

The “Secret” Discussion Board:

My students requested that the law school’s electronic media specialist (the person who helps them with Blackboard) set up a secret discussion board so that they could discuss negotiating strategy freely without my knowledge. I believe that setting up an electronic class created a “vision of the possible” for them about how they might use a private discussion board to pursue their union strategy. We later bargained about my ability to access their private board after the termination of the class for purposes of assessment.

Student posting highlights from the discussion board:

- “In the hope that someone reads this, I feel I must make a point that the discussion groups in the class have no power. At no time has Professor indicated that he actually cares about what decisions are made in those groups, much less that he plans to implement the outcomes. So anyone who is harboring the idea that there will be no midterm, or that we can negotiate about the current essay assignment, or negotiate anything else through those discussion groups is wrong. If anyone wants to talk, call me at”
- “Dear fellow students: I have only one issue that I want to be represented on: the curve. Corrada has no limitations on what his class average GPA should be since it is an upper level class. Everyone knows that Corrada is one of the toughest graders at DU, and I suspect his medians are deplorable. My hope for the union is that we push for as high a median as possible – at least as high as what other professors are using.... That’s it for me. Higher curve. Period....”
- “I think we should propose a “cafeteria plan” grading system. This could be much like a flexible benefits plan at the workplace. We develop a list of items to be graded (combine what everyone in the class wants, to create the list. Then each person would complete his or her own list with name and assignment of the 50 points to any one item, several or all the items. That way we could each be graded on our strengths.... Of course, Corrada will object, probably on at least two reasons: First, it will take more time. Maybe we could offer him class time to use. Second, he will object because it will be harder to grade us against each other. Hmmm...so?”
- “i think the cafeteria plan is great, but of course we have to be prepared to swing back with another offer when he shoots us down. on the particulars, i personally would be pleased with a single take-home essay exam. i think participation should be extra credit, in part b/c although certainly corrada handles it in a nice way, i don’t see the educational benefit to students “reciting” a case. my feeling is that it’s an antiquated law school practice that



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provides some mechanism for student “accountability,” but surely we can do better! what i think we need to uncover is what corrada’s bottom line is on this issue (i.e., minimal acceptable “accountability”), or maybe this is just my agenda!

- Ok let’s face it. We can make all the demands we want, but the bottom line is we have NO POWER. Corrada can just laugh us off. We need a power base, and we have to discover it quickly. What power do we have? What can we do?
- This has been my argument all along. But I do think that the Prof will relinquish some power to make this work.... And I think our biggest issue is going to be internal. There are 41 or 42 people in this class and everyone wants something different.
- I don’t like the idea of Corrada looking at this forum and our messages before he gives us our final grades. My only thought was to have a neutral third party do the grading. Anyone else have any ideas?
- I think I took care of the union membership problem. Corrada is violating Colorado state law 8-3-108(1) by having a union security clause in the collective bargaining agreement when there was no separate election on the union security clause. I filed a complaint with the state Division of Labor Industrial Claims Appeals Office alleging an unfair labor practice under state law and requesting a cease and desist order. Corrada acting as the state official seemed to think that the claim was a good one and meant we have an open shop (i.e., the security clause is invalid).... I think it means we don’t have to bother with collecting dues for union membership.



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