Another Country:

Thriving through the Travels and Travails of Interdisciplinary Scholarship

Patrick R. Grzanka 1

Elizabeth R. Cole 2

1Department of Psychology and Women, Gender, & Sexuality Interdisciplinary Program, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

2Departments of Psychology and Women’s and Gender Studies, University of Michigan

Author Notes

Patrick R. Grzanka, ORCID: 0000-0002-7364-9965

Elizabeth R. Cole, ORCID: 0000-0002-3124-5858

We have no known conflicts of interest to disclose.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Patrick R. Grzanka, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Department of Psychology, 303C Austin Peay, 1404 Circle Drive, Knoxville, TN 37996. Email: Patrick.grzanka@utk.edu

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Thriving through the Travels and Travails of Interdisciplinary Scholarship

Interdisciplinarity is one of the most exciting, complex, and intellectually stimulating advances within the contemporary academy (Jacobs & Frickel, 2009). Being an interdisciplinary feminist scholar and managing a joint appoint between two disciplines (e.g., psychology and sociology), or even an interdiscipline (e.g., women’s and gender studies), means linking important ideas and questions in a given discipline to broader conversations in ways that can tear down arbitrary academic boundaries and produce genuinely transformative knowledge. Doing interdisciplinary work, and having a joint appointment, can also mean learning and navigating two (or more) bodies of knowledge, two curricula, two sets of colleagues, two cultures and practices, and sometimes, two different sets of criteria – both explicit and implicit – for excellence and success. Thus, choosing to take a joint appointment presents a challenge of how to use these positions to enrich our life and scholarship, and eventually to change the academy, without sacrificing our own productivity and well-being. Unfortunately, some early career scholars anticipate that the burden of these dual demands outweighs any possible benefit to be gained in terms of intellectual value and career rewards, leading them to avoid interdisciplinary work and joint appointments. In this chapter we offer some insight into what makes interdisciplinary work worthwhile, and how to make joint appointments support you and your work, not deplete you.

We (Liz and Patrick) are both scholars who have spent our entire careers working in joint appointments and publishing across disciplinary boundaries, though we occupy different and overlapping social positions (Liz is a Black biracial straight woman and Patrick is a white queer man, both cisgender, able-bodied [for now], and tenured full professors, although we are of two different generations). We have come to think of our careers as protracted journeys across disciplinary spaces, almost like studying abroad or traveling to distant places, in which we have had to learn new customs and languages through a process of immersion and translation. Just as traveling in another country makes you see new things when you return home, interdisciplinary travel can help us imagine ways that disciplines can be different. Making interdisciplinary careers is still a bit of a revolutionary act in our own “home” discipline of psychology and in the academy more broadly. Though these travels have undoubtedly introduced complexity and challenges in our careers that may not have been there if we had taken more established journeys to tenure, we also feel compelled to underscore the unquantifiable dividends of interdisciplinarity that we have both been so privileged to experience. Learning a new language in a country where you don’t read or speak the dominant language can be alienating and isolating. It can be difficult and even traumatic at times. But we are hard pressed to think of a single person who would give up having learned how to communicate effectively, fluently in another country[[1]](#footnote-1).What follows in this essay is our attempt to transform the dividends of those travels into practical advice for scholars embarking on similar journeys.

*Liz:*

Although my PhD was in psychology, as a graduate student I began a major collaboration with a sociologist in communications studies. This project resulted in a co-authored monograph, not the type of publication that anyone would encourage a doctoral student in psychology to undertake. As a graduate student I took courses in social work and public policy, and taught in Afroamerican Studies and Women’s Studies. Looking back, I think that everything that is novel or frankly, important, about my scholarship is directly related to what I learned from my colleagues and in my teaching beyond psychology, including my understanding of politics, history, social structure, and culture. Other disciplines provide deep, rich literatures to theorize and understand these contexts in sophisticated ways. My joint appointments facilitated these experiences and conversations. They also have provided three communities and cultures that offered different kinds of support, both intellectual and social. Throughout my career I have sometimes felt like I didn’t belong in the social spaces of academia, and having a second department has been an important refuge.

Often, we speak of joint appointments as if they are one kind of position, but in fact they take different forms. At my first university joint appointments were rare. My joint status did not designate specific fractions of effort and was administered informally. Three key features facilitated my success in this arrangement: 1) my department chairs were excellent mentors, devoted to my success, who had already established a friendly relationship prior to my arrival; 2) by chance my departments were located across the hall from each other, and this physical proximity further facilitated the chairs’ communication and my movement between the two units; and 3) although the terms of the arrangement were only lightly-defined, it was implicitly clear to me that my evaluations would be primarily in psychology, and this understanding provided important guidance about expectations.

I arrived at my second (and current) job with tenure, at a university where joint appointments were common, and procedures governing them were relatively well defined. My position was explicitly split evenly between two interdisciplinary units (Women’s Studies and Afroamerican and African Studies), which meant that both units were used to evaluating interdisciplinary work by scholars with joint appointments. I’ve been here for more than 20 years, although the configuration of my appointment has changed according to my interests and other responsibilities, including time spent in significant administrative roles. From this vantage point I know a lot about how to administer joint appointments well.

*Patrick:*

Throughout my entire career my work has been interdisciplinary. I am trained in an interdisciplinary field (American studies); my first job was in an interdisciplinary unit with a primary teaching focus; and my current job is as a professor of psychology and chair of an interdisciplinary women, gender, and sexuality (WGS) studies program. I’ve had a complicated relationship to my own training and career path over the years, including quite a bit of internalized shame over not having a more traditional pedigree. Indeed, being terminally “undisciplined” has at times been a source of profound anxiety for me: I’ve been called too psychological for the sociologists, too empirical for the cultural studies folks, and–because I don’t hold the Ph.D. in it–flat out \*not\* a psychologist. I used to take all of these criticisms as mortal wounds and symbols of my perpetual inadequacy. Now, from a position of tenured full professor privilege, I treat my wily academic upbringing as a badge of honor.

Part of the journey from shame to self-actualization has involved a nonlinear process of coming to understand how disciplinary-insider status functions in disciplinary spaces, divesting from the anger and hurt I felt from being targeted by disciplinary boundary policing, finding support and mentorship from people both within and outside the academy, and developing a sense of self and purpose in my scholarship and work that is less dependent on validation from disciplinary-trained academics. I now know that when I’m experiencing boundary policing in action, it’s not just in my head: there’s an entire sociological concept – boundary work (Gieryn 1983) – designed to capture the heterogeneous ways scholars produce and reify disciplines, often in the interest of maintaining power in the name of “quality” (e.g., Liz and I discuss this in-depth in our paper about “bad psychology”: Grzanka & Cole, 2021; see also Lewis, 2021).

As we discuss throughout this chapter, not all interdisciplinary appointments are the same and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to doing interdisciplinary work in contemporary academic institutions, many of which purport to support and value interdisciplinary work while actively and passively making interdisciplinary careers painful or impossible (Jacobs & Frickel, 2009). But one key thing I have learned about interdisciplinary careers is that it is generally far easier to have a disciplinary degree and then succeed in an interdisciplinary appointment rather than pursue a disciplinary appointment with an interdisciplinary degree. This is a harsh reality, but it is the truth.

**A Strengths-based Approach to Interdisciplinary Careers**

Interdisciplinarily trained, inclined, and informed scholars come to their work with tremendous gifts and strengths, and joint appointments increase the probability that the contributions their scholarship makes can be understood and appreciated. This work of interdisciplinary scholars is critical because their presence – as teachers, scholars, and interlocutors engaging with colleagues’ work – is also a contribution to the development of the fields in *both* departments. Most disciplines were created many years ago when universities operated differently, served different student bodies and engaged different communities and audiences and populations, and addressed different problems that were understood in different ways. In some ways these divisions don’t serve our students or our scholarship today. The presence of interdisciplinary scholars helps the disciplines stretch and change.

However, the nature of interdisciplinary travels is that it can be difficult to master the nuances of theory, culture, methods, and norms in more than one discipline. The process of becoming fully acculturated into a disciplinary framework/epistemology/lexicon does not happen overnight, particularly when you are trying to do this across multiple fields–all the while just keeping your head above water in graduate school (Calarco, 2020)! It’s next-to-impossible to speak the language of multiple disciplines (i.e., code-switch); understand the arbitrary and nuanced idiosyncrasies of disciplinary organizations, which are key to succeeding on the job market; and to publish manuscripts in a sufficient number of prominent disciplinary venues such to maintain perceived legitimacy in more than one discipline at the same time. One of the unfair privileges of disciplinary work is typically having to know only one discipline's body of literature, which is an enormous feat in and of itself. The obstacles we’ve described this far are also certainly germane to more traditionally trained scholars who may find themselves in interdisciplinary spaces for the first time while on the tenure track.

We understand a meaningful and rewarding career as an interdisciplinary scholar in a dual or interdisciplinary appointment is both a deeply personal and structural journey. In other words, it represents a personal and individual path that others cannot dictate, and which should ultimately be driven by one’s scholarly goals and teaching interests: what audiences do you wish to speak to? What impacts–in the academy and beyond–do you aspire to make? The choice may also be influenced by your own values and your needs with regard to home, health, and happiness. For example, we find our work with students in WGS particularly rewarding and important because of their commitment to work for social justice. At the same time, it involves moving through and beyond institutional forces that should not be any one individual’s responsibility to change. In our own travels down this sometimes complicated, but almost always rewarding, vocational road we have made some observations about how to progress while enjoying the trip. Though our recommendations are based on our experiences in psychology as one of our core disciplines, we expect these strategies and recommendations can apply to feminist scholars in a variety of fields, as well.

**Preparing for an interdisciplinary job**

Our advice for junior faculty begins in the late graduate school phase, particularly when folks are first on the job market. Articulate your skills and interests in terms that are legible to those who are doing the hiring. An important value of interdisciplinary work is the way it tends to break down traditional disciplinary concepts, but this can be extremely confusing to scholars who are more firmly entrenched in the culture and worldview of particular disciplines. Make sure you can be *heard* by clarifying your teaching and research skills in terms of courses that are traditionally taught in the discipline to which you are applying. For example, if you are a feminist scholar of emotions applying to a joint appointment with psychology and women’s and gender studies, you might explain that you are prepared to teach both a basic course in emotions as well as psychology of gender (i.e., service courses), and also could offer upper-level electives in gender and emotion. Be prepared to explain what feminists have contributed to understanding key constructs in psychology; likewise, you should be prepared to explain the value of psychological methods to feminist, queer, and trans scholars in the humanities who may be skeptical of quantification broadly (Grzanka, 2019), not to mention psychology’s epistemic assumptions and legacy of positivism. [We’ll share a little secret: most critical humanities scholars are deeply skeptical of the quantitative empirical social sciences.]

Your job talk should aim to engage multiple audiences by inviting people into the conversation. Define your key terms, even ones that you assume some in the audience take for granted. Your ability to explain these concepts well can show that you are a good teacher! For example, how we present tables and graphs often presumes fluency with statistical analyses. Be prepared to narrate your findings for people who are most familiar with looking at the graphical representation of data in newspapers like *The New York Times.* A central part of being clear is speaking across disciplinary boundaries, particularly when communicating with those who are trained in vastly different methods and languages. The prescriptions of psychological job talks, for example, can be extremely alienating to non-psychologists and they can confuse or even irritate the uninitiated, including those who may be suspicious of psychology’s relevance or contributions to feminism, social justice, etc. All of this advice also applies to presentations you make at interdisciplinary conferences.

Because you ideally need to understand who holds the keys to your future in any institution, try to get to know your audience before you come to campus. For example, it’s essential to know which unit is going to have the most influence in the hiring and tenuring/promotion process. If you will be joining the ranks of others who have held joint positions or interdisciplinary appointments at your institution, understanding the experiences of these more senior scholars, particularly those who have successfully been promoted and tenured, is invaluable. Before accepting an offer, ask them to chat with you. Most will be excited to share their experiences with junior scholars and may be forthright about obstacles you should expect on the road to tenure and promotion. This is information you won’t glean from a university website. The same idea applies once you start your position. You should have as robust of an understanding of which unit(s) will play the largest role in decision making around your job, including what classes you teach, when you will be eligible for any pre- or post-tenure research leaves, and what kinds of service obligations you will expected to perform prior to your first promotion.

**Making the interdisciplinary job work**

Once you start a position, the most important issue, particularly in joint appointments, is understanding the metrics and expectations for success (for types of scholarship, outlets for publication, teaching expectations, service, and processes for evaluation). This demands communication between department chairs. Navigating joint appointments will often mean that junior scholars need to “manage up,” asking for clarification, making sure each chair has information from the other department. Ask for transparency if it is not provided to you: “Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_: As I prepare for my annual review in both units, I am hoping you can provide me with specific information about how my dual obligations will be treated by both units in terms of teaching and service, in particular. I want to make sure I am representing my work accurately to both units and am setting myself up for a transparent and fair evaluation. I appreciate your help and support in this process.” You have a right to this information, and there’s no shame in not knowing (you can be sure that some of your peers don’t know, either). To avoid burdening jointly appointed faculty with disproportionate service, one model is for junior faculty to do service to only one department at a time, alternating years. If this sounds attractive to you, ask your chairs whether it is possible. Don’t assume that usual practices can’t be changed. This kind of self-advocacy can take some effort and skill, but it’s worth it to cultivate them.

Early on, think about assembling your team. Don’t wait to identify potential mentors in your institution who have successfully negotiated similar appointments; there are advantages to having mentors both within your unit(s) and outside your unit(s). Ideally, you will have both. Mentors within your unit(s) will be able to offer insider knowledge that others will not have. They have been through many of the same processes you are currently navigating and will help you avoid mistakes that waste time and can be demoralizing, such as submitting a paper to a journal with a notoriously bad or slow editorial process or agreeing to serve on a committee that is poorly managed. On the other hand, mentors outside your unit(s) will have institutional knowledge that may be limited within your unit(s) and they may help you see the structure of the university in ways that your direct colleagues cannot. Join multidisciplinary mentoring groups at your university if they exist; attend campus-wide social events when you have the emotional bandwidth; and reach out to faculty whose work you admire for lunch, coffees, or to attend lectures with you. As a junior faculty member on campus, your college/university colleagues are generally quite invested in retaining talented junior faculty (you!) and are excited to make connections and share advice. Granted, this will come easier for extroverts like Patrick, than it will for introverts like Liz. If you’re more the latter, try setting yourself a modest goal like making one contact each month. Further, it’s helpful to have confidants outside of your unit(s) whom you can bounce ideas off, especially when you’re trying to solve a complex problem, whether it is intellectual, bureaucratic, or political.

Finally, identify mentors outside your university whose career trajectory is one that you aspire to; this is good advice for anyone but is especially important for interdisciplinary scholars who may be mold-breaking (i.e., a “unicorn”) or dissimilar from virtually all/most of your peers. For example, when Patrick was on the job market, he noticed that Liz was attending the same interdisciplinary conference and he was giving a talk about intersectionality that spoke directly to her work. He reached out to her while *en route* to the conference and Liz enthusiastically responded to the idea of meeting up, which Patrick initiated over email: “Dear Dr. Cole, I am so thrilled that you’ll be at this meeting. I know your schedule is likely already full, but I was wondering if you’d have any time for coffee while we’re both at the conference, because I would so appreciate your feedback on this new paper….” Though all emails won’t result in decade-plus friendships (and collaborations), this type of outreach can produce career-changing interactions—but they won’t happen if you don’t initiate the contact. [Liz always asks junior scholars at conferences to send her their papers, and they rarely do.]

Patrick found Liz because of her papers, but another fruitful strategy for identifying potential outside mentors is to find 5-10 people whose careers you aspire to and study their CVs. CV-scanning can sometimes result in a shame-spiral, but that’s not what we’re talking about. Studying the CVs of your aspirational colleagues is a great way to figure out things that you may not have been taught in graduate school (we certainly weren’t!), such as which conferences to attend; journals that are friendly to the kind of questions you ask and methods you use; awards to apply for; and funding agencies from which to consider pursuing grants. This is all the more important for interdisciplinary scholars, because there is no direct path toward an interdisciplinary career. If you develop relationships with outside mentors, they may become strategic allies in job applications, as well as the tenure and promotion process. But Liz notes that sometimes the best allies do not make the best letter writers, so it can be useful to consult other senior mentors for any relevant feedback about the kind of recommendation/review someone generally offers (e.g., “I was just wondering what you thought of Patrick as a potential letter writer?”). [Liz and Patrick both routinely invoke the same person they would never ask for a letter!] On the other hand, be on the lookout for unlikely allies. We have seen many scholars make the unfortunate mistake of assuming people in your discipline will not be your ally or even champion based largely on subfield rivalries or prejudices developed in graduate school. For example, as assistant professors, Liz got great support from the clinically-oriented faculty member in her unit, and Patrick’s biggest champions were traditionally trained experimental social psychologists.

Feedback–about scholarship, teaching, and service–is central to academic life, both to improve the quality of our work and to share ideas, resources, and strategies. The ability to give and receive feedback is one of the most fundamental processes in the development of a scholarly identity. Acclimating to consistent feedback on your scholarship begins in graduate school, and interdisciplinary scholars may get even more critical feedback than traditionally trained disciplinary scholars for all the reasons we named above, including the time it takes to learn multiple disciplinary cultures, languages, styles, idiosyncrasies, methods, etc. You will receive lots of feedback during your career, both as a junior scholar and beyond, and sometimes it will be disappointing and sometimes it will sting (hard). Although it can be truly difficult, it’s important to use feedback as an opportunity to improve your work, not as a referendum on the quality of your contributions (We both confess to consigning important projects to the back of a file drawer–when those existed–for several years after a harsh review).

But you should consider even challenging responses to your work deeply and understand that guidance aimed at achieving success within an unfair system need not be a sign of collusion with that system. At times, senior feminist scholars who have successfully navigated academia *and* who are extremely invested in you and your success will give you feedback that you may think is wrong. In some cases, it may ultimately not be the right feedback for you. Certainly, we have both decided against taking the advice of trusted advisors on occasion. But when dealing with supportive colleagues and good faith actors, such as editors who want to help you improve your work, you should always work to find the value in the feedback you receive.

One easy way to deflect constructive criticism or dismiss feedback as unhelpful or even unsupportive is to decide that senior scholars are merely giving you this feedback because they have mastered the use of the proverbial master’s tools (Lorde, 1984). In other words, it’s easy to dismiss some forms of feedback–particularly when it’s about meeting standards of a discipline or changing an approach or direction in the interest of getting tenure–as giving in to harmful forces you are committed to resisting. But to automatically reject feedback as rooted in complicity in systems of domination – for example, white supremacy, patriarchy, or the interests of the neoliberal university – may actually undermine your capacity to change the systems you want to resist (e.g., Zambrana, 2018). Learning the tools does not necessarily mean internalizing the most inegalitarian or oppressive elements of academia. A broad and deep network of feminist scholars in your corner whom you trust to give you supportive, smart, and critical feedback is one way to get good at navigating harmful systems so that you can ultimately help transform them.

Relatedly, chasing brilliant ideas that will transform disciplines takes time (Dill et al., 2009). As we have stressed, all junior scholars need to know what’s expected of them to earn tenure. As an interdisciplinary and/or dual-appointment scholar, you especially should have a sense of what your departments’ expectations are for your annual publications and scholarly output. For example, your personal intellectual priority may be to write a groundbreaking book that expands upon your dissertation project. But if your tenure home is not a “book department,” i.e., a department that does not require or value books for tenure, then focusing exclusively on a book during your time as an assistant professor will undermine your tenure case. Instead, you may need to put the book into what we call the “B-line” of your research program and prioritize articles in the “A-line.” The A-line of any research program represents your primary contributions and primary effort; the B-line is secondary and gets your attention when there are pauses in the A-line, such as when A-line manuscripts are under review or you need to step away from that line of work to refresh your mind (or nourish your soul).

On the other hand, if you are in a department that expects 2-3 or more publications annually, the book project may need to be relegated to the C- or D-line. That doesn’t mean abandoning a book project (Liz: seriously, step away from the file drawer!). It just means making sure that you attend to the (typically faster) process of publishing articles while you are serving your probationary period (i.e., the period prior to tenure review). Conversely, if your tenure home is a book department–as so many WGS units are–articles should be your B-line while your book occupies the privileged real estate of the A-line. Remember, too, that a career is a long-game and those dazzling contributions will eventually materialize, but you have to get tenure in the meantime. For example, Liz published her (Patrick: “groundbreaking, revolutionary, capital-I Important!”) *American Psychologist* paper on intersectionality 10 years after getting tenure. And though Patrick published two edited books before getting tenure, he deferred finishing the extremely time-consuming monograph book project until after tenure *and* promotion to full professor.

It’s never too early to think about scholars whom you might choose to write tenure-letters for you. Even the first year on the tenure track is not too early to begin being strategic about who will be evaluating your tenure portfolio. Letters evaluating your scholarship written by faculty outside your university are often the most heavily weighted elements of your tenure portfolio, particularly at research universities. Some colleges and universities allow faculty to recommend external reviewers who are qualified to write on their behalf. Nevertheless, it is essential that you understand your department and school’s bylaws and regulations governing this process. Typically, letter writers should be people with whom you have never collaborated (i.e., published), though you may know them as professional acquaintances or have served on panels together. [Although Liz and Patrick met 12 years ago, we didn’t write together until recently for exactly this reason!] Talk to department leadership about the expectations not only for the kinds of institutions (i.e., perceived prestige, Carnegie-designation [e.g., R1]) from which your letters can come, but also the representation of disciplines among your letter writers. Cultivating professional relationships with possible letter writers can happen at conferences and other professional meetings, but another useful way to get to know potential evaluators is by inviting them to your campus to speak in departmental colloquia, for example, and by accepting invitations to do the same. Campus visits like these are great opportunities to talk with respected senior colleagues (i.e., potential external letter-writers) about exactly the kinds of things about which we have suggested you be strategic: where to publish, how to navigate obstacles in the peer review process, balancing interdisciplinary demands on your time, etc.

In Patrick’s appointment, which is fully in psychology despite service obligations to WGS, only other psychology faculty would vote on his tenure and promotion. In this case, one might assume that only psychologists would be preferred for external reviews. But Patrick’s department head wanted interdisciplinary representation in the letter writers to better speak to the impact of his work in other fields. This is not always the case, however, and you do not want to be surprised. The expectations of those who will vote on your tenure case (i.e., your colleagues) should inform the questions of audience we referenced above, such as where you are publishing your work. For example, it may be difficult for an external reviewer to speak favorably of your scholarly impact if you have not published in journals that are considered essential or well-regarded in your field. On the other hand, often the flagship disciplinary journals are reluctant to publish interdisciplinary work; the right external reviewers can help explain how other journals are regarded and why they are the appropriate venues for your scholarship.

The question of where to publish sometimes often raises uncomfortable questions about pressures to meet norms or standards with which you do not agree and/or do not feel consistent with who you are as a scholar and a person. We are not encouraging you to “sell out” or be disingenuous; it’s also not advisable to contort yourself into a scholar you are not. Such a strategy is deeply unsustainable and painful. We are suggesting that in order to create the spaces you want to do creative and even transgressive work, you must clearly identify the hurdles to overcome and make sure you have a path to do so. Collaborations are fantastic ways to do this. By partnering with people who have had success placing articles in journals you might aspire to, you increase your chances by learning from their successes and mistakes. In fields where co-authorship is less common (e.g., history, literature), reaching out to scholars who have published similar or relevant scholarship in your aspirational venues is another way to assess critical factors which may help you balance your multidisciplinary obligations and chart a path to tenure, including: what was the peer review process like at that journal? How long did it take from submission to publication? Were the reviews constructive?

Disciplines have idiosyncrasies that are not always immediately apparent, even to sophisticated scholars (like you!) who already have spent years in academia. Different disciplinary cultures require different strategies, and these cultures might vary widely even between departments/programs in the same discipline. In a huge psychology department (like the ones we work in), attendance at brown-bag or colloquium lectures is not necessarily going to even be noticed and so might not be the very best use of your time, particularly when the speaker or topic is not remotely relevant. But in a smaller WGS unit with only a handful of faculty, attending program lectures may be an essential way for colleagues to see your commitment to the unit. Similar dynamics almost certainly apply to conferences. If your colleagues (and potential external letter-writers) have an unwritten but nonetheless consequential expectation that your attendance is expected at specific meetings, you should know this early and start planning and budgeting accordingly. Assuming you do not have infinite funds or energy, it makes sense to think about where and when you need to be directing your limited sources to professional development.

Teaching is also an important part of the journey. Teaching expectations can vary widely between units. For example, one of your units may care deeply about teaching and expect stellar evaluations from peers and students prior to tenure; another may not care much about teaching at all until the post-tenure stage. In some departments, it’s common for faculty to teach one course routinely or exclusively before applying for promotion, whereas others prefer to see a diversity of courses and modalities (i.e., lecture, seminar, online). Understanding these expectations and the values of your school or college will help you set realistic and attainable teaching goals while balancing research and service demands, which may similarly vary widely. Patrick observed no fewer than seven colleagues’ courses in his first year on the job; visiting others’ courses, particularly those of recently tenured faculty members’, is a great way to get a sense of teaching expectations.

At times, navigating these diverse demands can be stressful, unsettling, and ultimately alienating from the joys of teaching. Struggles in the classroom can completely derail an otherwise productive and joyful semester. Accordingly, within-unit mentors are essential for anticipating and handling pedagogical issues that are inevitable when teaching in multiple campus units. Mentors (including peer mentors) can help you avoid mistakes that might otherwise feel inevitable and to increase your confidence when commanding authority with students, particularly those students who might be inclined to challenge your authority or expertise. Fortunately, there are outstanding resources for developing critical feminist pedagogy from interdisciplinary luminaries in our field, such as Kim Case, Mary Kite, and Wendy Williams (Case, 2013; Case, 2017; and Kite et al., 2021). And if there is a teaching center on your campus, don’t hesitate to seek their support. You will eventually write a teaching statement for your tenure portfolio and your investment of effort to improve your teaching will be a key part of the narrative.

**On the Dividends of Interdisciplinary Travel**

The focus of this essay has been on the very tangible barriers that institutions of higher education present to interdisciplinary and dual-appointment faculty members. We have provided advice to early-career scholars that we have learned on our journeys from graduate students to full professors. We have stressed the ways these institutions impede the very kinds of transformative scholars and visionary concepts they claim (to want to) cultivate. But this is not the only part of an interdisciplinary scholar’s journey, and the challenges we faced were not the only part of our respective stories. We have been successful by traditional academic metrics, made wonderful friends, and done work that brings us joy and fulfillment. We would be remiss to conclude without emphasizing then the very tangible benefits of our interdisciplinary careers. For us, interdisciplinary travel has meant having not one but many homes, which comes with the kind of support from diverse networks of scholars and collaborators that have increased our resilience to the challenges of academic life and have enriched both our scholarship and our fulfillment in our careers. Just as home can be complicated, we have not romanticized the difficulties that accompany interdisciplinarity. Nonetheless, to return to our opening metaphor, having traversed so many discourses has brought us both stamps in our intellectual passports without which we cannot imagine doing the work we do today.

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1. Our title gestures toward James Baldwin’s 1962 novel *Another Country,* which was notably composed during his travels from New York City to Paris back; he ultimately completed it while writing in Istanbul. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)