Episode 21: Dr. Noah Shusterman

**KL:** Katie Linder
**NS:** Noah Shusterman

**KL:** You’re listening to *Research in Action*: episode twenty-one.

[intro music]

# Segment 1:

**KL:** Welcome to *Research in Action*, a weekly podcast where you can hear about topics and issues related to research in higher education from experts across a range of disciplines. I’m your host, Dr. Katie Linder, Director of Research at Oregon State University Ecampus.

On this episode, I’m joined by Dr. Noah Shusterman, a historian currently working as an Assistant Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Noah is a specialist in early-modern Europe and the eighteenth-century Atlantic World. He is the author of *Religion and the Politics of Time: Holidays in France from Louis the 14th through Napoleon* and *The French Revolution: Faith, Desire, and Politics*. Noah is now working on a history of militias and citizen-soldiers in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. From 2005 to 2013, Noah worked as a non-tenure-track lecturer and assistant professor at Temple University, teaching "gen-ed" and history courses. His Ph.D. is from UC Berkeley.

Thanks so much for joining me today, Noah.

**NS:** Oh, it’s my pleasure. I’m a big fan of the podcast.

**KL:** So, I should mention to our listeners that we’re currently recording, I am 7 am Pacific Time and you are 10 pm because you are in Hong Kong. You are one of our international guests. So, thank you so much for staying up to record with me until 10 o’clock your time. That’s much appreciated.

**NS:** Oh no, it’s my pleasure.

**KL:** So, Noah, one of the things that *Research in Action* listeners have actually been emailing me about is I’ve had a couple of junior faculty asking about how do you kind of juggle teaching and research responsibilities, especially when you’re just starting out in a new position and maybe you’re trying to get tenure and you’re kind of fresh out of graduate school. And, so, this is one of the things that I wanted to kind of talk with you about because I know that earlier in your career you were really trying to maintain a research identity while you in more of a teaching track appointment. And, so, this is something that you have quite a bit of experience with in terms of juggling some of those things. So, first I thought we could start with you just telling us a little bit about why was keeping research a part of your academic life important to you?

**NS:** Well this was the career I chose, it was what I wanted to do. I always viewed the job of a professor, the career of a professor, as a combination of research and teaching. And I always loved both parts of it. And it never really occurred to me to give up one or the other. You know, people get the jobs that they get, but the way I look at it, it’s really, it’s up to you to decide who you are as a scholar. And, you know, the fact that I wound up in a position that just, that only asked me to teach, didn’t mean that my love of research was gone. Or that, you know, I still had things to say. I still had problems with the way that my field was unfolding that any scholar, you know, wants to correct in their own little way. And, so, it never, you know, it never really occurred to me to stop doing it. And then, you know, I had written a dissertation and I wanted to turn that into a book and I had parts of the dissertation I wanted to turn into articles. Just like, I think, anybody coming out of their Ph.D. and not completely cynical about the whole process would.

**KL:** One of the things that I think is really interesting about your story, Noah, is that, you know, I think a lot of people when they leave graduate school they think they’ll be in their first position and maybe that first position will take them to tenure. And sometimes we think of faculty positions as really long-term. And what you found really was that you had an initial position that was teaching-intensive, but it wasn’t, you know, quite the perfect position for you because you knew that you wanted to do these research projects as well. And I’m wondering if you can talk a little bit about, you know, what it means to kind of enter into that first position out of graduate school, but then also knowing that maybe you’re looking for something different at the same time. So, you’re kind of investing in where you currently are, but also looking to the future. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**NS:** Sure. I mean I think a lot of people wind up in first jobs that they’re wary of for one reason or another, whether it’s because they’re in a teaching position when they want a research position or because, you know, they’re in South Dakota and they’d rather be in Manhattan. And, so, I think a lot of people do that. The things that I look at, you want to, as much as it is a big change from being a graduate student to being a professor and you walk around thinking, “I’m a professor. I’m a professor.” You want to have some level of continuity. You’re going to keep contact with friends that you made during the graduate school, during your graduate school, you’re going to be, you’re still part of the same discipline, and as long as you keep those networks intact, they’re always going to have some way of sort of easing the transition. But keeping you in contact with the sort of things you were thinking about and the activities you were doing when you were in graduate school just as a, which was much more of a sort of research position.

**KL:** One of the things I thought we could talk about is how you kind of strategize to both create and maintain a research pipeline when it wasn’t expected of you. I mean, I think that this is one of the most challenging things where you have to be pretty self-motivated. And this is something I’ve experienced also in the past. I was in an administrative position where I wasn’t required to publish, but it was something I really enjoy doing and writing was something I wanted to keep a part of my life. So, why don’t we chat about that for a little bit? What were some of the things that you did to kind of think about your research pipeline and carve out, you know, space just in your own professional life for that?

**NS:** Well, there were always things that I wanted to be writing about. There’s always, like with a lot of scholars, there’s always more things that I want to write about than that I actually find time to write about. And, so, in that sense, that part of it was never difficult for me. I mean there’s also, you know, I keep writing, I keep researching, because there’s still questions that I’m passionate about and, you know, there’s still, you know, a curiosity, a real desire for knowledge. You do have to think about what sort of research you can and cannot do at any given time. You know, as a historian, my second book was not what you’d call an archival book. I wasn’t going and spending three months, six months over, you know, over in Europe, you know, going through 18th century police archives, which I had been able to do for my dissertation. You know, for other, in other fields it might mean doing something with less field work, with less lab work. But really thinking about, you know, what are the sort of spots in your field where you can still contribute. And once I thought about that and got started on those projects, once I started thinking about what I could and couldn’t do, I guess, once I started forgetting about what I couldn’t do and focusing on what I could do, there was still way more that I could do than I could possibly have time for. And, again, you know, it’s a desire to still be part of my discipline, part of my field, still be communicating with scholars that, you know, whose views I respected and whose feedback I appreciated. And, so, that part, there was always something pulling me towards it. You know, this is sort of a strange analogy perhaps, but it’s like going to the gym or running or exercising of any kind. The people who keep doing it are the people who love doing it. In that sense, that was never a problem for me.

**KL:** Noah, one of the things that I think is really interesting about your story is this idea of choosing not to give up on a part of your academic identity that you want to maintain, even if you don’t necessarily have the external accountability or even the structural support to continue with research. You know that it’s something that you don’t want to give up and you’ve eventually kind of worked your way into a position where more research is possible.

Well, we’re going to take brief break. When we come back, we’ll hear a little bit more from Noah about carving out time for research. Back in a moment.

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# Segment 2:

**KL:** Noah, I think a lot of aspiring researchers who are in a teaching-intensive position will look at other people who are publishing and writing and say, “Well, you don’t have the kind of load that I have.” And this is why I’m really interested in hearing your opinion on time management and carving out time for research because for some time you were teaching on a four-four load. And you started, you know, at a three-three and kind of eventually worked your way up to a four-four and then stayed there. So, I’m wondering if you can talk a little bit about how you made research happen in that kind of teaching load. And I think it could be really inspiring for other people who are in that same position.

**NS:** Sure. The thing is, the first thing is during the semester with all the teaching, you really want to keep contact with your research. You really want to keep contact with your writing. You want to do things as close to daily as possible. You might not be able to pull off seven days a week, but you should be able to pull off at least four or five days a week where each of those days you’re spending at least some time writing or preparing your research. You know, don’t, all the studies say this and I think it’s true too, don’t wait for the big chunks of ten, twelve hour times. That’s just an excuse. Take the time you’ve got and use it as much as you can. One thing I really like to do with each semester, or what I used to have to do, is take a look at what your schedule gives you. Each semester tends to be a little bit different. If you’ve got, if you’re teaching four classes and they’re all on Tuesday and Thursday, you know, maybe give up on Tuesday and Thursday nights as a time when you’re going to pretend to get anything productive done. And, you know, make that time to have fun. Make that time to spend with your family. But then see what else your schedule does have. You know, if there’s a way you can get some work done on the train when you’re commuting in. If there’s, if there’s times, if there are chunks of time when you can really, some people like to schedule writing time the way that people would schedule teaching time or office hours. And look at what that time is, and make use of it. And if you let, if you just try to do it once a week, if you just try to do it when you have big chunks of time it really, in my experience and I think a lot of other people’s experiences, you don’t, it doesn’t work. Your thoughts aren’t fresh, you don’t remember where you were, you might not even, you might get to your computer and not even remember which file is the right one. So, sticking with that as close to, you know, if you can spend 15, 20 minutes on it one day, it’s not ideal, but it’s a lot better than letting that day go without touching base with your research at all. That’s the first thing.

**KL:** I think you raise a really important point, which is, you know, every term is different. And if your teaching schedule changes or, you know, you get put on a new committee or something like that. I have seen a lot of writers get really hung up because they’ll have one schedule that’s working really well, and then all of the sudden it’s not working as well and they can’t figure out why. And it’s because their schedule changed. And, so, you know, that 7 am, you know, morning writing time just isn’t valuable for them anymore because they’re trying to get to a 9 o’clock class or something like that. And I think that, you know, your point about every term, looking at your calendar and figuring out, “Ok, what is it this term?” You know, is it going to be evenings? Is it going to be mornings? Is it going to be my lunch hour? What is going to be that time that I can carve out? Is a really significant thing to do for people, and it’s easy to lose sight that your schedule can change over time and that can really impact your research and your writing.

**NS:** Oh yeah, definitely. I mean semesters will repeat themselves, but almost always your spring is going to be very different from your fall. And you’re going to have to adjust to that. But it doesn’t matter what job you have, nobody has the, you know, can just wait for the perfect schedule. But when you’ve got four classes to fit over, you know, however many times they meet each week, you really do just have to look and see what’s there and take advantage of what there is.

**KL:** That is such an excellent point. I also love what you raised about, you know, keeping the research fresh. One of the concrete things that I’ve seen people do is just keep the document open on their computer and have it minimized if that’s what it needs to be. But at least it’s there and at the very minimum, you know, each day you can open up that document and read through it, read through your notes, or read through something you’ve written, you know, in the past couple days. And it just keeps it on your mind, it keeps it kind of percolating in your brain. And I think that, you know, the point you raised about just not losing sight of it is a really important thing. And trying to keep it kind of in the forefront of just something you’re resonating on in the midst of doing other kinds of things.

**NS:** Yeah, and the percolating in your brain part I think is huge. I will get ideas for something I’m writing on when I’m not writing, you know. When I’m out, you know, out on a walk, or out doing errands. But that’s not going to happen if I haven’t looked at the document for a week. You know, it’s only going to happen if I’m somehow engaged in it.

**KL:** Absolutely. I’m wondering if you have other tips for people who are limited in terms of their time for research. Are there other things you found to be helpful?

**NS:** Like I said, some people like to schedule writing time. That worked for me for a little while until it stopped working. Just in terms of scheduling, every time you can do two things at once, you should. You know, if you can, commute time is my big thing. You never want commute time to be just commute time if you can avoid it. I mean this is part of why I discovered your podcast is because I listen to all kinds of podcasts when commuting as a way to, you know, to be somewhat productive. But whether it’s, you know, if you can combine your exercise with your commuting, if you combine your writing, you know, if you bring a laptop onto the train. Anything like that really helps. But then, and I don’t know if you’ve got other questions, there’s definitely ways to approach teaching and grading that I think can really open up time in ways that I think people might not realize.

**KL:** Let’s talk a little bit about that. What strategies have you found to be reasonable about the time that you spend on your teaching preps? And I think especially for new courses, particularly junior faculty who are coming into roles where they are teaching courses for the first time and are trying to do new preps on top of their research responsibilities. What are some of the ideas that you have?

**NS:** Well, one thing is that teaching prep, preparing courses, especially preparing new courses like you said, they will take up as much time as you give them. And so there is that sort of balance between wanting to do a good job and not wanting to overdo it. You know, this, how, so you’ve got to do something else first. You know, if your plan for the day, if you’ve got a new class to teach and your plan for the day is to get some writing done and to prepare this new class, you’ve got to do the writing first or the teaching will take, or the lecture writing, will take the whole time. That is just a very practical thing that I’ve learned for myself. Because you’re right, a lecture is never perfect. But as professors, as teachers I should say, I don’t think we should overestimate ourselves and what we do. We should, you know, you need to do, in my view, we need to be good teachers. You know, if you’re not interested in teaching, it’s a strange career choice to have made to have become a professor. However, much, you know, people like research. And you need to be a good teacher, but you don’t need to be a perfect teacher and your students don’t need you to be a perfect teacher. If you miss some little detail, there’s a good chance that the students are going to figure it out on their own anyway. So, as long as you set your goal as being, you know, as being, as doing a good job, but not requiring yourself to do some sort of perfect job, I think that really is, for me, very liberating. Especially in situations where I can lead a class that’s more of a discussion class and let the students figure things out on their own. Let the students learn from each other, let the students teach each other. I think that, you know, a lot of professors want to teach the students everything they can, but I don’t think that’s the right way to go pedagogically. I think that that’s, you know, just us overestimating ourselves.

**KL:** That’s a great point. I think that as we’re kind of planning and preparing our teaching, the other thing we need to leave a little room for too is spontaneity. And if you over-plan and over-prepare, sometimes you can lose that too. And some of the best learning moments are in those spontaneous moments as well.

**NS:** Oh yeah, and if you’re teaching your own topic, you want to have a discussion class on at least some level because they’re going to think of things that you haven’t.

**KL:** Absolutely. One of things that you mentioned too a little while back is this idea of something working for you until it doesn’t anymore. And I think that that’s another great point that you’ve raise. Is that we have these kind of strategies and things that we do, both with our writing and our teaching. And maybe they only work for a brief period of time, and then because of scheduling or our class format changes or we move from face-to-face to online or, you know, something, what used to work for us doesn’t work anymore. And I think that, you know, you raise just this really important point about being open to that and being open to this exploration of new strategies or tools that could help you in that situation, whether it be with your teaching or with your research. So, I think that’s just an excellent point.

We’re going to take another brief break, then we’ll come back and hear a little bit more from Noah. Back in a moment.

[music]

# Segment 3:

**KL:** Noah, one of the things that our listeners might be kind of interested in, I know I certainly am, is that you are an international scholar. And you have been working as a researcher and a scholar outside of the US for a couple of years now. And this is something that I think, you know, more and more scholars are starting to consider. There’s more opportunities to do international research and I’m wondering if you can just talk a little bit about your experiences with that. What led you to move to another country? And, let’s just start there. What kind of was the starting point for you to move to Hong Kong?

**NS:** My starting point is very different. I actually sought out Hong Kong. I wanted to come here specifically because my wife has ties here and we were already raising my son to, our son I should say, to be bilingual. And I was always on the lookout for ways to really reinforce that. Having said that, I mean, it’s been a great adventure. You know, it’s definitely an element of adventure, of exoticism if I can use that word, to my life that I had never anticipated growing up. I didn’t think I was going to be somebody that lived in the far East and worked here and, you know, here I am studying Chinese characters every night and trying to find out how this city works.

**KL:** Are there any major differences or even similarities that you’re finding that are, you know, surprising to you between kind of the US academic system and where you are now?

**NS:** It’s more similar than you would expect in terms of, you know, my work process, you know, I’m giving classes and I’m doing grading and there is, it doesn’t feel like a, how do I, I guess the best way to put this is, this is still the job I was trained for over here. There’s no reason to think that, you know, I would be doing better if I had been trained here or even if I’d been trained in England, which, you know, England is the nation that has the strongest ties historically to Hong Kong. So, in that sense, things are more similar than I might have expected. The students are a little bit more, a little bit closer to the stereotype than I would have anticipated. It’s hard to get critical feedback from the students sometimes. It’s a little bit harder to get them to discuss than it is a classroom full of rowdy Americans. But, I also, I guess, the one thing is if you’re teaching foreign students in English, there is always a part of me that knows I’m not getting all that they have to say for, you know, for 90% of my students. You know, there’s the 10% that comes in and speaks English as well as I did at that age. But for 90% of my students, you know, they have more to say and just too much difficulty in actually saying it in real-time during class.

**KL:** That’s very interesting. I’m wondering if you can talk about any particular challenges that you’ve found. I mean I can imagine one is maybe time zone differences if you’re still actively engaging with scholars in the US or other parts of the world. We had to definitely think, put our thinking caps on for how to record this particular podcast episode. But, you know, other than time zone differences, are there things that you notice that are particularly challenging or just when you have kind of online tools and resources, is it fine?

**NS:** For what I do, the libraries are lacking. And, so, you know, this is obviously something that is so much more doable today than it would have been even 10 years ago with the 2006 internet. There’s been so many improvements since then, let alone, you know, if I tried to do this in 1996 when, you know, when there really wasn’t anything online. It would have been, getting the research done that I’m doing now wouldn’t have been possible. But there’s, you know, if a book that was written, you know, a book that was published in 1850 or, you know, 1910 that isn’t very good, you know, but somehow still has something useful for me, it’s not going to be here. It’s not going to be anywhere in Asia. And, so, yeah that’s a challenge. But that, I would say, you know, that’s the biggest part of it. You know, in a way in Hong Kong, you’re less isolated than you might be in more rural parts of the United States. You know, you’re less isolated than you could be in a lot of the United States actually. It’s still a big city, it’s still, it’s got its own sorts of resources. And most, you know, if you’re in a place like Hong Kong or Beijing or Singapore, you’re still going to have a big collection of intellectuals with whom to interact, Western intellectuals and non-Western intellectuals. And in that sense, it’s very vibrant, you know, it’s very fun to be here.

**KL:** That sounds exciting. It sounds like you can do some good work. I’m wondering too if living in Hong Kong has changed your strategy about conferences or other forms of research travel. If you’re doing more kind of international engagements than maybe you’d done previously. If you come back to the US for conferences. How does that work for you?

**NS:** Overall I like my employer, but the last time I did an international conference I came back under budget and my bursar found some technicalities to not reimburse me for it. So, I wasn’t, this is more of an issue than it should be. Sorry to criticize you, my employer. But that might be the end of me and international conferences. Because it’s, you know, to go into, you know, flying to the United States for a conference was already tough, but coming back and finding out that my university didn’t have my back, was a little bit rough.

**KL:** I think that’s a really.

**NS:** I wasn’t going to bring that up, but.

**KL:** It’s an interesting point too, though, because I think a lot of conferences now are getting into the mode of livestreaming, of trying to bring in people via online, you know, platforms. Partly because of this issue, that it’s harder to do international travel and yet we are doing more and more international research collaborations. So, I think that’s kind of, you know, I wonder if this is a trend that’s going to continue to grow is we’ll see conferences that are really trying to put a lot of their kind of presentations and resources online, so that people can engage from all over the world.

**NS:** Yeah and I think people have very different views of this, some people, depending largely on whether you like travel or not. People who, if you like getting on and off of airplanes, then being in Asia and wanting to do conferences is very doable. The flights are long, but the airport here is good. It’s very easy to get to and from the airport, and that’s going to be true in, you know, if you were, I mentioned Beijing and Singapore. It’s certainly true of Tokyo. For me, that, you know, just personally, my days of enjoying airplane travel are kind of behind me. But, certainly, for people pondering this if what you, I would not, if you’re worried that you would miss conferences because you moved to Asia, that’s not something I would worry about. The opportunities are there and Asia knows that sometimes you have to leave Asia for business. And Asia is sort of organized around that in a way that the United States isn’t.

**KL:** That’s a really interesting point. I mean I think that one of the concerns that people might have about being an international researcher, scholar, or academic is that they would go somewhere and just lose connection with people. And, but the other thing I think we forget is we have these online tools for collaboration and you build up an entirely new network at the place where you go. So, I’m wondering if you can talk a little bit about that. What kind of research community have you found at your university in Hong Kong?

**NS:** Well, as a historian of the West in Hong Kong, we sort of band together. I mean most of the people, there’s a bunch of universities here and so even though I think at this point I’m the only straight up Western historian, historian of the West, working in my department, there’s other departments across Hong Kong where we sort of, we all know each other, we interact, we get together sometimes. It’s got a sort of ex-patty feel. Now, shame on us for not immersing ourselves more in Chinese historiography and taking advantage of the strengths that Hong Kong itself has, but, you know, we sort of, you know, we make do, you know, sort of make the contacts and make the community that we can. And there’s people here, you know, it’s big city life. It’s excess of resources, there’s, you know, there are, I mean, there are good historians here that I like, that I’ve met once, and then I’ve never had, you know, we just haven’t had time to get back in touch because there’s other people we get to talk to too.

**KL:** It sounds very similar to the US experience in that way.

**NS:** Yeah, yeah.

**KL:** Well, thank you so much Noah for taking the time, for staying up late to talk with me today for the *Research in Action* podcast. It was wonderful to hear about your experiences.

**NS:** Thanks, thanks for having me, and above all thanks for putting this whole podcast on the air. It’s been a real eye-opener for me, listening to other scholars talk about their research tips and their research advice. And I hope I was able to give something back.

**KL:** Well, thank you again. Thank you also to our listeners for joining us for this week’s episode of *Research in Action*. I’m Katie Linder and we’ll be back next week with a new episode.

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# Bonus Clip #1:

[music]

**KL:** In this first bonus clip for episode twenty-one of the *Research in Action* podcast, Dr. Noah Shusterman discusses using vacation breaks to get ahead with your research. Take a listen.

Noah, one of the things that I know that some researchers, myself included, have done, especially in jobs where research is not required, is to use vacation time to our advantage. And to take breaks from kind of the regular schedule of the academic year to really try to push through some projects. And, as you’ve mentioned, you know, certainly those kind of binge writing times are not always the best. Daily practice is usually preferred for productivity. But I think that vacation times can also be a really important tool for researchers. So, I’m wondering if that’s something that you’ve used in the past, if you have recommendations for people who are trying to use their vacation times to move forward some of their writing and research.

**NS:** Oh, sure. And my first piece of advice would be to get the vacation started as soon as you can. Get your grades in as early as you can, don’t let that linger. You’re not going to actually spend any different amount of time on it. My goal used to always be to get the grades in on the last day of classes. And that really freed up a lot of time for me. If you’re giving a final exam, that doesn’t work, but most of the classes I taught there was no reason to give a final exam. I would get the grades in early. And then you really want to hit the ground running. And look at, again, look at your schedule. American fall semesters are very strange, you know; you have these semesters where you’ve got, you don’t really, you have one or two classes after Thanksgiving. You can’t really assign your students a term paper to do over Thanksgiving. You know, you can get your, you can get your grades in when it’s barely December. And then, you know, take a few days, family time. And then you can really get, if you can’t get any work done in that chunk of time that’s basically all of December and part of January, well you should be able to get some significant work done then and have family time. And summer, same thing. Get started early. One thing I found is that August doesn’t really count when it comes to summer vacations. By the time, certainly by mid-August, you’re getting emails from your department, you’re having to turn in the syllabus, there’s going to be meetings and orientations. Summer is all about getting work done in May and June. And it’s going to be, it’s hard to make up for that if you don’t, if you don’t get off the ground quickly.

**KL:** I think you make such a great point about getting started, hitting the ground running. And it sounds like something that could be really important to that is just having a plan. Having something that you know you want to work on and maybe some concrete goals for what you want to accomplish during that vacation, so that when you are ready to get started you know exactly what you’re going to be working on.

**NS:** Exactly.

**KL:** Well, thank you so much for sharing a little bit about your tips about writing during vacations.

You’ve just heard a bonus clip from episode twenty-one of the *Research in Action* podcast with Dr. Noah Shusterman discussing using vacation breaks to get ahead with your research. Thanks for listening.

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# Bonus Clip #2:

[music]

**KL:** In this second bonus clip for episode twenty-one of the *Research in Action* podcast Dr. Noah Shusterman shares some of his tips for efficient grading. Take a listen.

Noah, one of the things I think is really challenging for people who are juggling teaching and research is grading. It can take quite a bit of time, it’s not something that we always look forward to, and it seems like there’s something to grade most of the time that could be taking up time that might be used for research. I’m wondering if you have any tips or strategies for efficient and effective grading that makes, you know, more time for your research.

**NS:** Sure, I do. It’s something I’ve thought about a lot. You want to keep the work flow pretty steady. Give your students assignments early, give them, don’t, you know, try not to give, try not to create any time in the semester when there’s going to be a huge crunch of grading that you have to do. Because then you will have to take time away from your research. Stagger your assignments if you’ve got a lot of different classes. Make sure that all the classes don’t have papers due at the same time. Get the papers back quick. Among other things, I hate the feeling of having one set of assignments coming in when I haven’t gotten the previous one back out. And when you’re giving feedback, again, don’t overestimate yourself. And in this case, I would even say don’t overestimate your students. You know, if this is an undergrad writing a paper for you, it’s not, you know, it’s not peer-review, it’s not, you don’t need the ten page single-spaced feedback. When you’ve got a paper, you know, read it, make sure it’s, you know, read the whole thing, make sure, you know, they’re not cheating or anything like that, and then, you know, tell them, you know, tell them what they did well, tell them what they didn’t do well. Give them some advice for, you know, one or two, maybe three pieces of advice for how they can improve their writing, and then you’re done. They’re not going to really process more feedback than that. If you give too much feedback, they’ll just, you know, it just kind of gets lost in the fog. I was saying, I mean this is, this sounds like a cheap and easy way out, but it’s, because it’s so much quicker for the professor, but I really do think it’s the more effective, clear, simple message to give a student, especially a student who is still learning how to write.

**KL:** Well, one of the things we know too is that too much feedback can actually be demotivating to students because they look at a paper full of red ink and think, “I can’t do this.” And I think you make a really good point that we need to be intentional about giving students the amount of feedback that they can really take in and process and do something with, rather than just everything single thing we see that could potentially warrant feedback or revision. And that can take some strategizing, but I also think that the more things you grade the more patterns you see and the quicker and it can become. Rubrics are obviously another really helpful thing in terms of grading efficiency as well. So, is that something that you’ve used before with grading for students, any kind of rubric?

**NS:** No, but this is a conversation I had with many colleagues who swore by rubrics. I felt like what I needed was just some sort of clipboard because, yeah, you wind up saying the same thing over and over, and you just want to be able to, you know, like grab one thing from a, you know, from a previous set of paper’s comments and sort of move it over. Because, yeah, you’re right, you see similar patterns, you see similar things. I have colleagues that swear by rubrics. I’m not anti-rubric, I just never, I never saw the need for them. But I understand that it does give a certain clarity to students. And, look, what you were saying before about students finding too much feedback demotivating, I find it demotivating, so I’m not surprised that my students do or that anybody’s students do.

**KL:** That’s an excellent point. For our listeners who might be interested in thinking about rubrics as one way for grading efficiency to make more time for research, I’ll include a link to one of our previous guest’s book. Dannelle Stevens has a book called *Introduction to Rubrics*. So, we’ll make sure to put that in the show notes for people who might be interested.

Alright, thanks so much for adding in these extra comments.

**NS:** Oh, it was my pleasure.

**KL:** You’ve just heard a bonus clip from episode twenty-one of the *Research in Action* podcast with Dr. Noah Shusterman sharing some of his tips for efficient grading. Thanks for listening.

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