



5 Creative Teaching Approaches for Your Online Course



You've got different course delivery tools and approaches available for online teaching than you do for live classroom teaching.

That means you've got opportunities to do things in new ways. Your best teaching will happen when you marry the opportunities that tech provides with your content and student needs.

Here are five ideas for going beyond the basic video and pdf lesson to give your students content, experiences and practice opportunities that get them masterfully achieving their goals.

1. Include an “Experts Say” lesson or supplemental series.

Every once in a while, get your students out of their heads, and exposed to fresh voices who are echoing what you're teaching. Move your students to contemplate other perspectives.

Ask your “expert” friends from the field in which you're teaching to record a short audio answering a very specific question.

You could present this in an ebook with their headshots and quotes. You could get them to record their voice in audio and add it into your lesson but with their voices. You could do a complete video or audio interview.

EXAMPLE

Here are three pages from an eBook on Polishing Scrapbook Pages. They feature several “secret sauce” approaches from guest experts.



EXAMPLE

For a 5-day or 5-lesson class that I offer at my site Get It Scrapped, I bring in a guest expert to do a live webinar interview each of the 5 days. So the students get a formal lesson in video and pdf formats in the morning. Then they can attend a webinar or catch an interview recording later in the day.

Say hello to our LIVE "Style is Leverage" Guests...

Each day we'll work with a guest designer to find out how they discovered their personal styles and we'll get their tips for developing your own scrapbook page style! Our guest teachers are: Tracey Fox, Lynnette Penacho, Jennifer Davis, Jana Oliveira and Hannah Lemieux



PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED

- What are the types of experts your students would appreciate hearing from?
- Can you identify experts to match those types?
- Who are the experts you've already got connections to?
- What are two or three quick "experts say" questions your students would benefit hearing the answers for?
- What are the topics on which you could do deeper dives and longer interviews?

2. Use Pinterest to curate boards of creative resources that enable field-work-type assignments.

Consider the new assignment possibilities you have for your students when you can collect the raw materials for that assignment from the internet.

While you cannot put copyrighted images onto your site, many can be displayed on a Pinterest board to which you link.

If you're teaching graphic design and a lesson is on "designing focal points," you could present your students with a Pinterest board of posters or book covers or magazine layouts and ask them to choose a piece and identify the focal point and report on what makes that element dominant.

If you're teaching floral arrangement, you could share a board of arrangements and ask your students to pick one and make an arrangement inspired by it-or to pick one and explain the balance of the piece.

EXAMPLE

Here's an assignment and a peek of the Pinterest Board I referred my students to in an advanced design class.

part 3: Look Around

do these assignments AFTER you've done all of the reading

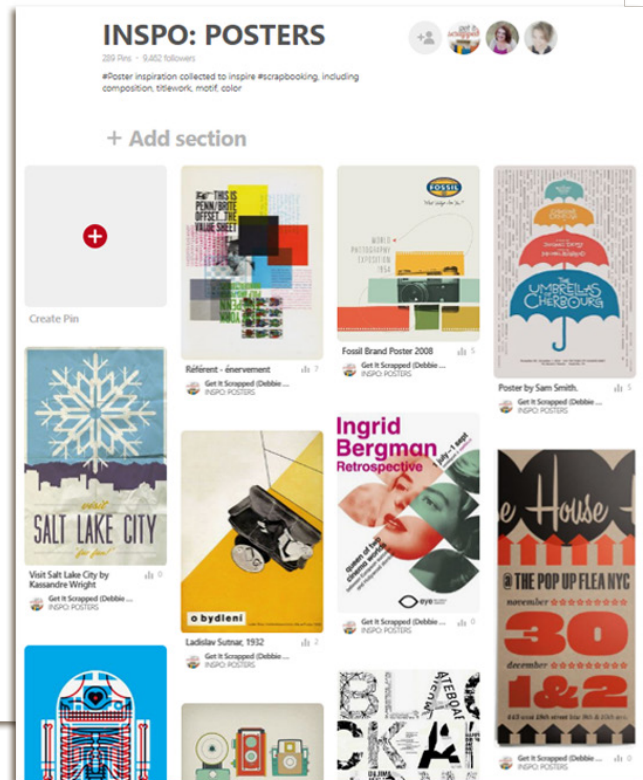
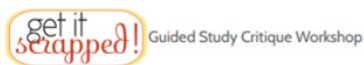
- Look at poster inspiration**
[click here for GIS Posters Board on Pinterest](#)

Select one poster with a clear focal point. Save the image and then upload it to the "Week 1 Pin" album for this class.

Tell us how you see the following:

- 1) what is the goal or purpose of the piece?
- 2) what do you see as the focal point?
- 3) what did the designer do to make this the focal point? (I.e., contrast of size or color or ?, line, embellishment, isolation)

---and anything else you want to share about the piece.



PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED

- What are concepts your students need to master that are on display in expert work?
- What do your students need to practice or implement on to get mastery in the class?
- How can you connect practice assignments with visuals available (and pinnable) on the internet?
- What is the work of analyzing those visuals?

3. Take your students on a real, live field trip.

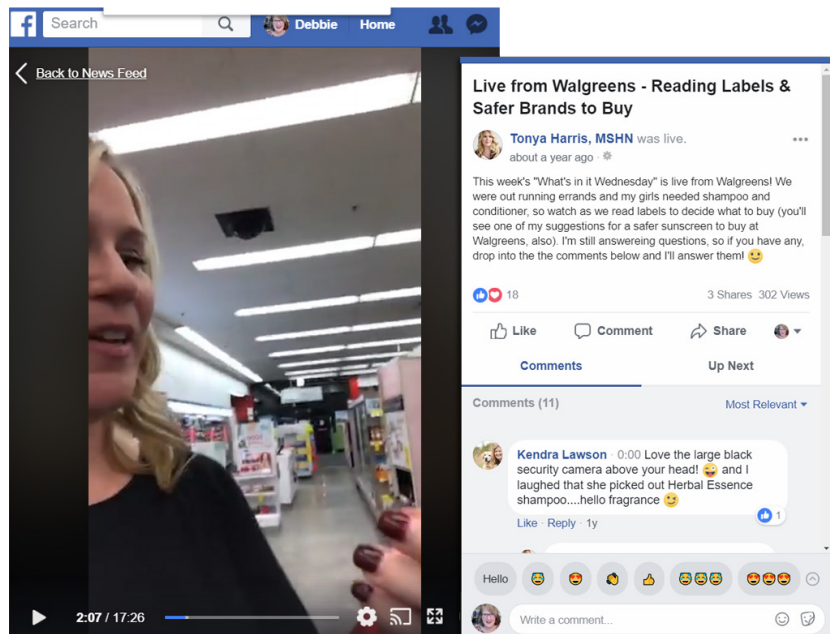
Are there venues your students will need to navigate on their own with the assignments and skills they get from your class? Or is there a venue they can't easily visit? Maybe a geological site or a museum or even a supply store.

If you're teaching students how to sew drapes, you could take them (virtually) to the fabric store and show them how to select for pattern, heft, weave--or whatever it is that matters.

Put your phone on a selfie stick, get yourself to the venue, and broadcast the lesson. Walk your students through the things you'd like them to see or experience—and let them ask live questions. It's almost like they are there themselves! My eCourse Blueprint student Lynn Dean who teaches homeschoolers and their parents at Hands On Homeschool Resources had this idea for taking her students on field trips to historical sites and museums.

EXAMPLE

Tonya Harris, MSHN is an environmental toxins specialist who headed to Walgreen's on live video to read labels and teach her tribe how to do the same.



PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED

- What is the on-site work or practice your students need? What are the associated venues?
- What can you point out to your students during your own video visit that they wouldn't immediately understand, themselves?

4. Systematize a creative or coaching process with forms and guided lessons.

If you've got a process you've taken a student or client through in one-on-one work, let's think about how to move that work into a guided format that takes your live presence out of the equation.

You can start by presenting prompts to get your online student to generate the thoughts or answers or creative elements they'll need to move forward. While you might have done this in a live interview or creative session in the past, for your online course use a form and instructions that the student completes on their own.

Then present them a process for inserting those raw materials and answers they generated into a guided process that yields an end-product.

EXAMPLE

I've made several classes on creative essay writing by presenting very specific prompts for free writing. Once those prompts are answered (in an online or printable form), I present a guided lesson that has students pulling from their free writing to create a completed essay.

Here's how it works with paper forms. The student goes through the worksheets, answering prompts. Each prompt is identified by a unique letter code (A, B, C . . .). Once they've answered the prompts, they use the guide which tells them what to write first and second and third. That instruction also tells them which of their prompted writings to pull from and provides an example. In this example, step 4 of the writing process pulls from the prompts B, D, and C.

The image shows a collage of writing prompts and a guided lesson page from 'storyCOACH'. The prompts are labeled A, B, and C. Prompt A asks 'What positive (happy-making) thing in your life preoccupies you?' Prompt B asks 'Why do you like doing and thinking about this?' Prompt C asks 'Describe a related activity or interest.' The guided lesson page includes an example of a student's response to prompt C, describing the production of something tangible, such as a crocheted bag or a pattern of roses.

storyCOACH braid OR COLLAGE

GOAL Write a segmented story / essay. This story will be written in segments that will combine like a collage or braid. Each segment is separate and yet connected and woven into the whole, moving the piece forward while adding meaningful repetitions. You will begin your free writing with something that you spend a lot of time on, something you enjoy so much it's on your mind even when you're not actually doing it. The prompts and the writing guide will help you find connections.

step 1: write notes

A What positive (happy-making) thing in your life preoccupies you? This would be something that you think about a lot and that you (mostly) enjoy. What keeps your thoughts swirling even when you're not actually DOING it? Perhaps it even keeps you from sleeping at night because your thoughts are charming.

This preoccupation could be something coming in the future or something gone by and in the past. You might be remembering how it all went down, the best parts and your contribution and what you might have changed and what you'll do again.

It might be thinking about a garden you're planning or in the middle of creating, a party you're throwing, a work or personal project you are working on, a dream trip or . . .

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B Why do you like doing and thinking about this? What is it about the activity and the thing on it that you enjoy?

C Describe a related activity or interest. State why you like your preoccupation.

Then write one or two paragraphs about one of the off-shoots/related items you thought as you brainstormed. We don't need to see an obvious connection right now -- but aim to connect things by the end of the piece.

Example.

The production of something tangible pleases me. I love knowing: I made that.

Thirty years ago, I worked alongside my first husband's father, a man in his 70s visiting from Iran and wanting to stay busy. He crocheted long cream bands, and I crocheted a pattern of roses on them. We made an afghan for each of his daughters and for me.

Twenty years ago, I wrote short stories, printing them double-spaced and single-sided to be shipped off to literary journals.

Ten years ago, I made elaborate parties for my children: tea parties for 100 on our lawn, Diagon Alley recreated from refrigerator boxes, winter in July evoked with white balloons suspended from a web of strings tied to trees.

YOUR #4 B D C

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BRAIDED STORY 111

EXAMPLE

Here's how it works with online forms. The students answers prompts at first. Then they get a step-by-step writing guide that: 1. tells them what to do, 2. presents back their written work, and 3. provides an example.

Answer these 5 questions quickly -- and then move onto step 2 where you'll use these notes to write a story.

1. How do you feel when you look at this photo? Just quickly -- how do you feel?

A little nostalgic I guess?

2. List at least 3 specific, concrete details from the photo that convey the feel of the wind or sun, or the texture of the grass, etc.

This is from one of the many walks I took down the hill behind our house to the neighborhood dock. I had taken the knife out of my pocket on such a perfect day that I wanted a photo.

3. What does it mean to be feeling this way? Is this a typical feeling for you?

It's typical of the time I spent at home during the summer. I was bored of thinking about what was going on with my job. My friend she liked it a lot and I ended up taking another photo from a different angle.

4. Micro world: how did this photo come to be taken? (i.e., were you at work or out shopping or eating breakfast or . . .) Is there a particular story to tell? If so what is it?

I took my knife out and set it on the dock so I could lie down comfortably. It was so nice I

WRITE STEP 2: Set the context (-)

WRITE THIS

Introduce the micro (the current story) within the macro context (your life right now).

Make clear the who, what, where, and/or when of the situation. Try to convey not only the immediate moment of the photo but the larger context of your life right now. Use simple and clear details.

USE YOUR OWN NOTES

Immediate situation

I took my knife out and set it on the dock so I could lie down comfortably. It was so nice I wanted a photo, the photo was so clear I was shocked.

Larger context

I was feeling both stressed and bored last summer, and I went for a lot of walks to the dock, sometimes during the day, sometimes at night. I always went barefoot because I like the feeling on my feet and I always took one of my knives.

Supporting details

This is from one of the many walks I took during the summer. I'd go

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE

Cleaning up after horses isn't the ideal job for a teenager, especially when work isn't consistent, but it's a peaceful place.

In just one sentence, Emily conveys

- the immediate situation: cleaning up after horses
- and the larger context: a teenager with a job that's not ideal and yet necessary

PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED

- What is the step-by-step process you use in live coaching or instruction?
- What are the questions you ask in that process?
- How are your student or client responses woven into your prescription for moving forward?

5. Create a “Choose Your Own Adventure” experience for your students with “learning tracks.”

This is a great approach when you’ve got a really big class or a membership library with LOTS of resources and lessons. It also works well when you’re attracting students with slightly different “avatars.”

NOTE: This is a strategy for when you’ve been teaching for a while. When you’re starting out, focus on just one segment or avatar and create for them only.

If you’ve been teaching for a while, though, and are ready for this approach, start by understanding your “avatars” or the segments of your market. Then map out “learning tracks” that are right for each of them.

PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED

- Identify the segments of your audiences and create a portrait of each avatar.
- Map out a path through your content that best serves each.

EXAMPLE

I teach a class at Get It Scrapped called “The Motivated & Efficient Scrapbooker” and it includes lessons and materials that motivate someone to scrapbook while giving them tools to do this work efficiently.

There are three types of scrapbookers who could benefit from this class: There are: 1) the scrapbookers who cannot find time to create; 2) the scrapbookers who find the work takes too long; and 3) the scrapbookers who feels unmotivated and in a rut.

Each is described below and each has their own “path” through the content. The path for the unmotivated scrapbooker is shown below.

Are any of these frustrations yours?



I can't find time to scrapbook.

My greatest frustration is just finding the time to scrapbook—which is unfortunately something that you can't help with unless you have connections with the elves and fairy groups to pass on my address to.

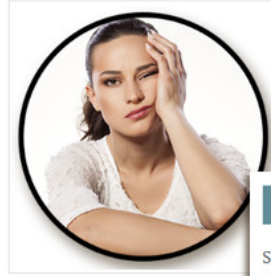
+ try this



It takes me forever to get things chosen and arranged to make a scrapbook page.

Is there is an easier way to get things started? I sometimes rearrange my photos over and over until I get it right and it can take me four hours to do a two-page spread. It would be nice to know how to pick photos, colors of papers, etc and to do this quickly.

+ try this



I'm unmotivated because I'm in

I tend to get stuck telling similar stories and feel like I get in a rut. I need inspiration and ideas on how to look at my photos and tell different angles on stories.

+ try this

So you like to scrapbook and you've got photos—but you're struggling with making them matter in fresh (and perhaps deeper and more enduring) ways. Our advice to you is:

1. Understand storytelling approaches and the ways stories connect generations and record family history (See **STEP 1** below). Explore new story angles and approaches. (See **Step 6** below).
2. Use sketches, templates and foundations that are different from your usual designs. You'll be trying new things and learning at the same time—and your designs will definitely go new places. (See **Step 3** below).
3. Increase your enjoyment and motivation by trying creative starting places and inspiration sources for scrapbooking. (See **Step 6** below.)

Which one of these can you incorporate into your teaching?

Which of these ideas got you excited about delivering a little pizzazz for your students? Come on over to our free [Facebook Group, Prep School for Online Course Builders](#), and tell us which ideas you're thinking about using. Be sure to ask any questions you have!