

Mid-Term Breather

Written by Dylan Kissane

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DYLAN KISSANE, OCT 28 2013

It's a Monday morning and there's not a student to be seen.

After rushing through the first seven weeks of the semester it is time for a breather here at CEFAM as the students depart for a week of vacation and professors take a moment to gather their thoughts before the sprint towards the end of the year.

Many of CEFAM's students head south to the Mediterranean to spend a week soaking up the last of the sunshine in Marseille, Cannes or Barcelona. Others will head home to family in Paris, in Lille or elsewhere in France, catching up with parents and siblings they may not have seen for the last couple of months. Our American study abroad and exchange students usually try to squeeze in a seven-to-ten day tour of Europe, hopping between capitals and making the most of their last few weeks in Europe. A few students may even take the time to study and prepare for the classes awaiting them next week, though in my experience this is definitely a minority position.

But what of faculty? What does a professor do when there are no students to teach to?

If the emails I received late last week are anything to go by then it seems that students feel that 'no students = no work' for a faculty member. I had emails that signed off 'enjoy your break' and 'have a good vacation', presumably written from a student who assumed that, as they were not doing much next week, that I'd be doing very little, too.

If only that was the case.

For many professors this week is a chance to catch up on grading, finalise preparations and plans for the last few weeks of the semester, and prepare for the 'Parent-Professor Evening' the school will host in early November. This latter event, an annual event at CEFAM, allows for one-on-one meetings between professors and the people who (mostly) foot the education bill: the parents. Parents want to know in detail how their child is doing, what they can do to improve and oftentimes question exactly why their son or daughter earned a B in a particular assignment. With faculty teaching dozens if not scores of students each semester, this is an evening that takes some significant time to prepare for, if only for the added difficulty that native English speaking professors will spend the evening commenting on student performances in French.

I'll be using the mid-semester break to finalise the recruitment of two or three new adjuncts for the coming Spring semester. Over the next couple of days I'll be sifting through the CVs and cover letters from applicants for posts in Information Systems and Environmental Science, for English teachers and Accounting professors, and looking for the sorts of skills and talents that will allow them to quickly integrate and shine as part of the CEFAM teaching team.

Of course, there's research to be done, too. I'm working on an article with a couple of colleagues in the US, I have a book review to get off to a journal by the end of the day, I'm trying to organise an undergraduate research project for the Spring, and along with colleagues on the Editorial Board of the *Central European University Political Science Journal* I am finalising the most recent issue of the journal for publication this week.

On top of all of this there are the inevitable meetings to attend, inter-departmental discussions to be managed,

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commentaries to be made on new marketing materials and recruitment packages, and an exam to write for my undergraduate sociology class, too.

Do I envy my students sunning themselves on the beaches of Barcelona? Perhaps a little. But I'm also grateful for a week where I can catch up on things and even get a little bit ahead so that, when students return from the beach, I can return to devoting real time to their needs, especially with the end of the semester so class to hand.

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Read more from Dylan Kissane in his e-IR blog [Political Business](#)

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