

MEMORANDUM

To: All Faculty and Adjunct Faculty, except COL and HWCOM

From: Gitta Montoto, Chair, Textbook Affordability Taskforce and Director, Faculty & Global Affairs, Office of the Provost

Date: February 22, 2017

Re: Textbook and Instructional Materials Adoptions for Summer and Fall 2017

As in previous semesters, course instructors are required by law (see [Textbook and Instructional Material Affordability - HB 7019](#)) to submit adoptions for course materials 45 days prior to the first day of the semester, with “adoptions” meaning “declaring” which materials you require or recommend, but not that students must obtain such materials from the University bookstore. The upcoming adoption deadlines are: **Summer – March 24 and Fall – July 7**. Early adoptions ensure that students have ample time to shop around for better prices. They also help with keeping inventories of books required by FIU faculty in our University bookstore rather than traveling to other institutional bookstores where such adoptions have been submitted early.

We ask that, where possible, you enter **Summer and Fall** 2017 adoptions in [FacultyEnlight](#) before the end of the Spring semester so that we can ensure compliance early, and there are no pending adoptions under your name. Please remember that even if you do not require or recommend any course materials for purchase, you **MUST** access [FacultyEnlight](#) and check the box for “No Text Material Required For This Course.”

Should you need assistance with adoptions in [FacultyEnlight](#), please contact the bookstore staff via e-mail at [fiubook@fiu.edu](mailto:fiubook@fiu.edu) or by phone at 305-348-3923 or 305-348-3924. In case you experience any technical issues with the system, please notify me at [gmontoto@fiu.edu](mailto:gmontoto@fiu.edu) or 305-348-3763 with specific details so that we can investigate and correct any errors promptly.

Before selecting your course materials, you may want to consider the many low cost resources provided by our library, our Affordability Counts initiative, and a tip from the Center for the Advancement of Teaching:

**[Library Resources for Affordable Course Materials](#)**

The FIU Libraries are a great resource for helping reduce costs to your students. With more than 230,000 online books, 20,000 streaming videos, and thousands of online journals and databases, the FIU Libraries have many resources which can be used as course readings or

textbook alternatives. Major book collections include titles from HathiTrust (HTRC), Springer, Elsevier, JSTOR, ACLS, and World Bank, including many core classic and historical titles. If you want to assign small portions or a single chapter of a book, consider Course Reserves as a means to provide access to a book without requiring an additional textbook purchase.

### **Affordability Counts Initiative**

As you consider your textbook selections for Summer and Fall 2017, you are encouraged to explore free or low cost materials for your classes at [lowcost.fiu.edu](http://lowcost.fiu.edu). Under this initiative, instructors who commit to keeping the purchase price of materials to \$60 or less earn the “Affordability Counts Medallion” for such a course. The website offers a database of course materials used by over 100 of FIU’s Affordability Counts Medallion-earning courses from a wide array of disciplines. Interested in joining the movement?

### **Last but not Least, a Tip from our Center for the Advancement of Teaching:**

## Let Learning (not a textbook) Guide Your Course Design

The deadline to order textbooks is approaching quickly—so while you’re thinking about your summer and fall courses, we’d like to urge you to reflect on your goals for your students *before* you choose a text.

All too often, we let a textbook or list of readings determine the content or structure of a course. And why not? It’s tempting: publishers know that the typical college semester lasts 14 weeks, so it’s no surprise that many textbooks have 12 to 14 chapters. In Humanities classes, we’re often satisfied with our favorite texts, readings we were assigned as students, and/or the canon. But there are many reasons why you might want to resist the imposed structure of the textbook or reading list.

It’s unlikely that any one textbook or anthology is perfectly aligned with your learning goals. Even if all the goals are handled adequately, they may not arise in the order that makes most sense for your students; often one chapter is much more important or complex than another, and warrants much more time in your students’ learning experience. Foundational concepts may not be introduced until the middle of the book; the big picture may be buried in loads of detail. You will build a better class if you start with the learning goals that are meaningful to you. What do you want your students to know or *be able to do* when they’ve successfully completed your course?

When we feel bound by a textbook, or a long list of readings, we’re more likely to fall into two common scenarios, both of which constrain students’ ability to learn: One, there’s simply too much content. Learning requires reflection, practice, and feedback—and an abundance of content often gets in the way. The other common result is a lack of

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integration among learning goals and learning activities—which also makes it less likely that your students will attain your goals for them.

So how do you avoid the textbook trap? How can you engineer a successful learning experience for your students? The “[Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses for Significant Learning](#),” by L. Dee Fink, author of *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*, is a great road-map. You start by identifying what you really want students to take away from your course. Once you’ve figured out what successful performance would look like, you can figure out the best way for students to provide evidence of their learning; and then you can design opportunities for them to practice. What materials they’ll need (i.e. what—if any—text) will be one of the final decisions you make. Of course, backward-designing your course in this way isn’t quick or easy, but it will be well worth the effort.

We use this framework for our course design workshops, the Hybrid Pilot’s professional development series, and many other working groups. The faculty who’ve used it can attest to its value. Let us know if we can help you get started!

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