Did I Miss Anything?
By Tom Wayman

Nothing. When we realized you weren't here
we sat with our hands folded on our desks
in silence, for the full two hours

   Everything. I gave an exam worth
   40 percent of the grade for this term
   and assigned some reading due today
   on which I'm about to hand out a quiz
   worth 50 percent

Nothing. None of the content of this course
has value or meaning
Take as many days off as you like:
any activities we undertake as a class
I assure you will not matter either to you or me
and are without purpose

   Everything. A few minutes after we began last time
   a shaft of light suddenly descended and an angel
   or other heavenly being appeared
   and revealed to us what each woman or man must do
   to attain divine wisdom in this life and
   the hereafter
   This is the last time the class will meet
   before we disperse to bring the good news to all people
   on earth.

Nothing. When you are not present
how could something significant occur?

   Everything. Contained in this classroom
   is a microcosm of human experience
   assembled for you to query and examine and ponder
   This is not the only place such an opportunity has been
gathered

   but it was one place

   And you weren't here