

# Instructor Voice

## The Voice Behind the Curtain

The other day I asked an emeritus faculty member where he derived his teaching style from. Looking back on a stunning 35 years of instructional experience, he said he had a great mentor instructor in undergraduate school and thought, "I want to be like him." As we look to the semester ahead and dust off our seasonal affective disorder prescriptions, consider your voice. Where do you speak from and where and how are you leading your students?

On a landscape of public presentation styles, there are baptist preachers and pentecostal ministers, press secretaries and public service spokespersons, TED speakers and infomercial hawkers, pre-school teachers and, on the distant horizon, the erudition hills are populated by tweed coated, pipe smoking scholars of the most serious sort.

Think back to your most favored experiences as a student. I mean your favorite experiences with faculty....when they were teaching...their courses. Where were they on this landscape? Were they wondrously effective at relaying just the facts, or did they have a sprinkle of evangelical fervor? Some faculty can pull off the illusion of possessing overwhelming knowledge and vast erudition to the extent that it becomes a pleasure simply to sit before them and bask in their radiance. These are few. Others find success with a bit of showmanship thrown into the mix. Still others find satisfaction in a more minimalistic delivery style similar to a White House press secretary.

Where do you fit in? On this landscape, how do you roll? How deliberately do you embrace the performance aspect of instruction? When are you teaching from your heart, and when are you faking it, and does it matter?



Take a moment to see what Jeffrey Tambor has to say on the subject of instructor voice at the inspirational 2014 SXSWEDU keynote presentation: Performing your life in the classroom. The most pertinent bit starts about 8 minutes in the video, but the whole is relevant.

<http://goo.gl/XAnKtq>

The Simon Fraser University Center for Teaching and Learning has put together a series of videos on voice and presentation skills. These open resources are available on YouTube:

<http://goo.gl/XhC4JN>

Lastly, consider the comments of one of UAF's very own emeriti faculty members. Here, Professor Emeriti Dr. Ron Smith shares a few thoughts on the subject of instructional voice.

<http://goo.gl/KhcUf8>

