

# A STRATAGEM FOR USING ONLINE COURSES TO DENY CONTINGENT FACULTY ACADEMIC FREEDOM

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## **Abstract**

Online college courses are now commonplace. If the majority of online undergraduate courses being taught in the United States are lower-division courses and if lower-division courses continue to be predominantly taught by contingent faculty, it is postulated that contingent faculty will eventually teach a disproportionately large number of online courses as compared to their tenured colleagues. A villainous administrator that knew online courses were being taught largely by contingent faculty might seek to further deny contingent faculty agency in their courses by employing policies for online courses that would impede the ability of contingent faculty to manage their own course readings in subtle ways. Taking the role of this imaginary administrator, the first portion of this talk will (satirically) devote itself to identifying online course policies that erode the existing intellectual agency of contingent faculty, including (1) requiring instructors to include prescribed online activities and readings to ensure course uniformity, (2) preventing instructor access to course materials *the instructor* developed and stored on course content-management systems after the course ends, and (3) exploiting (false) notions of American Disabilities Act compliance in such a manner as make it prohibitively risky for contingent faculty to use texts not already proscribed by the department.

The second portion of this talk will critically consider the tongue-in-cheek schemes proposed by my hypothetical administrator, note which policies *have already been implemented* and how these policies might be adjusted so as to be less offensive to the ideals of academic

freedom, and conclude with a reflection on possible reasons why contingent faculty may remain silent when faced with such policies.