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Lander University's

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White Board

Become An Effective Teacher & Save Your Valuable Teaching Time and Energy

Center for Effective Undergraduate Teaching (864) 388-8426

Student Preparation

CLASSROOM SITUATION

ALTHOUGH FACULTY members are typically trained in a specialized field and are most comfortable teaching that specialized material to students majoring in their field, they are often required to teach general education courses with a broader scope to students who are NOT majors in the field. Whereas majors are more motivated to read the textbook and keep up with the content of the course, students who are taking a course to fulfill a general education requirement may have little inherent interest in the subject matter and little motivation to do more than cram for a test the night before it is given.

Faculty who are teaching courses for non-majors may feel frustrated by the lack of student responses to questions posed in class or, in general, their lack of preparation for class. From the student point of view, there are many factors that inhibit them from contributing to class discussions:

- Class size in general education courses is often large (that is, more than 50 students in the classroom), which makes students fearful to talk in class. Cultural and other personal factors also inhibit students from contributing.
- Students may feel intimidated by the subject matter; for example, most non-science majors are fearful of taking science courses and don't feel they have the skills they need.
- Students usually have not completed the reading assignment and have no prior knowledge about the topics being discussed. Even if students have read the assignment, they may not have understood much of what they read.
- Students in a general education course may feel unmotivated to contribute to the class because they have no inherent interest in the material.

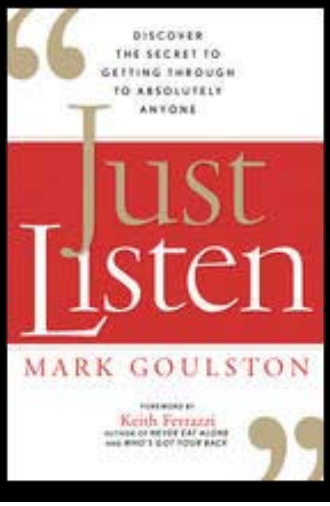
EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES
ONE SOLUTION

Course management software can be used to require students to complete homework assignments prior to coming to class. Course materials are delivered online, where students answer questions and receive their scores. Benefits of this technique include:

- The materials can be accessed using any network browsing software and is platform independent.
- The course management software can be used to set time restrictions. This means that the instructor can determine the time window during which students can submit their answers. If the instructor sets the assignment to "turn off" at the time when their class starts, students must have read the material and submitted their answers to questions about the material prior to coming to class. This technique assures the instructor that the students have interacted with the material and have some knowledge about the topic when they arrive to class.
- Online materials can include color images and other graphics. Online materials can also include links to external web sites with additional information. In science, some of these external sites contain real-world data presented in "real time"; that is, as it's happening. The instructor can also change aspects of the assignment when there are new developments in the field. These aspects give online materials

see **PREPARATION**, Page 2

BOOK



JUST LISTEN: DISCOVER THE SECRET TO GETTING THROUGH TO ABSOLUTELY ANYONE
Author: Mark Goulston

"Drawing on his experience as a psychiatrist, business consultant, and FBI hostage-negotiation trainer, Goulston provides brilliant yet doable techniques for getting through to others... This book transcends the self-help category by promoting real communication."
--Library Journal

- Product Review - Amazon.com
Hardcover: 256 pages
Publisher: AMACOM (September 15, 2009)
ISBN-10: 0814414036
ISBN-13: 978-0814414033

Classes Begin - Jan. 10
Martin Luther King Day - Jan. 17
Faculty Meeting - Jan. 26

WHITE BOARD
2010-11 Publication Dates
First Monday of the Month

September 6	March 7
October 4	April 4
November 1	May 2
December 6	June 6
January 4	July 5
February 7	August 1

Newsletters Archive HERE

Center for Effective Undergraduate Teaching
Carnel Learning Center, Suite106.
Phone: 388-8426

Faculty Preparations for the First Day

EVEN THE MOST experienced professors with extremely well regarded classes say they always feel a bit nervous the first day, even if they have taught the same class for as long as ten years.

1. Being prepared is perhaps the best antidote for anxiety - do not leave the lecture preparation until the last minute
2. Visit the room where you will teach. Scout things out to see if you will have everything that you need to give your lecture effectively.
3. Get any equipment (digital projectors, overhead projectors, transparencies, etc.) or supplies that you may need for the course. Practice using the equipment.
4. Get information about the course. This will increase your confidence. Talk to other professors who taught the course. Talk with them early to get their help and advice on designing and teaching your course. For new faculty, this will also help get the expectations and level of expertise of the students in addition to warning you of potential pitfalls. Having an understanding of the course before the first day will help derail any unforeseen discoveries about your students.
5. Scanning a class roster will familiarize you with your audience and make them seem less like strangers; it will put some names to the faces.
6. If possible, physically rehearse your first lecture. Do this in the actual venue using all your equipment if you can. As a minimum, have your introduction prepared well.
7. Make an emergency supply kit containing anything you think you may need to give your lecture. This may contain chalk, microphones, spare bulbs for the projector, eraser, overhead markers, and important cables.
8. Expect the unexpected. Be prepared to give your lecture if something fails. For example, if you have overheads or a PowerPoint presentation have a fall back plan in case your computer or projector fails. (For most PowerPoint lectures, simply having a copy of your slides can let you resort to a "chalk talk" using them as your lecture notes. It is okay not to cover the same amount of material as originally planned.)
9. How long is my lecture? This is very challenging for beginning lecturers. Here are some simple strategies for timing a first lecture: Dissect or outline the material into key fundamental concepts that can be presented separately. If applicable, include some problems or examples that will supplement the material or that can be excluded.

Dr. Ray Esquerra, Overcoming Anxiety, Orientation to College Teaching, San Fransisco State University, 2003, [http://oct.sfsu.edu/implementation/anxiety/index.html], December 15, 2010

PREPARATION

Continuing from Page 1

more currency than a textbook.

- The course management software offers many scoring options. Question types such as multiple choice can be automatically graded by the software, a critical time savings for instructors of large-sized classes. Instructors can also choose short-answer-type questions that require them to do the scoring. An advantage of this question type is that instructors can read some of the answers that students have submitted prior to the class period and be better able to direct the in-class discussions.
- Online submission of answers and online scoring is logistically easy because there is no paperwork. Students do not submit paper copies and instructors do not need to return paper copies. Students can view their scores online anytime they want, and can view the course materials anytime they want (even if they can no longer submit answers to questions).
- Most students are computer-savvy and enjoy doing homework on the computer. Most of them feel it is a more modern instructional approach and that it makes learning more interesting and fun. The computer-assisted learning technique can be a "carrot" that draws students into the material.
- By using a distance-learning tool in a class that has regular meetings, the instructor can better direct the students' out-of-class time by requiring very specific student responses to questions.
- The technique helps to implement the learning cycle by providing an exploratory phase (students explore real-world data and make observations), prior to figuring out the concepts behind the observations. This approach can also be called "discovery-based learning", because students first examine evidence and, through their observations, discover the concepts. Too often, new information is presented in an anti-discovery sequence, where students are first given the concepts and then the examples. With that approach, students have no opportunity to construct their own knowledge. The discovery-based approach is a better model of the process whereby new knowledge is constructed.

In-class follow up is important, so that students will feel that the homework assignments are an integral part of the course. An appropriate way to begin the class is to ask students a question about the material in their homework assignment. To assure participation, students are asked to first confer with their neighbor (students in adjacent seats), and then students are selected to provide answers. The evidence from the assignment is discussed and used to develop the concepts that underlie the observations.

CREATING ACTIVITIES

Complete these activities to develop online homework assignments for your course:

1. Identify the learning objectives for your course. It is important that the homework assignments you develop reflect your learning objectives.
2. You cannot design homework assignments for all topics in your course, but choose topics for which you can obtain images and data, and that have relevance to your students.
3. Once you have chosen a topic, select four or five images that illustrate aspects of the topic. Web searches can help to locate appropriate images. If you incorporate a link to an external site, make sure that the site is easy to navigate and not too busy. Provide students with very clear instructions about what they are to view.
4. Once you have selected images, write a series of questions that refer to the images. It is usually best to have each question refer to just one image. Make the questions short and as straightforward as possible. It is very difficult to write unambiguous questions (remember the students are working on their own) and you will probably have to refine them after the first time you use them.
5. After you assign the homework, follow up in class and ask students to provide feedback to questions about the homework.

Dr. Karen Grove, (Professor, Geosciences, San Francisco State University), Student Preparation, Orientation to College Teaching, Center for the Enhancement of Teaching, [http://oct.sfsu.edu/implementation/studentprep/index.html] November 10, 2010