.

We all just have to keep plugging along. We will make it.