



Teaching a Modern Professional
Responsibility Course with
Innovative Learning Tools



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SUMMARY

Requiring Study Center activities in the *Connected eBook* is a simple way to incorporate formative assessment using digital learning tools. Through the review and completion of activities, students have a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, setting them up for increased success in the course.

Background

Katerina Lewinbuk, Professor of Law, is an Aspen Publishing author; the second edition of her Professional Responsibility text *Connecting Ethics and Practice* published in 2019, and in Fall 2020, the text was upgraded to a *Connected eBook* on Casebook Connect. This meant her students would have access to an enhanced digital textbook, study aids, and a suite of learning tools designed to increase student success.

According to Professor Lewinbuk, “It’s a new era in law school. We have to give our students opportunities to test their understanding of course material throughout the semester.” Lewinbuk sees the *Connected eBook* Study Center as a simple, straightforward way to incorporate formative assessment into her course and increase student success. She believes, “If students are diligent in completing each chapter’s activities, they will be in great shape to do well in the course.”

EDUCATOR

Katerina Lewinbuk

SCHOOL

South Texas College of Law
Houston, Houston, Texas

COURSE

Professional Responsibility

COURSE MATERIALS

Connecting Ethics and Practice: A Lawyer’s Guide to Professional Responsibility by Lewinbuk with access to *Connected eBook*

“If you don’t require something as part of your course and overall assessment, students are unlikely to find the time to do it.”

*– Katerina Lewinbuk,
South Texas College of Law Houston*

Implementation

Lewinbuk instructs her students to purchase the textbook with access to the *Connected eBook*. They may choose the digital version or the print text with digital access. To get students familiarized with the technology, she includes a few onboarding videos in the first introductory module within Canvas, the school’s Learning Management System. She also plays a short explanatory video on the first day of class.

Lewinbuk feels that, “If you don’t require something as part of your course and overall assessment, students are unlikely to find the time to do it.” With that in mind, after a chapter is finished in class, Lewinbuk requires her students to complete all of the related Study Center activities within the *Connected eBook*, including multiple choice questions, flash cards, and short answer questions. Lewinbuk estimates it should take 20-45 minutes depending on the chapter. Due dates are posted on the course calendar, and so as not to cause additional stress, students have a couple of weeks to upload screenshots of their completed work to Canvas. Students are expected to submit all related Study Center work by each deadline in order to remain in good academic standing, otherwise a penalty on the final grade may be incurred. As an incentive, Lewinbuk includes a few questions on the midterm and final that resemble questions from the Study Center and the students know to expect it.

One component of Lewinbuk’s course is a group presentation (completed in class or via a recorded video) on a recent issue related to modern legal ethics and professional responsibility. Lewinbuk emphasizes the importance of law students needing to develop their oral speaking ability. She encourages her students to check the News section on the *Connected eBook* to find potential topics of interest for their presentations. Shares Lewinbuk, “It’s a good place to start and is updated regularly.”

Impact

“It provided an opportunity for further class discussion – it really bolstered the students’ active learning.”

*– Katerina Lewinbuk,
South Texas College of Law Houston*

Requiring Study Center activities helps Lewinbuk to be more connected to her students’ needs and their questions. Instead of everyone doing their own thing, she knows exactly what they are reviewing and how they are performing on a specific topic. If there is a specific question that students have, they can point to it directly. For example, Lewinbuk shares how one Study Center answer contradicted a case discussed in class. “The students were focused enough to see the discrepancy, and it provided an opportunity for further class discussion – it really bolstered the students’ active learning.”

The Insights section gives Lewinbuk a bigger picture of how the class is doing as a whole, but she adds, “I think it is even more helpful for my students. It allows them to see how they’re doing and what topics they need to work on.” Overall, Lewinbuk shares, “None of my students have complained about having to complete Study Center work. They seem to find it very helpful.”

Lewinbuk sees the *Connected eBook* as a workstation, with everything in one place. She explains, “The outline tool, the case brief tool, and all the other study resources are something for a new generation of law students – it ups their learning game.”



Conclusion

Although not all law school educators may want to require formative assessment, Lewinbuk sees it as nothing but a positive. She shares, “By the time finals come around, students realize how much they have reviewed over the course of the semester.” Lewinbuk has observed students doing better on their exams than in the past, and while that may be in part to the Study Center activities from the *Connected eBook*, in general, the pandemic has challenged Lewinbuk to make her course as modern and interactive as possible.

She concludes, “Teaching Professional Responsibility in this new reality, the material needs to be relatable and at students’ fingertips. I believe in modern, innovative teaching. I wrote my book to be modern and innovative, and I want my teaching to be the same way.”

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