



That's a Wrap: Ending Your Semester Intentionally

Focusing on the start of the semester is important but so too is how you end the semester. Faculty and students always find the final weeks to be a busy time but embedding ways for students to reflect on what they learned, engage one last time as a group, and say good-bye can help bring closure to the time you spent together.

Whichever activities you choose, from presentation to party, considering the following strategies may help guide you in your planning to meet students' needs:

- Offering emotional and psychological closure
- Creating opportunities to summarize or present what they learned
- Providing motivation and confidence to build on the knowledge and skills they accrued
- Extending invitations to reach out if they need help, support, or guidance in the future ([Eggleston and Smith, 2022](#))

In this teaching tip, two OU faculty share how they end their semesters.

Activities/Classroom Connections

Taking time to decide how you want to wrap it up most likely depends on the courses you teach, but using certain strategies can help you part ways with your students ([Eggleston & Smith, 2022](#); [Forunier, 2019](#); [Hardy, 2021](#)).

Using a project showcase page to facilitate final project presentations in online courses

Mark Isken, Associate Professor of Management Information Systems

I teach upper level / graduate courses in business analytics. My courses have always ended with a pretty open ended final project. Students are encouraged to view this as an opportunity to explore some technical topic (related to the course) that interests them and that they'd like to learn more about. I give them some broad ideas for types of projects as well as access to former project presentations to help them generate ideas. I urge them to create something that they'd be proud to include in their electronic portfolio and talk about in a job interview or graduate school application. Students are encouraged to be imaginative and take creative risks. Back when I taught these courses in a computer lab, the semester always ended with final project presentations and I usually brought dessert. Now that the courses are online, I provide a Project Showcase page with links to final project screencasts that the students create.

Student reflection and feedback about course texts

Kathy Pfeiffer, Professor of English and Creative Writing

While my practice is somewhat specific to English and Creative Writing classes, they may be adapted to other disciplines. I ask students to take out a piece of paper or open a blank doc and create 2 columns, one for **what they liked reading the most** and one for **what they learned from the most**. I offer them a list of everything we've read across the semester, and ask them to put those readings in whichever categories applied for them (or both, if applicable) -- and we have a discussion about the differences between what we enjoy personally versus what we learn from. This branches out into numerous end-of-semester conversations -- about the differences between what's popular versus what has critical merit (how bestsellers are rarely award winners); between personal pleasure and intellectual/ academic growth; about the relationship between discomfort and education. Sometimes I ask them if they think there's any texts that don't "pull their weight" in class -- readings that ask more of them as a reader than they deliver, through insights, information, aesthetics. Back in the old days of in-person course evaluations, I would always do this before handing out evals and it made for MUCH more useful evals, but even now, they're helpful in gauging how students' responses to material changes, how their taste and needs change.

References and Resources

Eggleston, T. J., & Smith, G. E. (2002). [Parting ways: Ending your course](#). *APS Observer*, 15(3).

Fournier, E. (2019, November 11). [How to end a course: Teaching tips](#). Washington University in St. Louis Center for Teaching and Learning.

Hardy, J. (2021, May 3). [End-of-the-year reflection: Tools for validation, celebration, gratitude and planning ahead](#). MyVU News.

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