A GUIDE FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS

James H. Korn, Mary Stephen, and Jason Sikorski

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An earlier version of this e-book was published in 2010 on the Society for the Teaching of Psychology website and was written specifically for psychology teachers. This version has been expanded to apply to all areas of teaching, including the humanities, arts, sciences, and professions.
Unit 1

Introduction

Welcome! You will be working electronically to prepare for one of the most challenging and rewarding of all human activities – teaching.

The Philosophy of this Guide

Teaching is an extremely complex activity. Those of us who begin to think that we are pretty good at it often are humbled by our failures in the classroom, and even experienced teachers realize that there always is more to learn. While this Guide has been designed for new teachers (graduate students and less experienced faculty), teachers at any level may find it’s content to be helpful. We also hope that instructors new to teaching a course on teaching will find the Guide a useful as an alternative or supplement to a traditional textbook on teaching.

The general philosophy of the program contained in this Guide is based on two ideas: First, all elements of teaching are inter-related, and second, one's personal philosophy of teaching provides the basis for how an individual thinks about teaching and does as a teacher in and out of the classroom. That is why we begin in Unit 2 with the development of the teaching philosophy and ask you to continue to revise that document as we go through the following units. Your beliefs about teaching will frequently be challenged by the decisions you make about plans, methods, and assessment. Consequently you must revise either what you believe or what you do or both. This can happen for the experienced teacher as well as for graduate students preparing to teach their first course.
The inter-related nature of teaching will be apparent in our frequent requests that you examine the links between various aspects of your teaching, for example, how your course objectives are related to student assessment. The process of our program is linear and logical. However, that is not the only way that teachers develop their courses, and in many cases, not the primary way, so you will find that sometimes as you go through the guide you will be asked to take the perspective of an artist and at other times, a scientist. The process used in this Guide will require your active participation. Each unit will include narrative commentary combined with learning activities, critical thinking interruptions, and suggestions for outside reading. The specific objectives for each unit support the following general goals: Develop a personal philosophy of teaching.

- Use the principles of course planning to design a course.
- Develop and practice teaching skills, including lecturing, classroom and online discussion management, and student assessment.
- Become aware of the literature on teaching and the resources available to support your teaching.
- Develop a plan for your continuing professional development as a teacher, including development of a teaching portfolio.

The last goal reinforces the fact that teaching is a profession, and like other professions it requires education and training that begins in graduate school and continues throughout one’s career. Unfortunately, many graduate programs provide little or no preparation for someone interested in teaching in higher education. This Guide is intended to begin to fill that gap. Involvement in a profession also includes joining the relevant professional organizations, attending professional meetings, and working on committees, which may eventually evolve into
a leadership role. It also means subscribing to teaching journals, reading books on teaching, and contributing your own research and ideas to the literature. Examples of professional organizations include: The Society for the Teaching of Psychology, National Council of Teachers of English, National Science Teachers Association, American Educational Research Association, and American Society for Engineering Education. The US Department of Education has created a list of educational associations and organizations that you may find helpful.

Teaching is a generic skill that is used in a variety of non-academic settings. For example, clinical and organizational psychologists often are engaged in training activities. In medical settings teaching is done in "grand rounds" format or when providing information and directions to patients. Professionals in business and engineering make presentations to groups. Even if you do not see your future professional role as an academic, most of the objectives of our program will assist you with these alternative forms of teaching.

This is the second version of this book. The first version was written specifically for psychology teachers. The second version takes the ideas and methods presented in the first version and generalizes them to apply to all areas of teaching, including the humanities, arts, sciences, and professions.

Your first learning activity.

Take about five minutes to think about your personal goals for this program. Write your goals down.

If this were a “live” course, we would ask you to exchange your list of goals with another student in the class. You will find this program most beneficial if you
find someone to serve as a surrogate classmate to help you reflect on your work throughout this program.

The following quotation demonstrates how teaching can be both a source of joy and a source of frustration; both inspirational and humbling.

**We Teach Who We Are**

I am a teacher at heart, and there are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy. When my students and I discover uncharted territory to explore, when the pathway out of a thicket opens up before us, when our experience is illuminated by the lightning-life of the mind – then teaching is the finest work I know.

But at other moments, the classroom is so lifeless or painful or confused – and I am so powerless to do anything about it – that my claim to be a teacher seems a transparent sham. Then the enemy is everywhere; in those students from some alien planet, in that subject I thought I knew, and in the personal pathology that keeps me earning my living this way. What a fool I was to imagine that I had mastered this occult art – harder to divine than tea leaves and impossible for mortals to do even passably well! (Palmer, P., 1998, p. 1.)
Your Guides

James H. Korn, Ph.D. (Jim)

I received my Ph.D. from Carnegie-Mellon University (1965) in physiological psychology. I served on the faculty at CMU until 1974, when I came to Saint Louis University as department chair. The introductory course and History of Psychology are the courses I taught most often, but I also taught courses in adult development, program evaluation, and qualitative research methods.

My commitment to developing teachers began during the tumultuous days of the late 1960s. Now I am retired. For most of my career I have been actively involved in the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, serving as President in 1988-89. My hobbies are gardening, walking, reading, and playing with my grandchildren.

Mary Stephen, Ph.D.

I received my Ph.D. from Saint Louis University (1997) in foundations of education, following earlier degrees and extensive graduate work in mathematics and computer science. In 2000, after over 30 years of teaching mathematics, computer science and instructional technology in higher education, I joined the staff of the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence at Saint Louis University where I had the opportunity to work with faculty members interested in expanding their teaching expertise especially in the area of technology integration, and with graduate students pursuing the Center’s Certificate in University Teaching Skills. I retired as director of the Center in 2011, and I am currently a part-time visiting professor at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville where I am involved in research on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
(STEM) education. My hobbies include travel, reading and grandchildren’s sporting events.

**Jason Sikorski, Ph.D.**

I received my Ph. D. from Auburn University (2005) in clinical psychology, where I received stellar training in how to be a decent teacher from one of the world’s best, Dr. William Buskist. I am a proud past winner of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology McKeachie Early Career Award (2004). Yet, I am most proud of being the first chairperson of the Graduate Student Association for beginning teachers within the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, which has grown considerably over the last decade. My hobbies include: watching baseball, hiking, reading, and sleep. Of note, I am proud to have worked on this volume with Jim, who truly represents a “teacher of teachers.”
Using this Guide

This is a Guide, not a textbook. It differs from the typical textbook in several ways. We include many learning activities that ask you to stop reading and do something, usually writing, but also communicating with others and searching other sources. We provide links to most of these sources.

You can work through this Guide from this first unit to the last unit just as you would in a live course. We also envision the Guide as an Emergency Room for instructors who have been assigned a course to teach that begins next week and who have had no formal preparation for teaching. Unfortunately this happens all too often. If you need an ER, you might jump into Unit 3 on Planning a Course to find suggestions for what to do on the first day.

While, you can work through this Guide on your own, we suggest you find people who will work with you one-on-one as you work through the units. In the first activity, we suggested that you find a friend to serve as surrogate classmate. You also may want to seek an experienced teacher to be your mentor. This person can help you reflect on your learning activities and discuss teaching issues with you. She or he may also be able to provide you with practice teaching opportunities.

We recommend that you find a textbook that will serve as a supplement to this guide and provides more in-depth information on essentials for beginning teachers. Following are a few books that we recommend:

Contains a variety of practical suggestions based on extensive research on strategies used by excellent college teachers to prepare to teach, design courses and class sessions, select teaching strategies and assess students.

Emphasizes designing outcomes with learning activities to achieve the outcomes, and assessment techniques. Includes sections on teaching large and small classes.

Each of the 61 brief chapters in this book has quick tips on all aspects of teaching.
It’s particularly good when you need a quick fix.

Provides tools to help develop courses that focus on designing significant student learning experiences. Includes information on using standard teaching strategies and introduces some new suggestions for teaching.

This book is especially strong in providing research data to support the advice.

You will find lots of useful checklists and forms, and a supporting CD.


Provides strategies for dealing with challenge of efficiently preparing to teach a new course, appearing credible, and practical suggestions for engaging and assessing student learning.


Includes a variety of practical, concrete teaching strategies and discussion of issues that may confront you when teaching for the first time. Appendix includes a sample syllabus.


Provides a good combination of tips and research on teaching. After twelve editions over almost 60 years it must be good.
Online Resources

We will refer you to various on line sources as you go through the units in this Guide. A few of these resources include:

Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP), Division Two of the American Psychological Association. You do not have to be a member to access most of the items you will find.

The American Psychological Society includes a section on “Teaching Psychology,” and within that section, “Teaching Tips.”

The Higher Education Academy from the United Kingdom offers a variety of discipline specific resources for teaching.

IDEA Center’s Idea Papers combined with POD-IDEA Center Notes on Instruction contain many practical suggestions for teaching and information on research related to teaching.

MERLOT contains a wealth of peer-reviewed online teaching and learning materials submitted by faculty members in a variety of disciplines.

Narratives Supporting Excellent Teaching (NEXT) contains hypothetical case studies on a variety of challenges in teaching along with strategies for addressing these teaching issues and related links for more information. While it focuses on engineering education, the challenges and strategies apply to any discipline.

Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education is an excellent online, peer-reviewed journal that contains many articles on strategies for effective classroom practice contributed by faculty and students working together.
Finally, each of us will be available to answer questions and discuss teaching issues via e-mail:

kornjh@earthlink.net

stephenm@acm.org

sikorskijaf@mail.ccsu.edu
Unit 2

Developing Your Philosophy of Teaching

Unit Objectives

1. Write a first draft of your teaching philosophy -- or a new draft if you have done this before.
2. Revise that draft based on peer feedback, discussion, and reflection.
3. Relate your teaching style to your philosophy.
4. Revise your teaching philosophy for different audiences.
Writing Your Philosophy of Teaching

"There is nothing so practical as a good theory." This quotation is closely associated with the renowned social psychologist, Kurt Lewin, who also believed that good theories are shaped by practical experiences. The development of your teaching philosophy is the heart of this unit. It is shaped by your experiences and forms the theory that guides what you do as a teacher.

Effective teaching begins with the teaching philosophy, which represents the personal theory that teachers construct to systematize their rationale for guiding student learning (Schonwetter, Sokal, Friesen, & Taylor, 2002). This statement of your teaching philosophy is far from a static document. An essential characteristic of effective teachers lies in their willingness to learn or change for a lifetime. As such, teaching philosophies evolve through the changing seasons of a teacher’s life and career. In fact, it will change even in the relatively short time that it will take you to work through this guide.

In this Guide we follow this model:

Philosophy > Objectives > Methods > Learning > Evaluation > Reflection

Your philosophy (explicit or implicit) of teaching and learning determines the objectives you choose for your courses. These objectives lead to decisions about the most appropriate teaching methods and ways of assessing student learning. All of this is evaluated and modified based on the data you obtain from teaching, and your reflection on what happened during your teaching. This reflection may lead you to repeat the cycle beginning with revising your philosophy.

As you go through this guide you will be asked to make the links explicit. What are those arrows (>) in the model? You will see that your philosophy will guide your teaching from major areas such as your course objectives to mundane aspects like your attendance policy.
Activity: Write your philosophy of teaching.

Asked to write their philosophy of teaching, most participants find they have several questions. What should I write? How long should it be? The primary reason for asking you to write without preparation and suggestions is that this should be your philosophy, not that of some expert. It should be yours in form as well as content. You are not starting from a blank slate, but from years of experience as a student and perhaps with a little or a lot of teaching experience. So simply begin. The only requirements are that you write in the first person (this is your philosophy) and use non-technical language because others will read it eventually.

Instructions.

Everyone has a preferred way of thinking and composing, so here are some suggestions. Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Think about teaching and whatever that brings to mind, perhaps occasionally jotting a note. Then do some free writing, where you write continuously without taking your pen from the page. Next, reflect on what you have written, and finally re-write it doing a little organizing in preparation for showing this first draft to someone else. Devote about an hour to this. Or do this for a while, change to some other unrelated activity, and then come back to your philosophy.

For beginning teachers, and experts alike, the abstract nature of the process by which an initial teaching philosophy is constructed or revised can be viewed as intimidating or
meaningless. In this Unit we provide advice for how one might go about constructing an effective teaching philosophy statement.
Reflecting on Your Teaching Philosophy

Our own experience provides the basis for much of what we write in a teaching philosophy. We think of good and bad teachers we have had, in and outside of the classroom. We recall reading things about teaching that struck us as profound or useful. Our view of human nature and the meaning of life come into play.

Activity: Revise your teaching philosophy.

These are some potentially useful questions to stimulate your thinking about your teaching philosophy:

1. Who was the best teacher you ever had? Who was the worst? (Or think of a composite of these good and bad teachers) List their characteristics.
2. Describe your style or the style you expect to have when you teach.
3. If you overheard students talking about you and your teaching, what would you want them to be saying? Why is that important to you?
4. How do (or would) you motivate students to help them learn? What motivators would you never use?
5. Does (or would) your teaching vary depending on the course you are teaching and the kind of students you have? Are there essential principles in your philosophy that would not depend on the situation?
6. Think of a metaphor for your teaching. Why is your teaching like this metaphor, and in what ways is it not like your chosen metaphor?

After thinking about these questions, revise your draft.
You have taken the first steps in constructing a teaching philosophy. As our model indicates, your philosophy of teaching determines the objectives you choose for your courses. These objectives lead to decisions about the most appropriate teaching methods to implement in the classroom and viable ways of assessing student learning. In reality our teaching rarely develops in this rational, linear manner. In fact, teaching philosophies are intended to be reconsidered frequently after experience teaching “in the trenches.”

At this point, it may be useful to review some teaching philosophy statements. You will find these examples in a supplement to this chapter (Appendix A). Please do not go to these statements until you have written a second draft of your own philosophy so that you are not unduly influenced by the writing style and ideas of others. Remember, this should be your philosophy. These examples are not provided to serve as reservoirs of ideas to borrow, rather they are provided in hopes of further stimulating critical thinking about your own personal style of teaching students.

**Critical Thinking Interruption: Critiquing teaching philosophies**

- What views noted in the teaching philosophies in the Appendix resonate most with you?
- What would you like to have clarified and added in these statements?

There may be some clichés in what we write, but mostly our ideas are deeply felt. Writing that is deeply felt may not, however, be writing that is clear, and that is why having someone else read your essay can be helpful.
Activity: Collaborative review.

Find another person who also is developing a teaching philosophy and exchange your essays. For most of us, showing our writing to another person is threatening, especially when it is an early draft. Realize that you both are in the same boat, that yes, it is rough, and you might have some grammatical and spelling errors, and you really can say it better. After getting over your reluctance for self-revelation, use these questions to guide your critique of each other's essay:

- What are the main points of this essay?
- What is the strongest part of this essay?
- What is the weakest part of this essay?
- What additional questions do you have and what other sub-topics would you like to read about in this essay?

Write your responses to these questions about your partner's philosophy statement then communicate with that person and discuss what each of you wrote. One of the best methods for developing as a teacher is talking with others about what we do and think. Once you have received feedback from your partner, make some notes for yourself about how you may want to revise your philosophy.

The teaching philosophy is an evolving statement that will change as you work through this Guide, and later as you continue your teaching. The process of change is based on the psychological theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). When we have two thoughts (cognitions) that don't fit (dissonance) this makes us uncomfortable, and we can eliminate that
discomfort by changing one of the thoughts. In teaching your thoughts come from your philosophy and your practices; when they don't match one or the other must change to reduce the dissonance.

In Jim’s and Jason’s teaching philosophies (see Appendix A), there are organizing principles that are not always implemented religiously in the classroom. For instance, we both speak a great deal about the importance of active learning (e.g., debates, critical thinking discussions, hands-on activities), yet realize that our classes often involve lecturing to students much more than half of the time. When we recognized this dissonance, we each described feeling exasperated with ourselves because this discrepancy had been evident for several semesters. In discussions, we wondered why we were so reluctant to change either our philosophies or our teaching methods. Unfortunately, without careful and frequent deliberation and discussion, cognitive dissonance is difficult to identify and not always easily resolved. In fact, sometimes more than one discussion or formal feedback session is required before discrepancies between philosophy and practice are realized and remedied.
Teaching Style

Your philosophy may include a description of what you will be like as a teacher -- your classroom performance and how you relate to students. Like your personality, some of your style is determined by heredity, but much of it is learned and can be changed. You have some choice about teaching style, which is why it is worth thinking about it here.

Jay Parini (1997) says that teachers "need to invent and cultivate a voice that serves their personal needs, their students, and the material at hand," and this "self-presentation involves the donning of a mask," our teaching persona (p. A92). We agree with Parini that you "learn to teach by listening closely to your own teachers, by taking on their voices, imitating them, digesting them so that they become part of your own voice (p. A92)." These characteristics are blended with our own, and over time we discover what works well for us so that a more authentic persona develops.

Several typologies of teaching styles have been developed to describe ways of relating to students. We are not particularly in favor of putting people into categories; they almost always are incomplete and overlapping. However, Anthony Grasha has developed a typology that is useful as an exercise to understand your teaching style. His book, *Teaching with Style* (1996), includes an inventory (p. 159-164) that will give you a score for each of these five teaching styles (adapted from Grasha, p. 154):

- **Expert.** Possesses knowledge and expertise that students need. Maintains status by displaying detailed knowledge and challenging students to enhance their competence. Concerned with transmitting information and insuring that students are well prepared.

- **Formal Authority.** Status comes from knowledge and role as a faculty member. Concerned with giving positive and negative feedback, establishing learning goals,
expectations, and rules of conduct. Provides students with the structure they need to learn.

- **Personal Model.** Teaches by personal example and models how to think and behave. Oversees, guides, and directs by showing how to do things and encouraging students to observe and emulate the model.

- **Facilitator.** Emphasizes the personal nature of student-teacher interactions. Guides students by asking questions, suggesting alternatives, and encouraging students to make informed choices. Overall goal is to develop the capacity for independent action and responsibility.

- **Delegator.** Concerned with developing the capacity to function in an autonomous fashion. Students work independently or in teams with the teacher as a resource person. The instructions for this inventory ask the respondent to keep a specific course in mind when completing the inventory, thus recognizing that our style may vary depending on the situation.

Grasha has done extensive research with the inventory and reports clusters of styles that go together. For example, he found that the most common cluster (38% of faculty) has a combination of expert and formal authority as the primary teaching style. An online version of the inventory which automatically does the scoring is also available.

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Activity: Put some thought into your own teaching style.

- Which of Grasha’s teaching styles best describe your unique approach in the classroom? Complete the online version of Grasha’s Teaching Styles Inventory, and then consider the following questions: How do the results match your image of your style?
• How does your style differ for different courses? If you completed this for only one course, what differences might you expect to see in some other course that you might teach?

• How do the results compare to what you have written in your teaching philosophy? If there are differences, will you change your philosophy?

The major objective of this unit has been for you to develop your teaching philosophy, and to increase the likelihood that it really is yours; we have provided minimal direction on the content and style of your statement. We hope you feel the result is your own deeply felt view of teaching and learning.

There are sources you can use that give more specific directions about how to write a philosophy of teaching. Two documents (American Chemical Society, 2000; Chism, 1997-1998) provide particularly useful suggestions. We suggest that you not read these until you feel that you have made sufficient effort to write a philosophy that truly is your own in both content and style. Nancy Van Note Chism suggests that the philosophy statement should be individual, reflective, and personal, creating "a vivid portrait of a person who is intentional about teaching practices and committed to a career" (p. 32). The American Chemical Society (ACS) brochure is more directive than we have been, however, you may find the advice on documentation and reflection of interest.

The staff of the teaching and learning center at the University of Michigan conducted a survey of faculty search committee chairs at large universities (Kaplan, et al., 2007), in which they asked, “What makes a teaching statement successful?” The responses were sorted into these five categories (p. 248):
• Offers evidence of practice. Statements provided specific examples linking their philosophy to what they actually did as teachers.

• Is student-centered and uses active learning.

• Demonstrates reflectiveness showing how changes were made in the classroom.

• Conveys enthusiasm for teaching and a vision.

• Is well written, clear and readable.

According to respondents, poorly written statements were “generic, full of boilerplate language, [and did] not appear to be taken seriously” (p. 249).

The report of this research includes a rubric used in the Michigan teaching center to evaluate philosophy statements. You may find this information helpful, but remember, what you write should be your statement and reflect your beliefs.
Audience

Being aware of the audience for your statement is very important. According to the American Chemical Society publication, "The most important audience . . . is yourself" (2000, p. 7). You are least constrained by style, length, and other details when writing for yourself. Eventually you may have a file with notes, drafts of early versions, and reflections on your development. This is the practical theory you use to implement your teaching style.

However, there will be other important audiences. When you search for an academic position many places will ask specifically for your teaching philosophy, and will expect to see it in a more concise form than one you have written for yourself. If you are successful in your job search – or already have that academic position – you will be evaluated for salary increments, promotion and tenure. Then Deans and committees will want to know how you view your teaching. Be informed about your audience. Your core values should not change, but you can use different examples and emphasize certain elements of your philosophy. Actually, your recognition of those differences can itself be a part of your philosophy.

Activity: Applying for a job or promotion.

Imagine that you are applying for a position at an institution that has asked for your approach to teaching, i.e., your teaching philosophy. If you already have a position, imagine your promotion committee asking for that statement.

- Take your latest draft and re-write it for this new audience.
- Ask a person who is in a position to hire or promote faculty to review your teaching philosophy, and provide feedback.
There is one other version of your philosophy you probably will need if you interview for a job, the “sound bite.” A busy Dean will have glanced at your materials, but not have had time to read them carefully. The Dean says, “tell me about this teaching philosophy of yours.” If you only have a minute or two, what will you say? Develop your sound bite and present it to a friend.

We are not the first people to have thought about a philosophy of teaching or, more generally, of education. Famous philosophers including Aristotle, Kant, and Dewey have written extensively and with great wisdom on this topic (Frankena, 1965). One of the characteristics of good teachers is that they are scholars of teaching, which means that they read extensively to discover what others think and do, and keep up with the research on teaching, both in general and in their discipline. It is not enough to base one's ideas about teaching only on personal experience. We would not want our students to do that, but would want them to become educated by reading and thinking critically. At the end of the units in this book, we include some suggestions for future reading. These lists are intended to further stimulate your thinking about your teaching.

In Unit 10 we will look at the teaching portfolio as a medium to present your teaching when you are looking for a job, seeking promotion and tenure, and for you own development. For any of these purposes, your philosophy statement will be the central document; everything else grows from that.
Looking Ahead

In the next unit we work on the design of a course. This is where you put your teaching philosophy to work. As you wrote your teaching philosophy statement, you probably were thinking about teaching experiences you have had or expect to have. Using your imagination is a good way to develop your philosophy. We have visualized ourselves standing in the front of an auditorium full of students, speaking eloquently, and seeing the students being fascinated and inspired. Yet we believe in the importance of active learning and frequent assessment. Planning a course will force you to make choices about objectives, methods, assessments, and how they all fit with each other and with your philosophy. You may have to put aside your dream of an award for performance, and substitute satisfaction in achieving specific objectives.
References


www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/academic_practice/pdfsdocs/Philosophy_Statement_06.pdf


Additional Recommended Readings


Conclusions drawn from a 15 year study of over 100 outstanding faculty members from a range of campuses and disciplines. The author provides practical advice and examples on teaching culled from the faculty members in the study. This book tops the list of Mary’s favorite books on college teaching.


This is a general discussion of teaching, but with particular emphasis on self criticism for improvement.


These authors present a strong case for putting the scholarly side of teaching on a par with other conceptions of research.


In over 100 years no one has written a better book on principles of psychology applied to teaching, and this book is written better than any other. The best edition of this book is from
Harvard University Press, but the one cited here is inexpensive. It also contains talks to students on life’s ideals.


This book is inspirational. Palmer writes not only about the joy of teaching, but also challenges and disappointments.


An intimate view of a teacher’s struggle to find her values and style. Jim doesn’t agree with her teaching methods, but joining her in the process of discovery is quite worthwhile.
Appendix A
Teaching Philosophy Statements

In addition to the philosophies of the editors, we have included several other teaching philosophies. The others are from volunteers who gave permission to include their statements as examples.

Jason Sikorski
Central Connecticut State University
Written in 2009

As my teaching experience accumulated and my love of teaching intensified, I began to think more deeply about my role as an educator in society. I began to read extensively about the relationship between scholarship and teaching and came to understand that psychologists are in a unique position to impart knowledge to students. After all, many of the behaviors exhibited by “master teachers” across disciplines include a heavy dose of psychology. For instance, the best teachers use operant learning procedures (e.g., positive reinforcement), cognitive psychology principles (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving, meta-cognition), and even social psychology (e.g., creating an environment conducive to learning gains) in the classroom. Being passionate, knowledgeable, and approachable sets the stage for students to learn in class, just as developing rapport in therapy could lead to client gains. In short, the most essential tenet of my philosophy on teaching is to use what I have learned as a psychologist in the classroom.

I strive to create a classroom that is comfortable and conducive to the critical evaluation of principles in psychology as they apply to our own lives. I supplement student readings with lectures, discussions, and vivid demonstrations that I hope bring to life what students read. In my mind, if students cannot take psychological principles out of the classroom and apply them to their own lives, then we as teachers have not fulfilled our responsibilities as educators. We should desire to be meaningful in the lives of our students. Thus, my second tenet of my philosophy on teaching is to be accountable for making learning last and being a role model for the passionate pursuit of lifelong learning.

Finally, I always want teaching to be fun. I have no reservations in admitting that I teach and write about teaching because I love it. Teaching to me represents a passion, an important responsibility, and a true joy that I plan on pursuing for the rest of my professional life. The rich and invigorating academic environment at my University is ideally suited for me as someone who will always desire to learn and to teach.
Beth Kania-Gosche  
Lindenwood University

“Teachers teach more by what they are than by what they say.”  
-Anonymous

Students learn by being challenged, and the best teaching arises when the instructor is also challenged. Education should help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and improve both. Therefore, the challenges must come not only from the teacher but also from other students, situations from the real world, and from within the student. Providing choices for students, both in topic of assignment and in scoring of the assignment, increases motivation and variety in the classroom, while increasing the respect students and teacher have for each other. The teacher’s job is to push students who are not challenging themselves enough and scaffold those students who may be frustrated. My job as a teacher is also to ensure that students have the necessary skills and prerequisite knowledge to meet the challenges presented in this constructivist classroom.

The teacher models the classroom expectations for the students. Students learn where they feel safe, both physically and emotionally, so building a community of learners is essential at any level of education. The perspectives of my students are important to me, because there is only one teacher and many students in a classroom. In the college setting, I consider myself a model for my students, who are future teachers. I strive to always “practice what I preach” by actually demonstrating the instructional methods, theories, and technologies.

I try to respond to the needs of my students and improve my practice by asking for student opinions. I never teach the same class twice, using previous experiences to improve my practice. When students turn in assignments, I always ask for feedback and recommendations, modeling reflective practice. Students ask questions not only of me but also of the entire class. My teaching style is informal; I often use humor and personal examples to expand concepts from the textbook. I want my students to feel comfortable asking me questions, asking for help, or disagreeing with me.

Many of my assignments require research beyond the textbook to journals in the field. I want my students to be able to find, comprehend, analyze, and apply current journal articles and research in the field. Even in courses that are not directly related to writing, I demand it from my students at almost every class meeting, usually sharing my own writing as well. For assignments I want my students to see a broader audience than just the instructor, so they share their completed assignments with a group before turning them in or the assignment itself may be a presentation or teaching a lesson to the class. As I always tell my upper level education students the first day of class, “I want you to stop thinking like students and start thinking like teachers.”
As a teacher, I view my role as similar to that of an orchestra conductor. My goal is to create a synergy, creating an environment where the students can move beyond the individual pieces of information to realize greater knowledge, skills, abilities, and understanding. The students are not, however, in the role of the audience passively taking in the experience. They are the performers who bring their prior experience and knowledge, engaging with the material.

The discipline of Psychology offers significant insight into the learning process, highlighting the importance of active engagement and experience. As an instructor, I am an essential part of that experience. As with a conductor, I have to determine the focus, pace, and tone – in my case, the composition is the specific course as well as each class session. I pull together the different forms of knowledge, including course content, life skills, and learning skills. Then, I work to find a structure that best facilitates their interaction, considering not only the process of information delivery, but also creating an environment conducive to learning.

At times, the content requires that I assume the role of expert – I must convey facts and concepts to provide a foundation for subsequent learning. Many times, however, I can utilize active and experiential learning techniques to facilitate learning without being an expert delivering information. By employing varied teaching methods I encourage students to engage with the subject matter, helping them “teach themselves,” and teach their peers.

This approach to learning may also require that I assume the role of mediator or translator in order to help students reconcile various perspectives. Facts and concepts do not always form a perfect picture of knowledge, creating perceived contradictions for students. Similarly, active and experiential learning activities may surface differences in personality and perspective that lead to conflict between students. My role includes helping students recognize the value in different perspectives and understand how differences may be complementary.

Feedback, related to both assessment and evaluation, unifies many aspects of the learning process. I strive for a balance between encouraging students and challenging them, attempting to establish realistic standards for academic performance that consider student morale and self-esteem but do not sacrifice rigor.

As a teacher, I hope that each student achieves insight and understanding that they would have had if I had not been there. At the same time, I understand that students come to the classroom with different motivations, abilities, learning styles, and perspectives – the same thing that sparks interest and a desire to learn in one student may leave five others yawning and frustrated. While I can not be all things to everyone, I can establish a student-centered learning community that values diverse perspectives and integrates them into course content, challenges students of varying abilities, and engages students with differing motivations.

Sometimes – some classes, some semesters – the end result lacks harmony or coherence. Sometimes, my rhythm will not mesh well with the students. Sometimes I’ll be too enthusiastic.
with one component, overwhelming the students. Sometimes I'll overlook a nuance, and the results will be lacking. Many times, however, it comes together beautifully. The students and I find a harmony with knowledge, creating a learning environment that is powerful.
From Passion to Desire.
James H. Korn
Saint Louis University (Emeritus)
Written in 2000

“'I have a passion for teaching” was the opening phrase in the two previous versions of my teaching philosophy. During the past two years I have come to doubt that this is the feeling that drives my teaching and is most present in it. I become tired of teaching too often, I look forward to the days I am not in the classroom, and I doubt my authenticity when I read that phrase. I am a good teacher, but not passionate. What I do experience is the excellence of desire.

This excellence of desire means wanting something with all your heart, and continually trying to find it. But what you want is unreachable so it is the wanting, the desire, that is excellent, not some outcome. It is about being and doing; about living the teaching life. It shows itself in teaching most often in the daily work we do, not only in those too rare peak experiences of glory in the classroom, and not in the prizes for excellence that some of us receive. I want to be a good teacher at the mundane level of class preparation, teaching methods, and relationships with students. I want this. That is the excellence of desire.

Maybe I am trying too hard. After one-third of a century of teaching I should have this all figured out. Desire is powerful, and trying to be excellent is a burden. Am I doing enough and is it good? Will they like me and, more importantly, will I like me? Trying too hard means over-preparing, compulsing over phrases in lecture notes, and worrying about how you will do and are doing and have done. But this energy is directed at the process of teaching, not the outcomes. What I want is to feel the spirit present in the classroom, and in my thoughts about class and my subject. The excellence of desire is expressed not only in the intense wanting during the struggle with my tasks, but also in my more relaxed awareness that this is my task. I am a teacher.

Wanting is what is spiritual about teaching: it is our animating principle and it gives us life. Although intangible, it is essential to our nature as teachers. It is our soul. I try to bring this spirituality into the classroom because I believe that is my most important role as a teacher; it defines for me what teaching is: bringing the spirit with the knowledge to the students. I call this “closeness learning,” to distinguish teaching with soul from teaching that emphasizes technology and “distance learning.”

I have retained some specifics from the previous versions of my philosophy:
Teaching is a form of service to others, my students. I respect students as free, responsible individuals whose most important task is learning how to learn. I try to show the beauty and power of ideas based in fact and imagination. I value active and collaborative learning, and continue to fight my habit of teacher-centeredness. Teaching is a community activity. We learn about teaching from each other. Conferences and conversations about teaching are the Viagra for my passion and desire.

As a senior member of this teaching community, I have an opportunity to help develop the next generation of teachers. I want to be able to make a difference not only for the students in my own classroom, but also for the students of those future teachers. That is my greatest desire.
I learned two very valuable lessons about teaching from the teacher who most influenced my beliefs about teaching. The first lesson was the importance of treating each student with respect and as a unique individual, and the second was the value of sharing your love and interest in your subject matter with your students. These two lessons lie at the heart of my teaching philosophy. Over the years, I have taught different content areas (mathematics, computer science, and instructional technology), discovered new research on learning, been exposed to new teaching strategies and had access to new tools and teaching settings. All of these things have influenced my thoughts about teaching and led me to reflect on and re-examine the effectiveness of my teaching strategies, course objectives and type of assessment that I use. I believe that as a teacher, it is important for me to understand my students and teach in ways that they might best relate to. When I first started teaching at the university level in the 60’s, I taught mathematics. The approach that I used then was appropriate for my undergraduate students at that time; however, it would not be a successful approach for today’s learners or for the graduate education students I now teach about instructional technology.

I believe that both the student and I have responsibilities in this teaching-learning dynamic. I believe that ultimately students have responsibility for their learning and I expect that they will assume that responsibility. At the same time, I believe that my role as a teacher is to motivate students to learn, challenge them to do their best and model and guide them in the learning process. I believe in creating an atmosphere in which students feel safe to learn not only from success, but failure. I willingly provide additional assistance to any student struggling with concepts and skills. I will not embarrass a student and I actively encourage and answer all questions. I believe that I am not the only teacher present in the educational setting, and that students can also learn from each other just as I can learn from them. I also have a responsibility to be knowledgeable about new developments in my content area.

I believe that students learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. I try to ensure that I incorporate active learning strategies in my classes and assignments. While currently my courses focus on integrating technology into teaching, I believe firmly that it is important to use technology only if it lets me do something I could not otherwise do in teaching or it provides a way to teach something better. Technology should be used as a tool in teaching only if it serves a meaningful purpose in achieving course objectives.

I believe it is very important to relate course content to students’ interests and backgrounds and to create assessments when possible that enable students to relate course content to their academic and professional interests. I believe assessment activities are important in the learning process as is providing meaningful feedback on those assignments. I prefer assignments that require students to use what they have learned in a way that demonstrates their
mastery of the content and skills, and I attempt to give students written summaries of my comments and suggestions for every assignment.

My philosophy continues to evolve and consequently so does my teaching as I strive to meet the needs and interests of today’s students. Yet, I hope that two things never change – respect for each student and sharing the enthusiasm for the subject I am teaching.
Unit 3

Planning a Course: Philosophy Becomes Practice

Unit Objectives:

1. Develop a plan for a course that you will teach or expect to teach.
2. Design a syllabus for that course, including objectives, methods and assessment.
3. Link that syllabus to your philosophy.
4. Write a plan for the first day of class.
5. Develop a vision for your ideal course.
6. Link that vision to your philosophy.
Course Planning in the Beginning

What do teachers think about when they get ready to teach a course? To some extent that depends on their teaching experience. After a number of years teachers have worked out many standard issues in planning a course, but certainly not all of them. Tom McGovern (2000, p. 1-2), an experienced and award-winning teacher, contrasts two approaches to course planning, those of the scientist and the artist.

The science of course planning and implementation follows the linear pathway of a research project and its reporting in a journal article. We propose goals and questions for the course and for our students based on the syntheses of available literature on many topics. We choose teaching methods shaped by empirical evidence and self-design. During the semester, we gather systematic observations and perform analyses of multiple performance measures. And finally, we evaluate the efficacy of our initial questions, the methods we used, and the results obtained, after the term is over, and then begins the cycle of planning for another semester.

The art of course planning is more intuitive, like the task of bringing a theater production from concept to performance. Historical antecedents, contemporary audience preferences and sophistication, environment and mood setting, uses of technology, and “how it might play in Peoria” become critical ingredients. Unlike a theater production, however, a faculty member must be playwright, stage designer of light and sound systems, score and lyrics composer, choreographer, director, and lead (often solo) performer.

In the past 100 years, how many times in how many places and for how many different audiences have faculty planned a semester of their various courses? Whether our preferred preparation heuristic is that of scientist, artist or some other unique amalgamation of the two,
thinking deeply about the course planning enterprise makes every autumn something to anticipate for its inspirations, rewards, and challenges.

We will approach the topic of course planning from the standpoint of a person teaching a course for the very first time with the understanding that the general principles and methods of course design can be applied as well to a course that has been taught many times previously. The guidelines and critical thinking exercises that follow should prove as useful to an instructor new to teaching a particular course as to an instructor faced with the task of teaching a course that has been taught numerous times before by instructors with a range of teaching styles and course objectives. These guidelines and exercises should also be helpful to those individuals interested in designing a course that explores new topics using innovative teaching strategies regardless of whether they approach what they are doing as academic artists or scientists.

The first step in successful course design is to consider the many influences that contribute to your current thinking on how the course should proceed. The range of possible factors that influence this process include such things as your prior experience as a student; outstanding, magical teachers as well as poor teachers you have encountered; your knowledge of learning theories; prior teaching experiences, if any; relevance of content; and experience with new technologies. In reality no course design can be completely fresh. Teachers across all disciplines have taken courses before. It is possible you may have even taken the course you are teaching in the past, and have fading memories of what worked and didn’t work for you when you were the student. You may have accessed syllabi of other teachers who have designed a course that is the same as or similar to the course you plan to teach, either through your department, colleagues at other universities, or the Internet. You may have discovered online resources such as "Project Syllabus," or Campus Compact Syllabus initiative, or Open Yale
Courses, all of which contain a number of excellent models to consult in constructing your own syllabus. There are also numerous books that contain examples of syllabi for a wide range of disciplines (O’Brien, Millis, Cohen, & Diamond (2008), Lang (2008), Nilson (2007), Davis (2009)).

Thinking about where you’ve been and where you’d like to go as a teacher represents an important starting point for planning a course consistent with your teaching philosophy. Being true to both the scientific rationale for what you do in the classroom and the personal values, ethics and preferences that define who you are as a person will increase the chances of students having a synchronous course experience where learning objectives are met. Our first activity in this section asks you to be an artist, that is, to be creative, imaginative, and non-linear.

Activity: Course planning by free association.

Think of a course that you would like to teach or have taught. Write the name of that course at the top of a blank sheet of paper. Now free-associate about that course, writing down notes about the thoughts that come to mind. Please do this before reading ahead.

You may have begun with those “must cover topics”, and then included some exciting potential exercises, assignments, films and active learning experiences for students. Readings for the course inevitably creep into the equation early on, and even our unique anxieties about teaching this course may rear their ugly heads. It is not uncommon to think about what you want students to experience and learn through this course from a first-person perspective. We almost imagine how the comments from our teaching evaluations will read or what might be noted on
Rate My Professor. This is the way many teachers begin to think about course design. Thinking like an artist helps us to generate lots of ideas about our courses.
Stating Course Objectives

In order to provide the most complete coverage of course design issues, it is necessary for thoughtful teachers to prepare their courses from the scientist's perspective as well. Scientists can be creative and imaginative too, but at some point they get more systematic about hypotheses and methods. In a multi-year study of what he termed “the best” college teachers, Bain (2004) identified several questions these teachers used when designing courses. They frequently began by asking themselves what should students know and be able to do upon completion of the course. This leads to our first step in the science of course planning, developing the course objectives. Where do course objectives come from? In some cases others give them to you. Your department or college may have had committees that developed course objectives to provide consistency across instructors and semesters. In some fields, professional organizations may specify a curriculum and course objectives, either recommended or required, for accreditation. Most commonly; however, you will be able to make your own decisions about objectives. Inevitably, these objectives should be based to a considerable degree on your understanding of learning theory and your ever-evolving theory on teaching, the teaching philosophy statement.

Activity: Articulating some course objectives.

What knowledge or skills should your students have developed by the end of your course?

Write two objectives for the course you have in mind. This activity is just to get you started thinking about the intended outcomes for your course.
Your philosophy of teaching will be a most important influence when writing objectives. A clearly articulated plan based on an explicitly stated philosophy of teaching enables peers and others to critique how you implement that plan in the classroom, as well as the plan itself. It also gives you a solid basis for self assessment.

**Activity: Outline some philosophy-informed course objectives.**

For the course you have in mind, write objectives that clearly are based on your philosophy. For example, if your philosophy says that you want your students to think critically about major issues in your field, one objective should reflect that idea. You might begin by identifying the ideas in your philosophy that potentially could relate to one or more course objectives.
The Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives

More than fifty years ago a group of educators gave careful thought to the issue of writing course objectives. They did this in two areas, cognitive and affective objectives (Bloom, 1956; Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). The cognitive objectives continue to be influential as ways of analyzing what teachers expect students to be able to do. In 2001, a revised version of Bloom’s taxonomy was proposed (Anderson, & Krathwohl, 2001). The original categories are presented from lower or simpler cognitive processes to higher or more complex thinking modes and are listed here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Verbs to indicate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>State, list, name, define</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPREHENSION</td>
<td>Explain, identify, discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPLICATION</td>
<td>Demonstrate, illustrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS</td>
<td>Analyze, compare, contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYNTHESIS</td>
<td>Create, design, compose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVALUATION</td>
<td>Evaluate, criticize, value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity: Course objective wording.

Look at the objectives you have written for your course so far. Where do they stand in relation to the cognitive taxonomy outlined above? It is likely that your goals for student learning may not have been best explained through the verbs you chose originally. If necessary, change the verbs used to state your course objectives.
To varying extents, the verbs you use to articulate course objectives may vary based on more than just unique intricacies of individual teaching philosophies. For example, an introductory course for freshmen may place more emphasis on knowledge, while a senior seminar may focus more on analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. You also may find that some of your objectives are more affective, which means that they concern developing students’ attitudes and values. Other objectives are skill-based, in that you may want students to develop in areas like writing and teamwork. This taxonomy is useful, but not intended to hamper one’s own creativity in composing course objectives.

Soon after Bloom and his colleagues developed their taxonomies, there was an active movement to encourage the use of behavioral objectives (Gronlund, 1970). The idea made sense to many people then, and it still does. These are the essential ideas for defining behaviorally based course objectives:

- You should be able to specify what you want students to know and do. Behavioral objectives are stated in terms of student performance, not things the teacher will do. For example, "expose” students to something, is what the teacher does, not what the student is expected to do.
- State the specific conditions under which a specific student behavior is expected. For instance, students may be allowed to use a textbook during and exam to evaluate an objective. State the expected level of performance for students with specific descriptors (e.g., learn three out of four developmental theories; given a diagram of the human brain, label all four lobes).

**Activity: Articulating behavior-based course objectives.**
Identify which objectives you have already written that are stated in behavioral terms. Pick three objectives that are not stated behaviorally and restate them so that they are more behavioral in nature.

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**Critical Thinking Interruption**

- How difficult is it to switch your broad-based cognitive objectives and affective objectives into crystal clear behavioral objectives?
- What do you see as some problems with the behavioral objectives approach?

Affective objectives are important too, perhaps more so in the arts and humanities than in the sciences. For many teachers these objectives concern attitudes and values that are implicit; we expect and hope that these things are accomplished but do not state them in our syllabus. And because they are quite difficult to state in behavioral terms, it means they will be difficult to assess as well. We need to be concerned about the limits on what we expect from students in this area. Should we expect students to accept our values? We will address this issue in a later chapter.

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**Activity: What are your affective objectives?**

Identify the affective, or value-based, objectives among the objectives you have written. If you don’t have any value-based objectives articulated, take some time to think about these now. As far as these objectives go, think about whether you consider them to
be more or less important than your cognitive and behavioral objectives stated earlier?

Will you put these in your syllabus? Why or why not?

Activity: Complete the Teaching Goals Inventory.

The *Teaching Goals Inventory* (Angelo & Cross, 1993) is a useful tool to analyze your course objectives. A goal is broader than an objective. It is a general statement describing where the students should be at the end of the course. An example of a goal is students will understand how the body functions. An objective describes steps necessary to reach the goal. In completing the inventory, you are asked to think of your goals with respect to specific courses. This online version is self-scoring and lets you see the importance you place on goals in these areas: higher-order thinking skills, basic academic success skills, discipline-specific knowledge and skills, liberal arts and academic values, work and career preparation, and personal development. It is a good tool to help you think about what you want to accomplish in your course, and your teaching in general.

Activity

Complete the online *Teaching Goals Inventory*. Comparing the results you obtain from the Teaching Goals Inventory with your philosophy may reveal instructive inconsistencies. For instance, your philosophy may say that you care about students, yet the inventory may reveal that personal development is not important for you, which would lead you to think more carefully about what "caring" means.
The Syllabus

The course syllabus can be viewed in many ways. It is not only the public presentation of your course plan, but it “reveals aspects of an instructor’s teaching philosophy, methodological preferences, and educational policies” (Nilson, 2007, p. 8). You show it to students and to others who want to know what you do in your course, and if you save these documents over the years they show how you have changed, or not, in your approach to an individual course. In short, the syllabus is an important document.

The primary audience for this document is your students. The syllabus tells them what the course is about, what is expected of them, what they can expect of you, and when and how they will be evaluated. It also tells them something about what the teacher is like. We know that students do not pay attention to many things in the syllabus that the teacher thinks are important, like the course objectives (Becker & Calhoon, 1999), so it is important to use strategies from the first day that encourage students to read the syllabus. Some faculty ask students to work in pairs, read the syllabus and generate a series of questions based on the syllabus for discussion with the faculty member. Others require students to read the syllabus and complete a quiz on key points. Yet other faculty members invite the students to assist in developing some aspects of the syllabus (e.g. sets of expectations for faculty member and for students). Many faculty members discuss the syllabus on the first day of class. If you chose this strategy, you will want to say a little about each objective and why you included it and what the student should be able to do by the end of the course. They discuss why a particular textbook was chosen and how students will use it in the course. Review the schedule pointing out that you have used bold type to indicate when assignments are due and the dates of examinations. Go over your course policies on attendance, academic honesty, and other issues. Your philosophy should be a guide here. In this talk with
students about your course, be human and use humor as it comes naturally to you. But, most importantly, make it clear to students what is expected of them.

One might think that the syllabus is a pretty standard document, but there is considerable variability in what teachers include and the format in which they present the information. Nilson (2007) presents course themes, requirements and information visually in a graphic syllabus. Bain (2004) advocates the use of what he refers to as the “promising syllabus” which consists of three main parts – statements on what the course will offer the students in terms of development and future opportunities; what students would have to do to attain the opportunities and development afforded by the course; and finally, a summary of “how the instructor and the students would understand the nature and progress of learning” (p. 75).

The following is one list of the major content areas of a syllabus, adapted from Altman and Cashin (1992).

- **Course information:** Name of the course, course number, credit hours, location of class meetings, class meeting time.
- **Instructor information:** Name of the instructor, title associated with the instructor (e.g., assistant professor), the instructor’s office location and contact information (e.g., phone, e-mail), times and days of office hours.
- **Textbook(s) to be used during the course.**
- **Supplementary readings that are required, recommended, or on reserve in the library.**
- **Course description:** A narrative similar to the college catalog.
- **Course objectives.**
- **Examinations:** Format of the examinations, dates of examinations.
- **Assignments:** Types of assignments and when they are due.
• Grading scale and standards.

• Course calendar: Topics addressed for each class, readings that the students are responsible for during each class, vacation days and special events.

• Course policies: Explicit articulation of policies related to class attendance, tardiness, class participation, missed exams, extra credit, late assignments, academic dishonesty, and classroom etiquette.

• Academic support services: Location and hours for the writing lab, locations and hours for services for students with disabilities, location and hours for counseling center, and resources available for students looking for assistance with their study skills and time management.

We will work on assignments, examinations, and grading in later sections. Here we give some thought to other, more general, items typically found on the syllabus. Choosing a
Textbook and Other Readings

This section focuses on selecting textbooks. In some fields, there may be a dozen or fewer choices and careful comparison is possible, but for many subjects there are too many textbooks to compare all of them. Instructors of some courses, such as literature courses, often do not select a textbook, but instead compile sets of readings or lists of books or resources for students to use in the course. In still other courses such as those in technology areas, course content may be continually evolving making selection of an up to date textbook problematic. Mary has faced this challenge in instructional technology courses that she teaches because of the pace at which technologies change. She often uses e-books that are freely available to students as well as comprehensive websites all of which tend to be more up-to-date than traditional textbooks as one way to address this problem.

Regardless of the type resource we use, textbook, collection of readings, online resources, many of the following suggestions for selecting a textbook will apply. We have to rely on what Nobel laureate (economics), Herbert Simon, called satisficing (Rainey, 2001), which essentially means choosing textbooks or resources that are good enough. To inform the satisficing process, several information-gathering strategies are typically pursued. For instance, one might ask those who taught the course before what book they used and why. Reviews of textbooks are available in many professional journals. In psychology we are fortunate to have comparisons of textbooks in some course areas where there are many choices (e.g., introductory psychology textbooks; Griggs, 1999; Griggs, Jackson, Christopher, & Marek., 1999).

These are some dimensions to consider in textbook selection (based on Dewey, 1999).

- Think of some course concepts that typically are difficult for students or are important in your mind as an instructor, and see how well the book explains them.
• Difficulty is determined by reading level and amount of detail. Consider who your students are and what they are prepared to handle. "Easier" books are not necessarily "dumber." That is, it is possible to present an idea in clear, simple language with good examples and facilitate maximum learning in students.

• Interest in a reading source is often facilitated by the quality of the writing. Some books are more fun to read than others. Does the text "draw you in?" Try to skim a chapter. If you can't skim because it's so interesting, that's good.

• Features like marginal definitions, critical thinking activities, self quizzes, and application sections can be good pedagogical devices, and have been found to facilitate student learning of the reading materials (Sikorski, Rich, Saville, Buskist, Davis, & Drogan, 2002).

• The length in pages for the book as a whole, and the length of individual chapters, may also be relevant to your course objectives. Consider how much detail you want students to master and which topics are essential. Think about the balance of breadth and depth that you want and the time you wish for students to spend on other, non-textbook learning activities. Many teachers try to cover too much in a course, which can hamper student learning.

• It's worth remembering that today's textbooks are quite expensive. New editions are published frequently, not because of rapid advances in knowledge, but to overcome the market in used books. Students do appreciate professors who attend to the broader issues like the cost of living that impact their academic lives.

• Consider the supplementary materials that are provided to students (e.g., study guides, CD-ROMs, internet access) and instructors (e.g., videos, PowerPoint slides,
computerized testing). You can get a good sense of the quality of supplementary materials and whether you want to require their purchase by students by talking to publishers’ representatives or visiting book exhibits at national and regional professional meetings.

- Consider also the wealth of free resources available on the Internet, and if any of these might serve as primary or secondary sources for the course.
- Your end-of-course student evaluations should include their comments on the textbook, which you can use to guide your decision making for the next semester.

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**Activity: Evaluate some potential textbooks or course resources.**

Get a copy of two textbooks or course resources that pertain to the general topic for a course you plan to teach in the coming months. Apply the criteria described above, and other personal criteria you may have based on your teaching philosophy to identify which book or resources would best serve your purposes in your course.
Decisions about Course Policies

Your course policies, which may seem mundane and sometimes legalistic, serve two important purposes: preventing problems and implementing your philosophy. These policies show how you want to relate to your students, a topic that could be included in your philosophy. For example, your attendance policy will look different if you think of nurturing students’ independence in a climate of trust, rather than teaching responsibility by holding students accountable. Some colleges will give you more choice than others in these areas, but you always will have choices to make that can contribute to whether you have problems later in the semester or not. Any policy should be clear and unambiguous and stated in clear, measurable, behavioral terms. Imagine the worst case, a disciplinary panel that expects you to explain why you failed a student. That will be easier to do if your policy was clear, fair, and followed.

Attendance. If you decide to have an attendance requirement that includes excused absences, your problem becomes one of deciding what evidence you will require to support the excuse. Students’ cars do have flat tires, they do have close relatives who die, they wake up with the flu, and they may have children who get sick. Do you want the burden of evaluating notes from doctors and auto mechanics? It can be done, and may have to be done, if your college requires attendance. However, some teachers prefer not to face this problem in almost every class period, and certainly not in large classes where a lot of time and effort would be involved in taking attendance. Students make choices, including whether or not to come to class, and if there is a cost in missing a class or a benefit in showing up then that will contribute to their decision of whether or not to attend class. For more arguments for and against taking attendance see Green (2007).
Missed examinations. This is a more difficult problem than attendance because the cost to the student of missing an exam (getting a zero) is high. There is little agreement about the solution to this challenging problem because most teachers want to be fair to all students; we want to be sensitive to emergencies and crises in students' lives while not condoning bogus excuses. The following policies are examples of ways that some instructors have addressed this problem:

- Allow students to take a make-up exam if they have “a legitimate excuse.” This may require the teacher to evaluate notes from physicians, funeral directors, and others. Additional implications include the need to prepare a separate exam and make arrangements to give the make-up exam.

- Allow students to drop one exam. This avoids the problems associated with giving make-up exams; however, doing this means that you will not assess or count performance on one part of your course. A student may decide if passing grades have been obtained on the first exams, to simply ignore the material for the last exam. The implication here is that mastery of three-quarters of the course content (e.g., if you have four exams) is acceptable. Also, a student may miss more than one exam.

- Give a comprehensive final exam that serves as the make up for students who missed earlier exams, and also represents a chance for other students to improve their grade in the course if they wish to take the cumulative final exam. However, some might argue that using this strategy, makes the final exam serve different purposes for different students, making assessment unequal and unfair.

For more advice on dealing with students who miss exams and assignments see Perlman and McCann (2005).
**Late assignments.** Give your assignments to students well ahead of the due dates, and in your course calendar indicate the days on which the assignments will be provided, as well as when they must be submitted. Remind students a week before the due date. For large, end-of-term assignments, consider inserting milestone dates throughout the semester where progress towards the final product can be checked to help students meet final deadlines. Even when you do those things, some students will be late. Most teachers lower the grade for late papers, often by a certain number of points or percentage for each day beyond the due date. Your choice here is to either be firm (you gave plenty of advanced notice) or implement your excuse criteria on a more fluid scale. Don’t forget, you could always be forced to articulate your policy during an administrative hearing if a student elects to protest a grade.

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**Activity: Write a policy statement for your course concerning attendance, missed examinations, and late assignments.**

After you write your policy, using clear behavioral criteria, review your teaching philosophy statement. Are your policies consistent with your teaching philosophy statement? If not, how will you change one or both of them?

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**Class participation.** As an undergraduate Jim was quite shy and would avoid classes where he might be expected to talk, so he has some sympathy for students who find this difficult. As always; however, one's course objectives and teaching philosophy are guides to your practice. In a later section we will see that some important objectives are accomplished best in small group discussions. However, what objective is served by requiring all students to talk in large
groups? If you do have a participation requirement you will face not only the problem of the shy student, but of the loquacious one. You also will have to evaluate participation by counting or estimating who talks in each class, and grading the quality of their participation. It is difficult to do that and teach at the same time. Incorporating online discussions into class participation often provides a way for all students to contribute to discussions. Participation should be encouraged rather than required, and in Unit 5 we will discuss ways to do that.

**Extra credit.** Assignments that are beyond what is usual, normal, expected, or necessary are called extra credit. It is not clear what purposes are served by these assignments. Students who are not doing well in a course should be studying more, not doing additional work. Perhaps students who are doing A work need a further challenge. Whatever the objective, any extra credit assignments should be designed so that all students have an equal opportunity to do the work (Palladino, Hill, & Norcross, 1999). For example, asking students to attend a lecture off campus may be more difficult for those without a car.

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**Activity: Writing additional course policies**

Based on the critical thinking interruptions on controversial topics in course planning, and your own personal thoughts and philosophy, write additional policies for your course. Try to be as comprehensive as possible in outlining the rules. After you write these policies, compare them to your philosophy. Are they consistent? If not, what will you change?
**Academic integrity.** Academic integrity is a nice phrase to use when saying, "don't cheat." Cheating on examinations is widespread. (This will be covered in more detail in the unit on testing and grading.) Plagiarism has been made easier by the availability for sale on the Internet of papers on hundreds of topics. Most colleges have a policy and procedure concerning academic honesty that should be provided to students. Your syllabus should make it clear that you will not tolerate cheating and what will be done to offenders.

Academic integrity is a serious matter, and you want to be fair as well as firm. You may want to convey a sense of trust for students in general, but toughness for cases of cheating. Students value fairness in their teachers; they do not want to see other students have an unfair advantage. If they see a teacher who has a casual attitude toward cheating, some students will take that as a signal to cheat.

Prevention is preferable to punishment. It takes a lot of time to gather the evidence and present it for a disciplinary process, which could become a legal case. Knowing that this effort is required, discourages some teachers from pursuing cheaters. There are steps you can take that will prevent cheating dilemmas from morphing into ethical and/or professional dilemmas:

- Provide a clear statement in your syllabus that defines what you mean by cheating and plagiarism. It is surprising how many students do not know what plagiarism is, particularly in this era when so much information is available online.
- Be clear on what will happen to students who cheat each and every time. Such students might be given an F on the particular exam or assignment, or fail the course. Whatever your decision, be consistent.
- Relate your policy to that of the college, including the disciplinary procedure.
• When instances of cheating are discovered, talk with students about reasons for cheating. Make clear that while you understand the pressure that many students are under, you don’t condone cheating. Offer to help students with study problems and personal emergencies or find help from other sources.

• Carefully monitor examinations. Some teachers use exam time to grade papers or read their mail at a desk in front of the room. This signals a casual attitude toward cheating. In fact, Jason asks each student to bring all of their bags, beverages, and pocketbooks to the front of the room before every examination. This sends a clear message that every precaution will be taken to ensure that the playing field during examinations is level for all parties. Create assignments that make cheating difficult. Most importantly, make it clear to students that you are a teacher who cares about honesty and integrity.

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**Activity: Write an academic honesty statement for your course.**

State what you expect from students and what will happen if they violate your policy. Consult your college policy and refer your students to it.

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**Classroom etiquette.** Although not typically listed as an element of the syllabus, we include a statement that indicates the value we place on respect: our respect for students and our expectation that they respect each other and us. This includes coming to class on time, being a good listener, not talking while others are speaking, and doing the reading before class. If your course includes online discussion and work, you will want to talk about expectations online as well as in class. We think that it is what you say and do in this area that has more of an
effect than what is written in the syllabus. For this reason, many faculty ask students to talk about their expectations of the faculty member as well. Being a model of respect gains respect.

**Grading.** Students will put more effort into activities that get them "points." They want to know what their assignments and exams are worth, and how many points they need to achieve a hoped-for grade. Each exam and assignment will be assigned some number of points, and thus an importance weight. Think about how these weights are related to your course objectives. They should reflect what you think is most important and what the student understands to be important based on the course objectives. Most teachers then determine grade cut-offs, with the number of steps defined by college policy concerning the use of plus and minus grades. For example, indicating that 90% of the total points is an A creates an illusion of objectivity. This and other grading issues will be discussed in Unit 7.

**Schedule.** It is a good idea to label your course calendar a "tentative schedule" to allow for flexibility if needed, and unexpected delays. However, exam and major assignment dates always should be firm and printed in bold. The schedule should let students know what topics will be covered with the hope that they will prepare the assigned material for that date.

O’Brien et al (2008) provide examples of syllabi from many different disciplines, while Nilson (2007) includes graphic syllabi that display course information in a visual format.
Planning Course Modules

Each section or unit of your course also requires planning using an approach similar to that used to plan your whole course. In his course on preparing to teach psychology, Victor Benassi has students design teaching modules (Benassi, Jordan, & Harrison, 1994). We recommend that you use that approach in planning sections of your course.

A teaching module includes these components:

1. Statement of objectives for the unit. Use the same process here as you did for planning your course objectives.

2. List of unit resources. What will you draw on for your class presentation and activities?

3. General outline of the major topics of this unit.

4. A detailed outline with the specifics of your presentation and class activities. This is your script for the unit.

5. Assessment and its relation to the objectives. Benassi recommends writing a “table of specifications” that relates individual test items to the objectives. You could do that with other forms of assessment, as well.

This might be a lot of work when you do it for the first time. However, you then will have a file for each module that can be modified and to which new material can be added, including evaluation of effectiveness.
Vision

What it would be like to teach a really great course? You would have done your best as a teacher, the students would have been involved and inspired to continue learning about the course materials after the course ends, and the materials from that class would be highly rated by your colleagues. Everyone would know that it had been a great experience. Having a vision for the perfect course is one way to set standards for both process and outcomes, and also to motivate you to improve your teaching.

Activity: What does your perfect course look and feel like?

Find a quite place where you will not be disturbed. Visualize yourself in a classroom and imagine what you would be doing and how you would feel if this were the best class you ever taught. You know, that perfect class. Imagine your course evaluations at the end of the semester; what will they say about this great course? Think in general about what would make this your perfect course. Do this until you get tired of it. Make some notes on what you thought about, then write a vision statement for The Perfect Course.
The First Day of Class

Critical Thinking Interruption

- Visualize the perfect first day of class for one of your courses.
  - What are you doing? What are you thinking about?
  - How are the students acting? What are the students thinking about?

The first day is one of the most important days of your semester. It provides an opportunity to get a good start in accomplishing important objectives. These objectives may not be stated in your syllabus, but nevertheless are related to the success of your course: presenting a positive impression of yourself, encouraging student participation, modeling your style, and clarifying items in your syllabus. We include a discussion of the first day in this unit on planning because this day is a kind of meta-class that previews what the semester will be like.

You reveal your plan to your students and begin to implement that plan.

Even after many years of teaching, teachers get a little nervous when facing a class for the first time. One solution is to write your name on the chalkboard, hand out the syllabus, make a reading assignment, and leave the room, thus postponing your nervousness to the next class. But you can do better than that. Good teachers use various approaches on the first day, depending on their style and the strategies that will be used in the course. For example, if a major strategy will be discussion, one suggestion is to include discussion in your first class.

McKeachie (2002, Chapter 3) has some good suggestions that may work for you, including the use of "ice breakers" and problem posting.
There is great variety in the types of activities you might pursue, and this variety is shaped by one’s teaching style, personality, and views on student learning. For instance, Jim has students complete a Background Questionnaire that asks them things like their hometown, hobbies, and favorite TV show. He then uses this as a basis for students introducing themselves to the class (when the class is small) or identifying students with shared interests (large classes). He also tells students some (not too personal) things about himself.

Most recently, Mary has taught blended courses with some in-class sessions and other sessions completely online. Prior to the first in-class session, she introduces herself online to the students and asks students to introduce themselves and share up to three features or experiences that make them unique. This information is used in the first in-class session which always begins with a group activity intended to introduce the focus of the course.

Whatever your style, we advise coming to class early on the first day. Being the first person that students see and greet communicates that you are approachable and accountable and excited about the upcoming semester. Moreover, it conveys an interest in them as individuals. Of course, whatever first day practice you pursue should be consistent with your teaching philosophy.

Perhaps the most important thing that we do on the first day is to begin to learn the students' names. As they used to say on the old "Cheers" television show, you feel welcome where everybody knows your name. Not only does this help to build better relationships with students, it also helps to identify students when there are problems. In small classes this task is done easily by rehearsing the names during class and making associations with students’ physical and behavioral characteristics. In large classes, Jim takes photographs of students in groups of six, records the names on each photo, and rehearses them at home while referring to
the Background Questionnaires. This has worked for Jim in classes of up to 100, although without regular rehearsal you might forget about 30% of the names by the end of the semester. Students are pleased when they see teachers make this kind of effort. Business must also be pursued on your first day. For instance, McKeachie (2002), and other experts on teaching suggest explaining your policies to students, clarifying your expectations for the course to prevent problems, and introducing the subject matter in a novel way. At the end of your first class, stay in the room for a few minutes to help students who have questions or problems.

There are many resources that contain additional suggestions on how to prepare for and to conduct the first day of class. These include websites such as The University of Toronto’s Center for Teaching Support and Innovation and books such as What the Best College Teachers Do (Bain, 2004) and A week-by-week guide to your first semester of college teaching (Lang, 2008).

Activity: Revised notions of the first day of class.

Based on your thoughts both before and after reading this section, revise and record your views of how the first day of class should run. Pay particular attention to the strengths and limits of your personality and your most important course objectives and teaching philosophies. Try being creative and provide a memorable first day experience.
Looking Ahead

We hope your first day of class goes well. Then you can look forward to the rest of the semester. The following units are intended to help you put your teaching methods into practice, assess your students' learning, deal with problems, evaluate your teaching, and contemplate your future as a teacher.
References


Unit 4

Class Presentations

Objectives:

- Understand the purposes of the lecture.
- Know the varieties of lecturing.
- Know what makes a lecture effective.
- Identify and begin to develop the skills that contribute to being an effective lecturer.
- Plan a class presentation.
- Identify ways technology can enhance lectures.
Picture someone who is teaching, then imagine yourself as a teacher. What aspects of these two images are similar? We would bet that in most of these images of teaching, students are seated and the teacher is standing in the front of a room talking. Like so many teachers before them, these teachers are giving a lecture.

If you ask teachers what educational method they use most in their classes, a frequent response will be the lecture-discussion method. This type of teaching is so prevalent in higher education that an individual with the rank of instructor in a U.S. or Canadian university is called lecturer in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world (Cox & Light, 2001). When teachers are observed as they implement this method, they tend to talk more than 80% of the time with some of their students talking (not necessarily discussing) less than 20% of the time (Nunn, 1996). Teachers continue to rely heavily on the lecture method as a primary way of teaching, which is why we place it first in these sections on teaching strategies. This unit focuses on three aspects of lecturing: preparing to lecture in general, implementing interactive lecturing, and using technology as a tool in lectures.
What is a lecture? Why use lectures in teaching?

What do we mean when we talk about lecture? There are many variations of what is meant by lecture. The political speech and religious sermon usually are pure lectures. While many teachers might give pure lectures, other teachers routinely complement lectures with demonstrations, visual aids such as videos and PowerPoint, technologies such as student response systems, and a variety of interactive and discussion-based activities. For us, the term lecture refers to a heterogeneous collection of class presentations or teacher-centered techniques designed to maintain student engagement with what is being taught.

Donald Bligh (2000), in his book-length review of the research titled, What's the Use of Lectures?, begins his first chapter with this conclusion: "The lecture is as effective as other methods for transmitting information. Most lectures are not as effective as discussion for promoting thought" (p. 3, italics added). He also concludes that lectures are "relatively ineffective" for teaching values, inspiring interest, for personal and social adjustment, and for teaching behavioral skills. In short, if your goal as an educator is to promote the storage of knowledge, lecturing seems to be a viable method of instruction. However, if your goal is to facilitate critical thinking, influence others to action or keep students’ attention for extended periods of time while you talk, you might be best advised to consider another mode of instruction. That's pretty discouraging news about this most widely used teaching method, but we will see that there still is something to be said for its continued use (Benjamin, 2002). In the remainder of this chapter, we will focus on why you might want to lecture and ways to do it more effectively.
Critical Thinking Interruption

- Under what circumstances do [or would] you lecture and why?
- How does the use of lecturing fit with your evolving teaching philosophy?
Why Lecture?

One of Jim’s colleagues, who loved his course topic, would say that he could not miss a class because, "I have a lot to tell them." Providing information that we want students to know is one reason to lecture, and it appears that there is research to support the lecture as one, though not the only, effective way to do this. Lecturing is an effective way to introduce new topics and relate the new topic to previously taught material. Some information may be so new that it has not yet been included in a textbook. Often information is scattered around across many sources, making it such that the teacher is best suited to integrate and summarize this important information for students. Even lecturing on material that already is in the textbook can be helpful. The instructor can rephrase an idea that may need clarification, and add examples adapted to the background and interests of the students. Keep in mind that transmitting information is a major objective for lecturing, but not the only objective. According to Burgan (2006)

…excellent lecture sessions raise questions in ways that inspire students to seek answers together. In doing so, they also can provide a shortcut for the student through the thicket of detail and argument that presenters already know by heart. … Most important, though, is the possibility of being ‘plugged in’ to a learning process that is shared in reaching understanding. … the vitality of the educational exchange in college often derives from the engagement of the student with a professor who is himself involved in a lifetime of discovery (p. 34).

Lectures when done well can motivate students and stimulate their interest in the subject matter (e.g., Benjamin, 2002; Cashin, 1985). Bligh (2000) reviewed 31 studies and concluded that lectures rarely influence the lives of students as powerfully as we teachers might fantasize.
When the measure is increased interest, lectures were found to be more effective than discussion or other methods in only 13% of the studies, and less effective in 52%, with no significant difference in the other studies.

The conclusion seems clear: lectures, as broadly defined here, represent one good way to transmit some informational objectives some of the time. However, lectures should, by no means, be viewed as a tool for all purposes in the college classroom. Traditional lectures have not been found to instill analytical thinking or critical synthesis skills in our students. Yet, lecturing “does not lead to poor learning … It is how lecturing is used that determines its effectiveness (Ramsden, 2003, p. 148).”

Other factors contribute to such frequent use of lecture in higher education. The furniture arrangement in a classroom leads students to make assumptions about the teaching style of the instructor (Graetz, 2006). Most university classrooms are designed to facilitate lecturing. This is particularly true in large classrooms containing rows of fixed seats facing the front of the room where the instructor’s station is situated. This leads to expectations that the instructor will primarily lecture.

Several years ago, Mary interviewed students in a computer science course that involved one session per week in a traditional classroom and a second session in a computer lab. The students actively asked questions and responded to questions from the instructor during the sessions in the computer lab; however, in the traditional classroom, they remained silent when the instructor asked questions and encouraged them to ask questions. When asked why they behaved differently in the two settings, the students routinely responded that in the traditional classroom, they expected the instructor to lecture to them (“that’s his job”) while when in the
more informal lab setting, they expected to be actively involved in working on material learned in lecture and asking and answering questions.

Class size is often another contributing factor in instructors choosing to lecture. Teacher talking time is correlated positively with class size. Larger classes tend to make some student-centered, active learning methods (e.g., group activities, class demonstrations, debates) more difficult to implement, but we will see in a later section that there always are opportunities for student involvement even in very large classes, so class size should not be the primary criterion for lecturing.

Let us confess to another purpose we have observed for lecturing; boosting the ego of the teacher. Many teachers have an image of themselves as exciting, inspirational classroom performers. Over the years, we have heard many of our colleagues talk about the “buzz” they get from performing well in front of a class when students are excited, ask a lot of questions, and laugh at your jokes. All these student responses can serve as powerful reinforcers for lecturing. This is fine if it enhances the teacher's enthusiasm and accountability, because that will help maintain the students' attention. But it is a problem if it blinds the teacher to more effective ways of accomplishing course objectives. Ludy Benjamin (2002) summarizes well why teachers lecture in a way that speaks to the roles of teacher and student.

The lecture clearly acknowledges the scholarly authority of the teacher -- an authority that most college students feel they have paid to see. It offers the teacher the best chance to illustrate the creativity, magic, and insight that are components of great lectures. It offers faculty the opportunity to inspire and students the opportunity to be moved, enlightened, or changed in dramatic ways. . . . [This is] an awesome responsibility . . . so if you lecture learn to do it well; if you do it well, learn to do it better" (p. 66).
Activity: Think further about why you lecture

Based on this discussion of the lecture method, reflect on the circumstances you identified earlier for lecturing and make any appropriate revisions to what you wrote earlier in this unit. Continue to be cognizant of how your thinking fits within the broader framework of your evolving teaching philosophy statement.
Lecture as Presentation

Lecturing is more than simply delivering a monologue to transmit content. It involves using good presentation skills and when appropriate, auxiliary instruments such as visuals and technologies, to increase understanding and to engage students in the content. Mastering these skills usually requires extensive practice and work.

We can return to the idea of how the influences of the artist and the scientist can be used in planning individual classes, just as they were utilized in articulating your teaching philosophy keeping in mind one caveat from Bain (2004). “Teaching is not acting, yet good teachers do expect to affect their audience when they talk: to capture their attention, to inspire, to provoke thoughts and questions (p. 121).” This does not preclude us from using the analogy of "college classrooms as dramatic arenas" (Lowman, 1995, p. 100), in which the teacher is the lead actor, the stage manager, and the author of the play when we discuss lecture presentations. Light and Cox (2001) echo the use of this analogy, explaining

“All too frequently lecturers have regarded themselves primarily as the writer of a lecture, and sometimes, albeit reluctantly as an actor delivering the lines. In truth they are writer, actor, director and producer, responsible for all aspects of performance and its preparation. The main function of these roles is to ensure that the key links between the lecturer, the students and the material shared between them are integrated, aligned and working together (p. 107)”. We will therefore use aspects of the theatre (acting, staging, scripting) to look more closely at lecture presentations.

Acting

The first problem for many of us is simply getting on the stage. We may experience stage fright, that common anxiety about public speaking. Over the years, we have experienced
ourselves or observed colleagues using some of the following strategies to help alleviate the anxiety of lecturing.

- Learn to relax. A colleague of Mary’s regularly sets aside 15 minutes before class time when he is not available for interruptions. He spends this time focusing on what he wants to accomplish in the lecture including the content of the lecture and how he hopes to engage the students. He enters the classroom focused and relaxed. Other colleagues use deep breathing exercises to help them relax, while still others find engaging in informal conversations with students immediately before beginning class a good technique for relaxing. There are a variety of self-help books (Manoth & Kase, 2007; Esposito, 2003) and websites (Fearless Public Speaking) that contains suggestions for being relaxed in speaking situations. If you are particularly fearful and stressed about speaking, you might consider investing in a few sessions with a therapist.

- Begin to lecture in small steps. This technique is called systematic desensitization. You develop a hierarchy of steps toward your ultimate goal, which might be to lecture in front of a class of 100 students. The first step might be to imagine yourself talking to a group of several friends. Later steps might be talking for five minutes in a small seminar, then in a class of 25 students. After you learn to relax, you go through the steps in this hierarchy while you are relaxed, until you feel comfortable with your class of 100 students.

- Understand that in most classes students are your friends. They want you to do well because then class will be more interesting, and they also sympathize with you because fear of public speaking is so common. Later in this unit we will suggest things that you can do to build on this initial student sympathy.
Finally, practice speaking whenever you get the chance. You might have a few favorite mini-lectures that you can volunteer to give in colleagues’ classes. If you are a graduate student, use opportunities to give seminar reports to develop your presentation skill.

Develop good communication skills. In order to be a successful lecturer, you must be able to communicate well. This includes speaking loudly enough to be heard throughout the classroom; articulating clearly (no mumbling, no monotone); and speaking coherently using organized, complete sentences. This takes practice and requires feedback so you can identify what you need to improve. You might find resources, such as the following useful:

- Lowman (1995), Chapter 4, "Analyzing and improving classroom performance." In addition to good advice, you will find a "communication assessment rating form" (p. 125-128) that you can use to analyze a videotape of your performance.

- Use a book of advice on public speaking. One that we like is *I Can See You Naked* by Ron Hoff (1992). The title comes from the old advice about overcoming fear of speaking by imaging your audience in an embarrassing circumstance, but Hoff has a lot of helpful advice about effective presentations.

**Staging**

Your attire can become a creative aspect of staging. Different attire can create different impressions. Occasionally, a real costume can make a powerful impression. When Jim’s colleague, Belden Lane, a professor of theological studies, lectures on Francis of Assisi, he dresses in a robe to look like Francis of Assisi. He also brings his dog to class because of his role as St. Francis, but the dog often "upstages" professor Lane, so be careful how you select
your props. Costumes and props will contribute to student learning only if they help students to make associations between the costumes and the ideas being presented.

Another aspect of staging to keep in mind is how resources, space and technology might be used within your lecture presentation. Before your first session, examine the space in which you will lecture keeping in mind how movement might be used (or restricted) by the space. An actor moves about the stage. Will you be constricted by space and equipment to remain behind a lectern or will you be able to engage your students more by moving within the space and not obscure students’ view of what you might want to demonstrate or show within the lecture? What resources will you have available (e.g. flip charts, white boards, maps, projectors, blackboards, video equipment, Internet connection)? Do you know how to operate the equipment in the room? What additional resources might you use to supplement the resources available in the space? Are visual aids, whether written on the board or projected PowerPoint slides, readable for all students?

Will you include demonstrations or visual examples either live or recorded in your presentation? Preparing the staging for such demonstrations prior to the presentation is very important. Is there sufficient space for the demonstration? Do all mechanical devices work correctly? Are all the necessary props in place? Will the demonstration achieve the desired effect? There is a risk in using demonstrations that are very dramatic in that students will remember only the dramatic effect and not the principle it exemplifies.

**The Script**

Lowman (1995) recommends that we create dramatic suspense in our lectures by telling a story that gives "listeners a sense of unfolding and discovery" (p. 124). We must be good storytellers.
To tell any story well, the narrator must become almost as caught up in the plot as the listeners. Even if they have told a story countless times, masters of the ancient storytellers’ art grow excited at hearing the tale once again. They save the big surprises until the end, laying the groundwork early by posing questions from the opening moments and dropping cues along the way (Lowman, 1995, p. 124).

In writing your play (lecture) you can use other devices from the theater in addition to costumes, so that your audience enjoys the performance. For instance, visual effect and vivid demonstrations are often well received. Friedman (1995) [Not in our reference list.] suggests that the teacher can serve as a great actor in several other ways:

- Great actors and teachers move around and use a lot of hand gestures. These movements foster attention and interest in audiences.
- Great actors work hard to make their performances seem especially unique each time. This is often very difficult when you have played an acting role or taught a particular class manytimes. However, it is those great lecturers that make it seem as if the words they utter have never been spoken before and have never been said so meaningfully.
- Great actors and great teachers are passionate and emotional at work. In Friedman’s words, they “feel the content.”

For example, when teaching the chapter on psychological disorders, Jim typically plays the role of a person with a variety of anxiety problems related to the weather, while descriptions of severe weather forecasts from the National Weather Service are projected on the screen. Students are divided into groups, whose task is to use their textbook to diagnose the disorder and speculate on possible causes. This demonstration incorporates enthusiasm, uniqueness, and student activity.
Light and Cox (2001) suggest using a template for scripting a lecture. Such a template allows you to craft a tentative time schedule that summarizes information such as how you will organize the content, the teaching and learning activities you will use for different parts of the lecture, what and when materials will be distributed, and when and how you will use resources and space. Such a template can serve two purposes: to help you organize what you will doing during your allotted time, and as an outline during your lecture to keep you on track. However, no matter how well scripted your lecture might be, you should be prepared to be flexible in terms of adding or deleting material from the lecture depending on student questions and feedback.
Interactive Lecturing

Many authors have claimed that students’ attention declines about 10 to 15 minutes into a lecture. Some of these statements are based on casual observation or personal experience. However, examination of the empirical research on this issue found little support for the 10-15 minute estimate (Wilson & Korn, 2007). Clearly attention is variable across individuals and classroom situations, so the teachers must use every reasonable tool to maintain all students’ interest during the lecture period.

In a study in which three two minute pauses during which students discussed and modified their lecture notes were inserted into lectures, findings showed that students in the experimental section significantly outperformed students in the control sections (lecture without pauses) on related quizzes and a comprehensive test (Ruhl, et al., 1987). Hake (1998) found that the positive impact of including interactive components on increasing student learning and engagement held regardless of the class size. What does this mean to you as you prepare to lecture? According to Biggs & Tang

The time periods [before inserting a meaningful break] depend on the students, the skill of the lecturer, the pace of the lecture, the difficulty of the material, the use of technology involving a change of activity the time of day, and so on. But the basic points remains: Do not talk longer than 15-20 minutes without a pause unless you are certain you still have their attention. When you pause, get the students to change their activity. (p. 109-110)

Some lecturers are very charismatic and can keep attention for long periods of time. If you examine one of their lectures, you will most likely find that they include a variety of attention keeping strategies, such as inclusion of stories, humor, dramatic episodes, questions,
and challenges that engage students in the content. According to Bain (2004), the lecture becomes a way “to clarify and simplify complex material while engaging important and challenging questions or to inspire attention to important matters, to provoke, to focus” (p. 107).

For those of us who are not charismatic in this way, there are quick, interactive strategies that can be used to create interactive lectures that intersperse lecture material with activities that engage and challenge students to reflect upon and apply the material while providing feedback on student understanding to the instructor. The Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) developed by Angelo and Cross (1993) are examples of activities that can be interspersed in lectures to make them interactive. An example of a CAT is “the muddiest point,” in which students answer the question, “at what point in today’s class were you most confused” or “what idea was most difficult for you to understand today?” The responses can be reviewed quickly after class and “muddiest points” can be cleared up in the next class. Some of our colleagues use a modification of this technique within the lecture by asking the students to write one question they have on the material just covered. If the class is small, the questions are collected immediately and the most frequent questions answered before proceeding on to the next topic in the lecture. Some additional strategies that we or our colleagues have used include: asking students to solve a problem or provide an example related to the content; asking students to make predictions, then polling the students on their responses; providing two minute break for students to work with a partner and compare notes they have just taken on a topic; or having students write the most important thing they learned about a topic. Additional strategies that involve technologies will be discussed in the next section on technology.
Websites such as Starting Point: Teaching Entry Level Geoscience and the Cain Project in Engineering and Professional Communication contain additional examples of strategies for making lectures interactive.
Incorporating Technologies into Lectures

There are many arguments for incorporating technologies in a meaningful way into lectures. The current generation of college age students has grown up in a digital world where technologies that allow them to explore information in non-linear format are prevalent. These technologies encourage users to explore information in a variety of formats (Tapscott, 2009). The incorporation of technologies into lectures assists the lecturer in presenting information in a way that addresses a variety of students’ learning styles through inclusion of visual, audio and kinesthetic prompts. Technology enables the instructor to demonstrate things (e.g. experiments) that could not be demonstrated live either because of time or safety constraints. It allows the lecturer to include visuals and videos to illustrate key concepts.

However, there are challenges to be considered when including technologies as well. The first thing that every lecturer quickly learns is that when you intend to use technology, you should always have a plan B in the event the technology is not available or is not functioning as intended. You will always want to check the location where you will be teaching to see what equipment is available and to try the equipment in advance to make sure that you know how to use it and that it is working. Will your use of the technology require particular technology skills on the part of the students, and if so, how will they obtain those skills?

If you intend to use technology in your lecture, make sure that the way in which you use it is meaningful to the objectives you have set for the lecture. This advice from a prestigious group of educators in a 1972 report on what they called “the fourth revolution” (Carnegie Commission, 1972) is very much applicable today. Use technology when:

- The teaching-learning task to be performed is essential to the course of instruction to which it is applied.
• The task to be performed could not be performed as well – if at all – for the students served without the technology contemplated.

In other words, avoid using technology simply to use it.

The use of several types of technologies and applications tend to be more prevalent in lecturing, and research studies provide some guidance on ways they might be used effectively in teaching. We’ll look specifically at two of these: presentation software such as PowerPoint or Prezi and personal response systems (clickers).

**Presentation Software**

The two current popular presentation software applications being used in teaching are PowerPoint and the relatively new, Prezi. PowerPoint tends to be used in a linear fashion which fits well with a traditional linear lecture. Prezi is used primarily in nonlinear presentations where the instructor might not have a particular order in which items must be discussed, but rather specific elements to be included at some point within the lecture. The order does not matter. Prezi is also used as a graphic organizer of key points enabling the instructor to display layers of complexity related to different points in a lecture. It should be noted that PowerPoint shows can be set up in a way that slides need not be accessed linearly as well.

Much has been written about the dangers of using PowerPoint incorrectly (Tufte, 2003). This classic example of converting the Gettysburg address to a PowerPoint address shows what can be lost when PowerPoint is used in some situations. Many resources exist to help you avoid pitfalls such as reading the slides, including too many slides or too much content on individual slides, overusing animations and graphics, and using fonts that are too small or blend into the background when using PowerPoint or any presentation software (Ball, 2002; Caputo, 2002;
Jackson, 1997). Ideas for using Prezi effectively in teaching can be found at sites such as Prezi.com and 13 interesting ways to use Prezi in the classroom.

Several research studies have explored the use of PowerPoint to facilitate student learning and student course satisfaction. Research in 1980 by Kulik, Kulik, & Cohen, revealed that students exposed to PowerPoint slides appeared to benefit more from those lectures. However, more recent research by Hardin (2007) discovered that while PowerPoint slides can provide catchy visual, and sometimes auditory, aids to facilitate student engagement with content, there is more to the story than that. More specifically, Hardin warns that good teaching continues to matter, with or without PowerPoint slides. Failing to give a good lecture can just as easily result in negative learning outcomes for students as the lecturer who fails to include any pedagogical aids to supplement their presentation. Research results from a study conducted by Brock and Joglekar (2011) on the effectiveness of using PowerPoint slides in teaching showed that effectiveness of using PowerPoint varies depending on instructor’s teaching styles and that lower text density, higher use of visual images tend to increase student engagement and learning.

Many instructors make their PowerPoint slides available to students either before or after a class session. Many times students request copies be available during class sessions so that they can concentrate on what the instructor is saying instead of trying to copy what is appears on the PowerPoint slides. There are several downsides to this particularly if the slides contain all pertinent information for the lecture including decreased student attention and engagement. Many instructors have found providing outlines of the slides which require the students to expand the outline based on the lecture is particularly effective way to use PowerPoint and increase student engagement.
Mobile Devices

Research has shown that using a variety of mobile devices ranging from PC tablets and iPads personal response systems not only increase student engagement but can lead to increased attendance (Deslauriers, L., Schelew, E., & Wieman, C.. 2011; Fisher et al., 2007; Hake, R., 1998; Mazur, 2009; Xiang et al., 2009). This research includes ways that clickers are being used very effectively in large and small enrollment physics courses. Each of these studies provides examples of ways to use the mobile devices effectively in teaching. If you choose to use such technologies in your teaching, the critical consideration is how you might use them to increase student engagement and learning. As with any technology, using electronic devices simply for the sake of using them without connecting them to achieving your objectives for the lecture will not have the desired effect.

Many instructors find student use of mobile technologies such as laptops distracting not only to themselves but to other students particularly when students are engaged in activities on laptops unrelated to course activities. Instructors handle this situation in several ways. Some instructors ban the use of laptops in classes. Some set up a laptop section of the classroom and require students who wish to use laptops for class purposes to sit in this area and banning laptop use from other areas of the classroom. One of Mary’s colleagues created a contract in which students agreed that they would only use laptops for class related purposes and any violation of this would result in banning that student’s use of a laptop in future class sessions.

Internet as a Resource and Tool

The Internet can provide a range of supporting materials for a lecture and even provide ways for students to access audio and video recording of lectures. For instance, a teacher might create a podcast or vodcast to allow opportunities for students to review the lecture at a later
Many instructors use tables, figures, pictures, and videos from the Internet to support lectures (Weiten, 2002). There are many other ways that technologies might be used to support lectures. Several of our colleagues ask students to post or email the instructor questions they have on material read in preparation for a lecture. The questions help the instructor understand what points to emphasize during the lecture on the material. Other instructors use online discussion boards to promote continued discussion on material discussed in a lecture session. Other colleagues use voice over internet protocol systems (VoIP) such as Skype or live virtual classrooms such as Wimba to deliver online lectures, or conduct virtual office hours or review sessions in which they answer student questions on course content.

It’s important to realize how the current zeitgeist calls for instructors to tap the full bounds of the Internet to support teacher-centered ventures in class. As an example, in a witty little piece from the Chronicle of Higher Education entitled from You Tube to You Niversity, Jenkins (2007) articulates how Internet resources like YouTube are revolutionizing the social, recreational, and analytical lives of adolescents and young adults. Gone are the days where lecturers would include figures and pictures to be consistent with research documenting the importance of presenting information through multiple sensory modalities to fuel student learning. Today, it’s not the number of sensory modalities that are tapped during a lecture, it’s the power of those resources to garner student attention in this technological age.

There are many websites that contain excellent suggestions and resources for using technology in teaching, including: Society for the Teaching of Psychology site, the Pursuit of Technology Integration Happiness, World Lecture Hall, and Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Teaching Online (MERLOT).
Activity: Planning a presentation.

This extended activity consists of six parts and is designed to help you plan a class
presentation or lecture that is teacher-centered. First, select a topic that you might present a 50-
minute class. Pick a relatively small topic that you can expand later if you desire. For example,
the topic, theories of personality, is too broad for a 50 minute period, but an aspect of the topic
such as trait theories would be sufficient.

Second, decide what information you students to learn about your topic. What are the
terms, facts, and ideas that you want students to know? Your task here is to state specific
objectives for the class. How will you know that your students know these things? For example,
you may want students to list and define the "big five" personality traits. At what cognitive level
[See unit 3] do you want your students to use the information? Perhaps you just want them to
remember things, like the five traits, or you may want them to be able to give examples of each
trait. In Jim’s lecture on personality traits, he presented the heredity-environment issue. One of
his objectives might be that students are able to state one research finding that supports each side
of this issue, or, at a higher cognitive level that students are able to evaluate the importance of
this issue if raising children. What are the specific objectives for the topic you will present?

Third, organize the information. Clear organization will help both you and your students
remember the material. There are several forms of organization (see Bligh) including tree or
hierarchical structures and concept maps. You might choose a dramatic form, such as a story, to
present your topic. Using our example on personality traits, imagine telling a story about a
family of five adopted children, each of whom has one dominant personality trait. Now, create an
individualized outline or structure for your topic.
Fourth, Create vivid examples that relate to students’ experiences. Students will understand and remember the information better if it is meaningful to them. This is where a background questionnaire completed at the beginning of a course or information culled from informal conversations with students before and after class can be particularly helpful. If it is difficult to find examples in students' lives for a particular topic, you may have to create a common experience in class. In a unit on perception, Jim used a demonstration of speech played backwards, which is something few students ever have heard. Write three examples that you will use in your presentation.

Fifth, transmit information in a way that catches and maintains students’ attention. You have started to do this by organizing the material and making it meaningful to your students. Varying sensory input is another way to hold students’ attention. Move around the room, but in a way that fits your presentation. Pacing back and forth can become boring or a distraction, but moving up the aisle and then pointing back to the front of the room may be dramatic. The use of visual aids from writing on the chalkboard to showing video clips and technologies such as PowerPoint or clickers increase students’ attention. Be careful not to overuse these things, however. Remember that using strategies such as demonstrations and student participation enhances student attention.

The sections on interactive lecturing and technology provided ideas that you might want to consider using. A later unit on active learning will present additional strategies you might choose to use.

Review your outline and determine places and strategies that you might use to increase attention.
Sixth, prepare lecture notes. Universal advice from experts on lecturing is to avoid writing your notes verbatim, using complete sentences. Instead, use an outline to help you remember what you want to say. Some individuals need more support than others from notes, and while it doesn't hurt to have the words there, you will give a better presentation the more natural you appear to be. If you have written everything that you intend to say, you will end up reading the notes instead of speaking naturally. Regardless of whether you use a template as described in the scripting section, an outline, notes or some other organizational tool, it should remind you not only of the content of your lecture, but also give you stage directions to remind you when to move, talk more slowly, pause for effect, or insert a prop or demonstration or activity to achieve a point.

You now have a plan for a lecture that will help you teach the information in a way that meets your objectives. You have chosen the content, organized it clearly, and have designed ways to maintain students' interest and attention. At some time you will have to deliver this lecture. We now turn our attention to two characteristics that many studies (e.g., Murray, 1983) have shown will enhance your effectiveness in the classroom: enthusiasm and rapport.

Enthusiasm is conveyed in a number of ways in your speech and gestures. You can tell when a speaker is tired and bored by a topic or when that person is excited about it. Not all of us, however, are naturally exuberant, and teachers cannot be passionate about every topic in their course. With some effort, you can learn to be enthusiastic about anything. According to McKeachie "like other learned behaviors, this takes practice" and that it will help if you "put into each lecture something that you are really excited about" (2002, p. 53).
Rapport means having a good, but not necessarily close, relationship with your students. Joseph Lowman (1995) has an excellent section on "fostering personal relationships with students" (p. 66ff). There are two important things that he recommends. First, learn your students’ names. This is easy to do when you have less than forty students, and more challenging in large classes of up to 100 students. You may be fortunate to be at an institution that provides student photos with class rosters in a classroom management system such as Blackboard. If not, you might want to try something like this. Take pictures of students in groups of six. One person in the group holds a 5” by 8” card with the group number on it. After the picture is taken, an assistant writes the names of the students on the back of the card corresponding to their position in the picture. Later, you match the cards to the pictures and practice associating their names. Students are impressed not only when you are successful in remembering their names and maybe even something about them, but also in your effort to do this.

Another recommendation to increase rapport suggested by Lowman is to you come to class early and talk informally with the students as they arrive. If you previously obtained background information from students, you can discuss their interests, as well as current events on campus or even the assignment for that day. All these things indicate that you care about your students, and if that is part of your teaching philosophy then these are ways to make your ideals real.
Getting Feedback on Your Lecture

A lot of work goes into planning a class and delivering a lecture, so it is important to find out what you did well and what needs to be improved. Your sources for this feedback are your students, your colleagues, and yourself.

**Students**

You stated your objectives in terms of what you want students to know, so obviously you will need to find out how much they know. You can find this out when you give them an examination or assignment, but if you find out sooner, you can do something that will help students perform better on the exams. The CATs developed by Angelo and Cross which were mentioned in the interactive teaching section are one way to obtain this information on a regular basis.

Students also can give you their view of the dramatic aspects of your presentation. You can ask them whether they enjoyed your lecture, were able to maintain their attention, and found your examples helpful. Even before they answer questions like this, you will be able to see their response to your presentation by their non-verbal behaviors. Do not focus on the few students who seem tired or bored when most of your students appear attentive and are responding as you had hoped. Some students are, in fact, tired because of illness or working a night job. However, when most students seem to be lost, this is a good time to use a CAT or even stop lecturing, and ask students why you are not reaching them.

**Colleagues**

Ask a peer to come to class and observe your teaching. In Unit 8 we will look at specific observation techniques. The least helpful observer is the one who visits your class and then, when you ask for comments, simply says, "that was a really good class. I liked your example of
the ball and chain.” You learn nothing from these general, courteous comments, although you do want an observer who is nonthreatening. A colleague within the same department may focus on content rather than teaching. If you want feedback on your teaching, consider inviting a colleague from a different discipline or a trained observer from a campus teaching center should your institution have one.

Make a recording of your teaching. That can be a stressful option, but it provides a record of your teaching for you to review and perhaps discuss with a colleague. Davis (2009) contains a good section on reviewing videotapes of teaching. We suggest that you watch the recording three times. First, watch the tape by yourself to get a general sense of where you need feedback. Be aware that you will most likely notice personal habits that another viewer will not notice. Next, ask a colleague or someone from the teaching center to watch it with you and pay attention to those aspects that concern you the most. Finally, review it a second time by yourself, stopping the tape at places where your colleague made suggestions and think about what you might do differently when you give this lecture again.

**Yourself**

You will have good days, OK days, and discouraging days. Immediately after the class, find a quiet place to sit and reflect on the class you just finished. What do you think worked well? What might have gone better and why? Consider making notes on your thoughts and put these with your notes for that day’s class, so you can review the notes before you teach this class again.
Looking Ahead

In the next two Units we will look at methods that are student-centered: discussion, writing, and other forms of active learning. Before going to those units, look at your teaching philosophy and the objectives in your practice syllabus. How well do teacher-centered methods fit within your philosophy?
References


Unit 5

Managing Class Discussions

Objectives

1. Distinguish discussion from other forms of student participation.
2. Understand the purposes of small group discussions.
3. Know how to manage effective discussions.
4. Know how to prevent problems in discussions.
5. Develop a plan for a class discussion.

In the next two chapters, we will look at strategies in which students take center stage as active learners. In this chapter we will focus on managing class discussion. Class discussions are one important way to get students more involved in their own learning. The next chapter will focus on other forms of active learning.

Critical Thinking Interruption

- Think about discussions in general, not only those that take place in a class setting. What makes a discussion a good discussion? List the characteristics of a good discussion.
Discussion Objectives

Often class discussions involve relatively little discussion; the teacher asks a question then waits for someone to answer. Most students try to look busy by taking notes (on what?) and wait for this irritation to pass. A few students often carry the load in the discussion, as they probably have during the entire semester. In a study of 20 different classes involving a total of 579 students, Nunn (1996) found that the median percentage of time spent in student participation per class was 2.28%, and the median percentage of students who spoke was 25.46%. That is, most students do not talk during "discussions" and those who do, do not talk much.

Let’s consider some teaching objectives that are best accomplished by involving all students in a discussion.

- If all or most of the students participate in a meaningful way in class discussions, you can be assured that the majority of your students are doing more than just memorizing facts. Rather, they may be thinking about ways to apply course information to their own lives. The major impetus behind the push for more active learning approaches in the classroom is the fact that students forget memorized facts and are more likely to recall meaningful lessons (Sikorski & Keeley, 2003).

- Learning to think requires practice. In order for critical thinking to occur, problem solving has to take place and decisions have to be made. According to McKeachie (2011) discussion gives students practice in thinking when they evaluate the logic of their own and others' positions, and develop applications of principles.

- When diverse viewpoints are present in a group, discussion and other active learning activities set the stage for students to explore varying perspectives on a given topic. For
example, men and women will learn more about gender role development when both genders are represented in a discussion, and even more when there is a diversity of cultural backgrounds.

- Finally, discussion is an occupational skill, like writing. Students should be aware that in business and professional life they will be taking part in discussions where their performance will be important.

For more reasons to use discussion, see Brookfield & Preskill's (2005, p. 21-22) list of fifteen benefits associated with using discussion methods in the classroom.
Managing Effective Discussions

"A discussion is an exchange of ideas where all members of the group have an opportunity to participate and are expected to do so to some degree" (Kramer & Korn, 1999, p. 99). Depending on the size of the class, even if the teacher did very little talking, there may be limits to the extent to which all students can be involved in a discussion. For larger classes, one way to give all students an opportunity to participate in discussions is to divide the class into small groups.

There are several reasons that separating classes into groups may not be easy for a teacher. First, they may not be used to conducting classes this way, so the process seems awkward. The intact class, like the lecture method, is like a comfortable old shoe that they can just slide in and out of at their discretion. Second, teachers may be uncomfortable when they have less control over what happens in the class and discussion may go in unintended or non-course related directions. In particular, there is a danger with discussion on topics like sexual orientation, ethnic diversity, religious diversity, and gender roles that generate a lot of student interest, but may result in a student making a comment that offends other students. Third, many teachers are challenged by students who either won't talk at all or dominate discussions. All these problems can be managed effectively with practice.
Forming Groups

**Size.** Discussions are most effective in groups of 4-6. In theory, a class of any size can be divided into subgroups, but often there are limits imposed by time and space. There should be at least a little distance between the groups to prevent crosstalk during the discussion, and not all rooms are large enough for that. Time might be a factor if each group is to report its conclusion at the end of the discussion.

**Flexibility.** In some rooms, chairs are bolted to the floor and in fixed rows with long tables extending in front of the chairs. While challenging, that arrangement should not prevent using small groups. For example, a group of four is formed when two students turn around and work with the pair behind them. In classroom with furniture that is flexible and easily moved, creating new seating arrangements can be fun and instructive for the class.

**Choosing group members.** Students learn more when the diversity of a group’s members is greatest, so when possible use a strategy such as counting off to form groups rather than allowing students to form their own groups. Sometimes it is best to assign students to groups to insure diversity. In a discussion of gender issues, for example, you may want groups that include (or do not) both men and women. It might also be useful to form the groups based on some mixture of skill level or class performance. This type of intervention might enable students who are struggling with concepts to discover how successful students are thinking about the class material.
Promoting Participation and Preventing Problems.

As an undergraduate, Jim was a shy student, so much so that he would avoid classes where he might have to talk a lot in class and give oral reports. For that reason he has a lot of empathy for students who are anxious about talking in class. We (Kramer & Korn1999, p. 101) offer these suggestions concerning shy students:

- The course description should clearly indicate that discussion will be expected, and this fact should be emphasized in the first class meeting.
- Help should be available for shy students either from the instructor or a student development center.
- Be accepting of degrees of participation. Students who need to confront their shyness need time to develop, and all of us have days when things are going terribly, and we prefer to remain quiet.

Shyness may not be the only reason that students do not want to talk in class. Some may have speech disorders. Your university disability counselor should notify you about these cases and can provide suggestions for how to help these students participate. Other students may come from a culture that does not approve of public self-presentation. You might explore other ways for those students to express their views.

The challenge for the teacher becomes how to promote full participation in discussions while encouraging active listening as well as talking, and preventing problems that commonly occur in groups. The following four strategies will help address such challenges: establishing clear ground rules, clarifying instructor and student roles, providing training in discussion skills, and offering alternative ways for students to participate in discussion, perhaps through the use of technology.
Establishing Ground Rules

When a group agrees publicly on how to carry out its work, the reduction in ambiguity can promote class participation and help to maintain order in the classroom. Ground rules for discussions can be set either by asking students to participate in developing them or by suggesting a list that is open to modification. Some believe that having the class set the rules creates a sense of ownership and increases an individual student’s commitment to follow the rules.

Activity:

Earlier in this unit, you listed the characteristics or guidelines that you believe make a discussion good. Compare the list you wrote with the following discussion guidelines (adapted from Schwarz, 1994 by Kramer & Korn, p. 101-102).

1. Begin the discussion with a question that all members understand.
2. Expect some level of participation of everyone, while allowing that individuals may participate at different rates or levels.
3. Prevent domination of the conversation by one or two people.
4. Allow individuals to finish their thought; do not interrupt.
5. Listen. Concentrate on what others are saying rather than formulating your response.
6. Paraphrase and summarize to increase understanding.
7. Ask for and give the basis for opinions and observations.
8. Encourage divergent views; everyone may have a piece of the truth.
9. Be specific and use examples wherever possible.
10. Keep the discussion focused on the topic.
Now take a moment to create a list that combines your earlier list with those guidelines above that you find most helpful. What items should be added to this list? Should any items be deleted from your original list?

Additional suggestions for ground rules and how to generate such rules can be found in Brookfield and Preskill (2005, p. 53-54) and Davis (2009, p.98-99). Following these ground rules will help to prevent many common problems, such as the dominant talker and groups going off on tangents that concern teachers.

**Instructor and Student Roles**

When a class is divided into smaller groups, the instructor’s role changes from being a discussion leader or group facilitator to being a supportive observer. In this role the instructor clarifies the discussion questions in the beginning, monitors the process and progress of each group, and, when the groups have finished their work, the instructor manages reporting, summarizes points across groups, and draws out the implications of the exercise during a discussion involving the whole class.

Typically, each group selects one student to serve as facilitator to manage the discussion and hold the group members accountable for following the ground rules. Another student in each group is selected to serve as recorder with the responsibility to summarize and report on the main points brought out in the discussion to the class as a whole. Jason often tells students that he has yet to decide which group member is going to present the group’s findings to the larger class during group discussions. This strategy holds all students responsible for explaining the group’s conclusions. See Doyle and Straus (1982, p. 291-292) for a more in-depth discussion of the group discussion facilitator and recorder roles.
Teaching Discussion Skills

Involving students in the management of discussions gives them an opportunity to learn valuable communication and group process skills. Frequently these are skills with which most students have little experience. It is worth devoting class time to the introduction, demonstration, and practice of most or all of the following skills:

- Active listening, including paraphrasing and summarizing,
- Keeping on the topic and managing interruptions,
- Accepting divergent views and managing conflict,
- Involving all participants and dealing with dominance,
- Facilitating discussion and enforcing the ground rules.

The following is a process that Jim has used to help students learn how to be effective discussion participants in preparation for frequent discussions during the semester. There are several reasons for this process: to model management of discussion in the class as a whole, to generate items that form the basis for setting discussion ground rules, and finally, to show the limits of large group discussions.

Jim asks students to generate a list of characteristics of a good discussion that should appear in the ground rules for class discussion and he records students’ suggestions on newsprint. If the class begins with students seated in rows, someone usually suggests that the discussion would be better if people look at each other. At that point if the group size allows and chairs are not bolted to the floor, he stops and has students rearrange the chairs so that students will be facing each other. During this discussion he has an observer (preferably not one of the participants) note how many people speak and roughly for how long. Later he contrasts the
extent of participation in the large group discussion with that when the class is divided into small groups.

When the group (the class as a whole) agrees that the ground rules are acceptable, he posts them so everyone can see them. He also provides copies for everyone in the class so they can bring the ground rules to every class meeting. For the first few discussions it helps to remind the class to take these ground rules seriously.

Telling students about skills needed in discussion is not as effective as showing how to use the skills. Ask someone with experience in group process to join you in modeling several of the ground rules. For example, your colleague can act the role of a dominant student. You can demonstrate what it means to be an active listener. Of course, this assumes that you are familiar with and experienced in discussion skills. If not, try to find a colleague who can help you or a workshop that will develop your skills.

If you value active learning and want to accomplish the objectives for which discussion is best suited, then it is worth providing the class time to include this training early in the course. You will then want to include small group discussion regularly throughout the semester. Problems may still arise; however, remember that prevention is the best medicine, and students may need to be reminded of three basic ground rules at the beginning of discussions: First, that student opinions are welcome, and second, the importance of respecting the opinions of others, including that of the teacher; and finally, that comments should be directed toward comments made by others, not the individuals who made the comments. If you still have a problem, remember that this is your class, and it is all right for you courteously to interrupt a student. The rest of the class will appreciate that. Then talk with the student after class or before the next
class, saying that you value all constructive contributions and help the student to become more constructive.

Activity: Refine your views on discussion

Relate the information you just read about discussion to your philosophy and course objectives.

- Begin by reviewing your philosophy and selecting ideas that suggest where you stand on the teacher- and student-centered dimension. Is this where you want to stand? Write your response.

- Next look at the objectives you wrote for the course you used in the section on planning. Which, if any, of these objectives could be achieved using small group- discussion? How would you do that?

- Finally, list any problems that you personally anticipate when using class discussion?
Other Types of Class Discussions

With today’s technologies there are ways that students can discuss information without having to face pressing concerns about feeling nervous in the presence of other students and the teacher. Many college courses today feature online discussions that students and teachers can visit at their leisure and post critical thinking questions, continue in-class discussions, solicit student opinions about current events as they relate to class material, post practice quiz questions for the students to discuss and/or raise questions about their assigned readings.

Many course management systems, such as Blackboard, include tools for setting up discussion boards. Such discussion tools enable the instructor to set up smaller discussion groups, something that is particularly useful for large classes. Some teachers set up class email listserves for discussions; however, one caution is that if the class is large or the number of emails voluminous, managing and organizing of responses can be challenging. There is an ever expanding set of free Web 2.0 tools that support on-line discussions. For example, many instructors use blogs (e.g. Blogger) to support discussion of course readings or a tool such as VoiceThread that allows comments in audio, video or text formats. Twitter, which requires students to condense comments to at most 140 characters (tweets), is a microblogging tool that some instructors use as a discussion tool in and out of class sessions. Click here to see an example of how Twitter has been used to enhance classroom discussion.

Regardless of the tool used for on-line discussions, the same challenges for managing face-to-face (f2f) discussions are often challenges in on-line discussions. Just as suggested for f2f discussions, Mary has students develop the rules they will use on-line to support good discussion. She divides students in large classes into small on-line discussion groups so that everyone has an opportunity to participate, and asks that one student facilitate the discussion and
another student report out on-line to other groups a summary of the group’s discussion. She models the responsibilities and strategies needed for each of those rules by facilitating the first on-line discussion and summarizing the discussion. She frequently privately asks students to ‘act out’ particular problem behaviors in the initial on-line discussion so she can demonstrate strategies for dealing with such behavior.

In order to make all students accountable for participating in on-line discussions, a teacher might require a certain number of postings per student within a specified time period. If you use this strategy, you will want to provide guidelines for what constitutes a good posting prior to the beginning of the discussion in order to encourage quality rather than simply quantity of comments. Mary provides students with a rubric or set of guidelines that sets out her expectations of what constitutes a quality comment.

Other strategies to generate discussion regarding class material that teachers have utilized with considerable success include the following:

- Encouraging students to attend office hours and discuss class material one-on-one with the professor and perhaps rewarding students for doing that;
- Giving students the opportunity to present their written thoughts or questions about class material by email or handwritten note.
Evaluating Discussions

There are many reasons to use discussion in class and if these reasons are related to some of your objectives, you want to know if those objectives have been achieved. You may think that participation itself should be an objective and want to grade students on the extent to which they participate. These are some reasons not to grade participation:

- Talking is not the same as learning.
- Grading the number of comments reinforces only talking.
- Grading the quality of comments is highly subjective.
- It is difficult for the teacher to manage the discussion while evaluating the students.
- In many cases you are grading personality traits, so shy students are at a disadvantage.

Rewarding, however, means that you encourage and recognize comments that are of high quality, as well as comments that indicate active listening. Small groups or the class as a whole can be rewarded for a good discussion. You can work with shy students to reward their less frequent comments, and perhaps reduce their shyness, whether in class, during office hours, or through on-line discussions. One area where grading may be appropriate is that of student preparation for discussion. For example, students might be asked to prepare summaries of sections of a reading assignment. Each student prepares a different section so that the group has all the information needed for the discussion. This puts pressure on each student to complete her assigned section, since without it, the entire group cannot complete its task.

Evaluating whether a discussion achieved the stated objectives is a different matter. We will work on course evaluation in a later Unit and many of the techniques that we present there can be applied to the evaluation of discussions, (e.g., student writing and videotaping). Brookfield and Preskill (1999, p. 215-216 new edition?) provide a checklist of questions to
assess the teacher's ability to manage discussions. They (p. 218-220) also recommend using a "discussion audit" to assess "how well students have observed the rules of conduct they have evolved to govern the discussion process." They suggest requiring students to do audits on a weekly basis and to summarize the audits in a learning portfolio at the end of the semester.
Whole Class Discussions

If a discussion is an activity in which all members of the group have an opportunity to participate, then there are clear limits on the size of the group involved. A General Psychology class with about 100 students in it and 75 minutes per class meeting gives each student less than a minute to talk. Given the realities of this situation, most students will not participate unless techniques other than those common in the frequently used lecture-discussion method, where the teacher occasionally asks a question and allows a few students to respond briefly are used.

Using small groups in a large class as discussed earlier or having students work in pairs is one way to ensure that all students participate. The teacher might pose a question, ask students to reflect and write for a couple of minutes, and then exchange papers and discuss their ideas with a partner. After allowing a reasonable amount of time for this, the teacher may ask for a few volunteers to summarize one or two main ideas from their paired discussion, using that information for continuing the lecture. This has proven to be an effective way to get most students to address the task and make participation much more inclusive than in a typical "lecture-discussion."

Productive Questioning

According to Bain (2004), students are more likely to engage in a discussion when there is “something to discuss that the students regarded as important and that required them to solve problems (p. 127).” Asking good questions is important regardless of the discussion format. In the whole class situation, one of the most common questions asked is, "are there any questions?" The typical response is a sea of glassy eyes, even though many students may have questions. What can you do to encourage students to ask questions?
One solution is to have students write their questions and submit them at the end of class. An alternative strategy is to ask students, "what was the muddiest point in today’s class?" or "what things seemed most confusing in class today?" Review their responses, pick out the points mentioned most often, and go over these ideas again in the next class. For more detail on these strategies and many other practical suggestions, we recommend Angelo and Cross’s (1993) excellent book on classroom assessment.

Productive questioning is not as easy as one might think, yet a teacher’s initial questions play a major role in determining how involved students will be in the subsequent discussion. You can be too general (e.g., What do you think of Freud’s theory?) or too specific (e.g., How many elements are listed on the periodic table of chemical elements?). Asking questions should fulfill some of your objectives and one way to do that is to plan most of your questions in advance. You also have to make decisions in advance on how you will handle the discussion process: Will you ‘cold’ call on students, or only call on volunteers? How long will you wait for an answer? A major mistake that many new instructors make is not allowing enough time for students to think and respond between the time a question is asked and the instructor provides the answer. What if there is no answer to your question, will you rephrase the question, follow-up with a more probing question, or continue to wait for an answer? Will you learn to be patient and bear the silence during which, you hope, students are thinking? Remember -- let your teaching philosophy guide you in making these decisions.

The Fish Bowl

To add more fuel to the fire when it comes to questioning options, we leave you with a potentially useful small group technique that can be used in large classes. This technique is called the fish bowl technique. First, present a question for discussion and ask all students to
write a response to the question. Then ask for volunteers to have a discussion in front of the whole class. Invite the volunteers to come to the front of the room and sit in a circle or semi-circle. The instructor facilitates the discussion. After the fish bowl group has responded, ask the remaining students (the audience) for additional comments.

Jim used this technique in a discussion of gender role socialization. A class of 80 students filled out a check list of statements about being masculine or feminine (e.g., boys don't cry). They reported whether they heard these things as children and if they would tell their children these things. Then they wrote what the best and worst things are about being a man or a woman. Next, two groups of five students responded to questions based on the check list of statements; one group was all female and the other all male. After each group discussed the questions, the other group responded, usually with extensive criticism of the views of the other biological sex. Finally, the audience added comments. Students usually view the fish bowl technique as a creative exercise, and more importantly, it’s a technique that promotes critical thinking and active processing. Additional strategies for effectively handling discussions can be found in Bain (2004, pp. 126 – 134)

Activity: Creating your own unique discussion format

We have covered a considerable amount of material related to discussion methods and their benefits for students. Remember however that you are an individual with a unique teaching style. Record your own personalized method for generating discussion in your classes. You may find some of the methods discussed in this chapter useful, but you will want to personalize the strategies you will use based on your teaching philosophy.
Looking Ahead

Discussion is one method for promoting active student learning. The next unit will focus on additional teaching strategies that use small group activities to promote active learning. Many experienced teachers are either unaware of small group activities or are reluctant to use them. Meyers (1997), Millis (2002), and Myers & Jones (1993) provide an introduction to and review of a variety of active learning activities.
References


Unit 6

Writing to Learn

And Other Forms of Active Learning

Objectives:

1. Know the characteristics of learning activities.
2. Know how and when to use writing to learn activities.
3. Be familiar with a variety of active learning techniques and resources.
4. Know and apply criteria for effective active learning.
5. Integrate learning activities in your course plan.
The idea that people learn by doing has been part of the conventional wisdom surrounding education for thousands of years, with credit for the idea often given to Aristotle or John Dewey. Experiences like internships, apprenticeships, and a range of other job training programs accentuate the importance of getting in the trenches and learning a craft. Yet, in college classrooms, this wisdom is widely ignored when teachers lecture to passive students.

Active learning is the contemporary label for learning by doing. This unit will offer an overview of a variety of active learning strategies and provide some opportunities for gaining experience with them. In a sense, the phrase, active learning, is redundant; all learning is active. Learning only takes place when there is active processing of information and experience. The simplest definition of active learning is that it takes place when "students do most of the work" (Silberman, 1996, p. ix).

The following are some characteristics of active learning (adapted from Mathie, et al., 1993, p. 185):

- The entire class has the opportunity for active participation.
- Students understand the relevance of the activity to course content or their everyday life.
- The activity is flexible enough to encourage student-initiated learning.
- The activity stimulates learning at higher cognitive levels.
- Feedback to students is planned into the activity, and is given at the time of or soon after the learning experience.
Activity

Design an assignment or activity in your discipline that uses as many of the above active learning characteristics as possible.

Articles, books, and workshops abound that provide advice and examples of how to get students to more actively participate in learning. The small group discussion approach included in the last unit is one important way of doing this. There are many other forms of active learning, both in and outside of the classroom, which can be done individually or in groups (Meyers, 1997).

Planning and managing active learning activities can be time consuming for the instructor. Successful implementation of such activities requires thought and advance preparation. Virginia Mathie and her collaborators (1993) provide the following advice on using active learning experiences.

- Establish rapport. Active learning might be a new experience for some students. It's not what they usually do in their college classes, so they need to feel comfortable with the instructor. This involves creating a "climate of trust" and that helps students get involved. Fleming (2003) provides strategies for establishing rapport with students.

- Stepwise progression. Because these activities may be atypical for many students, begin with exercises that are highly structured and directed by the teacher with clear instructions on what students are to do. This is especially important for first- and second-year students, and for activities that involve self-disclosure.
• Set limits. Instructors must be sensitive to issues of privacy and to individual differences among students. "Students should be given guidelines for nonjudgmental evaluation and feedback for particular exercises" (p. 189). Some of the ground rules for class discussion (Unit 5) would apply here.

• Consider content. Active learning can be used to accomplish any objective, including the learning of basic facts, but it "works particularly well with complex material that calls for the development, evaluation, and tempered acceptance of several alternative explanations" (p. 190).

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**Activity:**

• Review your teaching philosophy to see if it contains statements that indicate the relevance of active learning?

• Review the objectives in your course plan. Identify which of these would benefit from the use of some active learning techniques.
Writing to Learn

One of the easiest forms of active learning to implement is requiring students to write. We are not talking here about writing papers of various lengths, but primarily about writing to learn. Nodine's (1999) article, "Why not make writing assignments?" captures the essential ideas of this approach.

Expressive writing is written for oneself for the purpose of understanding a concept or topic. Thus, written reflection on material allows writers to clarify their own understanding of it (p. 167).

One recommendation from Nodine is stopping during a lecture to have students write a response to some question using "free writing, that is, writing non-stop, without lifting their pens from the page and without concern for spelling" or grammar. Minute papers discussed in an early unit are an example of this strategy. Short response writing requires students to be more involved in thinking about the question than would be the case without the writing. "Remember, the point is to get thoughts on paper where they can be reviewed and re-examined" (Nodine, 1999, p. 168). Here are two suggestions for using this type writing exercise:

- In classes of 30 or fewer, a writing exercise can serve as a basis for discussion. All students will have expressed an opinion that they can use in the discussion.

- In classes of any size, students can exchange papers with a partner to clarify what they have written, perhaps using guiding questions from the teacher. You did this exercise in the Unit on developing your teaching philosophy.
Activity:

Refer to the class presentation outline you prepared for Unit 4. Indicate the places where you could use a writing to learn activity. Write a plan for what you would do.

Review your plan with a peer.

Are assignments like these a lot of extra work? No, because you do not have to collect, read, or grade these papers. In writing to learn, students do the work to foster learning, and they receive feedback from their peers. Nodine argues that grading the papers changes the purpose of the writing and stifles the writing of authentic ideas. However, Jim likes to collect papers sometimes just to see what students are thinking. This encourages them to take the assignment seriously and it also provides an opportunity to summarize the various ideas that students produce. In a large class you might choose to read a sample of the papers.

Papers. All of us had experiences with the "term paper" when we were college students. Those of us who survived and continued in academic life probably enjoyed writing these papers, and our ability to do them helped us get into graduate school. Now we call them articles and they get you promoted. Most of our teachers gave us some guidelines for selecting a topic for the paper, maybe some help finding material, and a few weeks later we handed in our 10-20 pages. That still may be the model for out-of-class writing assignments, but here we want to consider a wider range of writing assignments and methods to accomplish course objectives.

Short papers (1-2 pages) can be of great value for some objectives. You may want students to think critically about a specific issue or to summarize a position on an issue. This format requires the student to be clear and concise in expressing a view. Short assignments also
work well for peer learning, where students exchange papers and provide feedback to each other. Additional discussion of the writing to learn approach and examples of short writing assignments can be found in Smit (2010).

Nodine stresses the importance of paying at least as much attention to the writing (and thinking) process as you do to the final product. She emphasizes the importance of giving students "the opportunity to experience and understand the process of writing . . . through drafts and revision which are ungraded" (1999, p. 169). This means providing input to individual students as they develop their papers. If learning objectives are important and if papers are the best way to help students achieve these objectives, then the time is well spent. The time may not be as great as you think because your focus is on helping students learn to think and to communicate their thoughts rather than on grammar and spelling. Ideally you would read a paper’s first draft without grading it to encourage the student to take risks on future drafts. Short of that, scanning the draft briefly in a student's presence or arranging a peer review session in class are beneficial activities. Providing questions that emphasize the peer readers' description of what they read can increase the value of a peer review session (Nodine, 1999, p. 171).

Activity:

Review the objectives for the course you planned in Unit 3. Would an out-of-class paper help to accomplish any of these objectives? If so, think about the value of a 1-2 page short paper versus a longer paper. Write a draft of this assignment. We will refer to this draft in Unit 7 on grading.
Making writing assignments more relevant to students’ daily lives is often advisable. Concepts are best mastered, when the learners find value in the process of applying what they are learning to their personal experiences and lives. When teaching Life-Span Development courses, Jason routinely requires students to take at least two different theories and use these theories to explain how an unidentified loved one has evolved into the person they are today. For example, interview questions might be developed using Vygotsky’s sociocultural approach. This theory then serves as the frame of reference by which the student shows “active mastery” of the course material. In essence, the question of whether factual theories can be used or not in the real world is answered. An added bonus is that many students describe having a great deal of fun putting their facts to work in this fashion.

Blogs and wikis which were mentioned in an earlier unit provide excellent tools for short writing assignments and peer-review activities. One of Mary’s colleagues regularly uses wikis to facilitate the writing of class notes. Each class session, a different student is assigned the role of class scribe. This student enters his/her notes on the class wiki immediately following the class session. The other students in the class then edit and expand upon the scribe’s notes, resulting in a collaborative set of notes. This activity has a side effect of helping weaker students develop note taking skills through observing what other students include in notes. Mary uses wikis for assignments related to course readings. Each student is responsible for summarizing in a wiki entry key points from an assigned article or book chapter which the rest of the students then edit and expand. She often requires students to create blog entries in place of submitting short written papers. Some faculty members use Twitter and ask students to summarize key concepts in at most 140 characters.
Students should be aware of the importance of good writing in whatever career they choose or media they use. You may want to consider making the development of writing skills a specific course objective.
Other Varieties of Active Learning Activities

Often when students are involved in active learning exercises, they are talking loudly, and laughing; that is, they are fully engaged. Can this be learning? As long as the objectives for the activity are clear, there is nothing wrong with using activities that might be construed as fun. Each of the activities we describe can be used to achieve one or more cognitive objectives including the application of principles or the evaluation of ideas. As you consider incorporating various active learning strategies into your teaching, keep in mind your course objectives, and how these activities can help students achieve these objectives. This is particularly true for critical thinking, which is something that must be done actively, not simply read about.

Where can you find suggestions of active learning strategies? There is actually a wealth of resources containing activities and strategies for implementing active learning. You might begin by looking at general sources like *Tools for Teaching* (Davis, 2009). The instructor's manuals that come with most textbooks have activities, which while they might vary considerably in quality, are still worth examining. Professional organizations for academic disciplines frequently provide collections of activities. For example, in psychology, the journal, *Teaching of Psychology (ToP)*, has activities in every issue, many of which have been accumulated in separate volumes that are listed at the end of this Unit. You can access an index to all subjects covered in *ToP*. Examples of sources for active learning strategies provided by other disciplines include publications such as The *American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) Prism*, The *Journal of Nursing Education*, *Journal of Education for Business*, *The History Teacher*, *Journal of Social Work Education*, and *Chemical Engineering Education*. For example in the latter journal, Felder (1990) provides tips for incorporating active learning into an introductory chemical engineering course. Websites of professional organizations such as
American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages; and National Council of Teachers of English are excellent sources of discipline specific resources. In addition there are publications such as Active Learning in Higher Education Journal, National Teaching and Learning Forum, and The Teaching Professor which regularly contain examples of active learning strategies.

Teachers certainly cannot use a shortage of activities as an excuse to avoid using active learning initiatives. The choices available can be overwhelming. You might begin by asking other teachers what has worked well for them. Miserandino (1999) has developed the following guidelines, which we have modified, to increase the effectiveness of such activities:

- Provide a background and rationale for the activity related to the goals of the course.
- Specify what students will be doing and your expectations for their participation.
- Indicate how the activity will be evaluated and if it will be graded.
- Be sensitive to students' privacy and do not ask them to disclose sensitive personal information.
- Respect individual and cultural differences (e.g., shyness, personal history, gender) in order to avoid embarrassing students.

If you are using an activity for the first time with no one else's experience to guide you, consider using it in a practice session with some friends. Be sure in advance that the materials and equipment work, and that you know how to help students use necessary resources. Anticipate questions and problems. Of course, you cannot anticipate everything, but we have found that even when an activity does not work, you can help students learn something by asking them to analyze the reasons for the unexpected outcome.

Case studies. These are most commonly used in business, law, medicine, and clinical psychology, but can fit in just about any discipline. For example, The National Center for Case
Study Teaching in Sciences; The Clearinghouse for Special Education Teaching Cases; and The Clinical Nursing Case Studies site each contain databases of cases for teaching specific disciplines. Dramatic cases present themselves in the news regularly as well as in your own campus setting. You can consult one of the many books on teaching with cases (Ellet, 2007; Barnes, Christensen, & Hanson, 1994) if you are using cases for the first time. A case may become a continuing example in your class. Jim used two cases of road rage during the semester and had students, writing individually or in small groups, to apply concepts from psychoanalytic theory, physiological psychology, social psychology, and other areas.

Projects. Out-of-class work might involve learning activities in addition to writing about things the student has read (i.e., library research). Projects involve experiences that become the basis for application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of course content. These may be individual or group experiences.

Some projects are quite simple, like having students practice "random acts of kindness," that is help someone without being asked, then write about the reactions. Other projects are more complex, like choosing some behavior to modify and applying the principles of reinforcement. Data collection projects may be done individually or in groups. Once again, instructor's manuals that come with textbooks and other sources contain many suggestions.

Other projects are grouped under the general heading of “independent studies,” and may allow students to obtain course credit for research they conduct or help a professor conduct. We believe that these types of experiences represent particularly powerful mediums for promoting active learning. Jason requires students who work with him on his research to meet on a weekly basis to discuss general issues related to his field of study. During these weekly discussions, students bring perspectives and ideas based on what they have been reading and writing about in
relation to their own individual projects. They learn quite quickly that they have an idea to add to broad-based issues in our field of study. Original and lively banter is easily maintained and teachers gain fresh perspectives on their topic of choice.

Games. “When somebody says, 'I knew it all along.’” “What is hindsight bias?” This is the Jeopardy television game show format for quizzing students. It, and other games, can become active learning in two ways; first, by asking all students to create items for the game, and second, by involving all students in playing the game in class.

Another approach is to have students design a game. Creating an adaption of an existing game can be quite challenging. A group of Saint Louis University graduate students adapted Pictionary for class use, and Jim used it effectively in his introductory course. (Try drawing a picture of chemical bonding or “The Merchant of Venice.”) There are few limits to teachers’ and students’ creativity in designing active learning experiences.

We have included a variety of examples of active learning strategies, but there are excellent resources that contain many additional examples and strategies. In particular, we recommend:

Active learning: Creating excitement in the classroom (Bonwell & Eison, 1991);

Student engagement techniques: A handbook for college faculty (Barkley, 2009); and

What the best college teachers do (Bain, 2004).

Activity

Using either the course plan you developed in Unit 3 or the syllabus for a course you have already taught and find at least two places where you could use one or more
active learning activities. Write a brief draft explaining how you would integrate these activities in your course.
Conclusion

Aristotle said, “For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.” Our education system might have misplaced that idea for many years, but now it is becoming strongly associated with effective teaching. There are many ways to encourage students to learn actively, and we have only scratched the surface here. It is the job of creative teachers to develop their own active learning approaches that are uniquely based on their personal teaching philosophy.
References


Unit 7

Assessment and Grading

Objectives

- Understand the purposes and kinds of assessment.
- Indicate how you will use assessment in your courses.
- Know the different grading systems available.
- Design a grading system for your course.
- Relate assessment and grading to your teaching philosophy.
How do you know that your students have learned what you want them to learn? How do you report that information? Teachers traditionally use tests and assignments to answer the first question, and assign grades to answer the second question, but doing either of these things is not as simple as it may appear. The process of determining viable course objectives, designing related assessment assignments, formulating standards for assigning grades, and then coping with the ramifications of assigning said grades can represent a pitfall-laden and stressful process for teachers.

The importance of comprehending the relationship between grading and assessment of learning goals cannot be overestimated. Learning requires knowledge of results (KoR); students need to know what they have done right so they can do that again, and what was wrong so they can correct it. However, learning does not require that KoR come with a grade. In fact, for some students a bad grade may create an emotional reaction that discourages further learning. For other students, grades serve as powerful reinforcement for learning-related behaviors.

This unit will focus on two topics: assessment and grading. The word, assessment, is more inclusive than the word testing. Assessment describes the various activities that help students and teachers track the learning process. The importance of aligning assessment with the learning objectives cannot be over emphasized. Assessment often “may determine what and how students learn more than the curriculum does” (Biggs & Tang, 2007, p. 169). Students learn what they think they will be tested on. This has been referred to as ‘backwash.’

Some assessment is *formative*, which means that it is used during the learning process as an indicator of progress. Based on the results, teachers might use different strategies or additional activities designed to help students achieve objectives deemed important by their instructor.
Because formative assessment is non-judgmental, these types of assessment strategies help teachers to shape, refine, and/or revise how they teach and what students learn.
Classroom Assessment

Angelo and Cross (1993) have developed a compendium of classroom assessment techniques (CATs) that mostly serve formative purposes. One of the most popular of these is the "one-minute paper," one version of which asks students to write a paragraph on "the muddiest point" in the day's class. Reading through these papers helps a teacher identify material that is confusing to a substantial proportion of the students and that requires additional work in subsequent classes. Another exercise asks students to write a summary of the main points in a lecture at the end of a class. Teachers hope, often erroneously, that student ideas regarding the main points discussed across each class match their own ideas. When assessments yield less than ideal results, teachers possess evidence to help them to alter their instructional strategies and then re-measure how students are progressing following the alteration. This link will lead you to five examples of CATs.

There are many additional options for formative assessment that one might pursue. For example, asking students to write drafts of papers provides an opportunity for formative feedback. In our experience, it is much more rewarding to help students develop their ideas than simply to critique and grade the final product. You may actually see learning happen! In contrast, little learning takes place following the presentation of the final grade.

Formative assessment strategies can be crafted in creative ways that not only provide information about student progress but also appeal to students. For instance, Jason typically sets up a Jeopardy program pertaining to material in his courses and creates competitions among students within and between class sections. Surprisingly, with only a prize of two extra credit points and a picture of the winners framed outside of Jason’s office on his “wall of fame,” he has found that students will study for these types of events, look forward to class, and strive to be
victorious. Further, such activities give teachers a chance to step back, see how students are doing with the course material overall, and then decide on whether pedagogical changes are required for the course.

*Summative* assessment refers to the final product, an examination, final lab report, project or paper. There may be feedback other than the score or grade if the exam is discussed in class or if there are comments written on the paper, but the context is much different than it is in formative assessment. With summative assessment, the outcome is decided, whereas with formative assessment the “final” learning outcome is still evolving and potentially changeable.

In many courses, summative assessment is the only kind that is used. This is another example of where one's teaching philosophy comes into play. Teachers who see themselves as "facilitators of learning" might be more likely to use formative techniques, while those who believe "students should discover how to learn on their own" may prefer to use only summative techniques.

________________________________________________________________________

**Activity:**

Using the syllabus you designed in Unit 3 or a syllabus you used for a course you have already taught, list assessments that you included that are summative, such as exams, papers, and graded assignments. Now list where and how you use or could use formative assessment techniques. Is the balance between formative and summative techniques consistent with your teaching philosophy?

________________________________________________________________________

Assessment varies on an *objective-subjective* dimension that is related to the type of test or assignment. Generally, multiple choice tests and solving math problems are objective, while
essay exams are more subjective. We will discuss shortly strategies for reducing subjectivity and increasing reliability of various assessment methods. For now, you should recognize that the objective-subjective dimension of assessment is not a clear-cut dichotomy. Rather, it is related, in part, to the amount of teacher effort that goes into the design and grading of the test. It takes a lot of time to write good multiple choice test items, but very little time to score those items. The reverse is true for essay tests; writing the questions may not take much time, but it takes a lot more time to grade them, especially if the teacher includes comments on the paper. Item writing time can be reduced somewhat if the teacher uses the test banks of multiple-choice or essay items that come with many textbooks. However, the quality of these items is highly variable; in fact they often require extensive re-writing to be useful.

Remember that our assessment goal is to find out if students have learned what we want them to learn, and this takes us back to the course objectives. The way we state course objectives should be related to our assessment decisions. Consider this example:

Objective: students will be able to describe the structure and function of parts of the nervous system.

Test item A: draw a diagram that shows what happens when a nerve impulse is transmitted from one neuron to another.

Test item B: When a nerve impulse travels from one neuron to another it crosses the (a) axon, (b) dendrite, (c) synapse, (d) myelin.

Test item A asks the student to describe, but item B asks for recognition and at a more specific level. Ease of test preparation and scoring may not be the most important considerations if you try to create assessments that are consistent with your course objectives. The question then
becomes whether you will change your methods of assessment or change your course objectives when the two are not consistent.

Activity:

This activity should prove particularly valuable for anyone who has never written test items. It will provide insight into how difficult the process may be while giving you some items to critique.

- Pick an objective from your syllabus.
- Think of a content area from your course.
- Write two multiple choice items, two essay items, and two different type items (e.g., short answer or matching), all related to the objective that you selected.

A good test is one that is reliable, valid, standardized, and has norms. Most teachers do not know if their tests qualify as good in this sense and rarely take the time to find out.

If precise assessment of students is a high priority for you, then you need to develop knowledge and skills in the area of educational measurement. If that is not your top priority, you still have the responsibility to provide reasonable tests. According to students, fairness is one of the most important characteristics of a good teacher (Buskist, Sikorski, Buckley, & Saville, 2002), so you should take realistic steps to make your tests reliable. Tests should have some face validity, that is, they should look like the objectives you want to assess. Further, your tests should have content validity, which means that the test adequately samples the material in the course or unit. You might ask a colleague who is teaching the same course to look at your exams to help determine if they have face and content validity.
Developing a standardized test can be very time consuming. You not only have to write good questions, but also develop a strategy to maintain security so that the questions do not get out. More importantly, because our courses change as we develop new content and methods, we need to revise the old test or develop a new test every time we made changes to the course.

It follows that we cannot have norms for our tests in the way the Educational Testing Service (ETS) can, but we can keep records of student performance over the years to help us make judgments about the relative difficulty of our assessments each year. A good enough test then, is a test that can be judged as fair by students and other teachers because it possesses signs of reasonable reliability and validity, and performance could be compared to that of students taking similar tests in comparable courses.

A number of useful resources are available to help you with the basics of test development. *Tools for Teaching* (Davis, 2009), chapters 41 and 42, and *Lessons Learned* (Perlman, McCann, & McFadden, 1999) chapters 8 and 9 contain useful information on test construction, especially for multiple-choice tests. You may also find these two IDEA papers: No. 16, "Improving Multiple-choice Tests," and No. 17, "Improving Essay Tests" helpful.

In addition to traditional forms of assessment, you may want to experiment with methods that are used less frequently, including oral examinations, performance assessment, and portfolio construction. A good overview of some of these methods is available in *Teaching Tips* (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006, pp. 79-85).

An important aspect of successful formative assessment is helping students become “test-wise”. Your tests will have greater validity if you can level the playing field by giving less experienced students helpful advice on test-taking strategies for both multiple choice and essay tests. Part of this preparation could include giving a practice test that students grade themselves

Even with your advice, some students may have serious test anxiety. A classroom climate of respect and openness should help alleviate this distress, but serious cases should be referred to your school’s counseling service.
Grading

One cynical educator referred to a grade as, "an inadequate report of an inaccurate judgment by a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has attained an undefined level of mastery of an unknown proportion of an indefinite material" (Dressel, 1983 quoted in Hanna & Cashin, 1988, p. 1). Unfortunately that is true in many cases, but it does not need to be. Our colleges and universities expect us to take grading seriously, and students and their parents obviously think grades are important. It often appears that our students' view of assessment and grading might be characterized as follows:

Success in life depends on getting into medical school, which depends on my overall GPA, which depends on my grade in this course, which depends on my grade on this exam, and that depends on getting specific items right or wrong.

We may wish that students were not so grade-oriented and operated under other motives, but grades remain a central fact of academic life. Not only are high grades rewarded in the academic world (summa cum laude), but grades often are factors in students’ career choices.

As a teacher, your grading must be consistent with the college’s grading policies and practices. Some colleges permit pass-fail grading; some allow pluses and minuses with the letter grades while others specify criteria about grade distributions. Most, however, give considerable latitude to the individual instructor, so you will want to develop a grading process that is consistent with your teaching philosophy. You may not wish to grade on a curve if your philosophy says that you want to help all students achieve their full potential, in your course.

Following a review of the college policies on grading and your unique teaching philosophy, you should work hard to develop a grading system that is fair and clear. This applies to both the grading of individual examinations and assignments, and to determining final course
grades. Fairness may mean different things to you and your students. Every student should have the same chance to do well in your course and irrelevant variables should not influence grades. For example, a student who often disagrees with the teacher should not have a disadvantage when graded. Students often think of fairness in relation to workload and difficulty. As one student adeptly put it to Jason, "this isn't my only course, you know?"

Does fair mean the same thing as objective? Is there so much subjective bias in grading essay exams and papers that it is impossible to be fair? Not if our grading process is clear to us and to our students in a statement in the syllabus that is reviewed before every exam and assignment. One way to increase fairness in grading is to indicate how each examination and assignment will be graded. For instance, on an essay or short answer question that has multiple parts, indicating the number of points each sub-section is worth might help students to make a decision regarding whether to pursue this particular essay, if they have the choice to earn points by completing a different essay (e.g., Complete one of the following three essays). This same level of detail and “fairness” is required when a student's final course grade is determined. A good syllabus will provide this information at the beginning of the semester.

**Grading Exams and Assignments**

Each examination and assignment should be related to the course objectives. More specifically, every exam item and the elements of each assignment should have a clear relationship to the objectives. When we look at strategies for computing final grades, we will see that one common way is to assign some percent of the final grade to each assessment, e.g., exams = 60%, paper = 25%, group project = 15%. This system gives a weight to the different items assessed, but it also assigns a weight to the various course objectives. You will want to keep the importance of each objective in mind when you design and grade assignments and
assessments instruments. The weights that you assign during assessment should reflect how important you believe each objective to be. Often we wind up doing much more assessment of factual knowledge than of the objectives that we view as more important.

If we want students to achieve course objectives, then it is important to be clear about our expectations. Students are concerned with what they will have to do and know. Questions such as "What do you want?" Will it be on the test?" are often an indication that requirements and expectations have not been made clear to the students. Providing a study guide for examinations, showing students the criteria or rubric that you will use to grade papers and other assignments are two frequently used strategies for clarifying requirements.

**Grading Papers and Projects**

In many subjects, writing assignments are often the best way to assess higher-level cognitive objectives. The 1-2 page paper can demonstrate critical thinking on a specific issue, and the longer “term paper” can assess students’ ability to integrate material and evaluate content. In other subjects, designing and implementing a final project that requires students to apply what they have learned is the norm. Regardless of whether you use writing assignments or projects, you have the responsibility to make your grading as objective as possible. Objectivity will be enhanced if you have criteria (a rubric) to guide your grading. In Appendix 7A we provide an example of a set of criteria for evaluating longer research papers; one can modify these criteria to suit other kinds of writing assignments. You should give a copy of your criteria to students as part of the assignment.

Making a global comment (“Nice work.”) with a grade does not provide the student with information to understand why you believe it is good work. It is far more meaningful for the learner if you make specific comments on the student’s ideas as you read the paper, for example:
“Your conclusion does not follow from the statements in your last paragraph.” “These sources provide good support for your criticism.” At the end of the paper consider writing a summary statement of strengths and problems in the paper. Often a faculty member might believe that putting such effort into comments is a waste of time; that students don’t bother reading comments. One strategy to promote student reading of comments is to require students to identify questions or specific areas where they would like feedback with their assignment. This might be in response to a prompt asking them to indicate what aspects of the assignment they found particularly challenging. This is also a strategy that might be used in the peer review process (Weimer, 2011).

Activity

Modify the writing assignment that you developed in Unit 6 based on what you have learned about grading.

Determining Final Course Grades

Determining course grades may seem like a totally mechanical process, but this process relates to your philosophy of teaching. Walvoord and Anderson (1998) make this clear in their presentation of models for calculating course grades. Each model makes assumptions that reflect your values and tells students what you think is most important.

- Model 1: Weighted letter grades, e.g., 3 unit tests count 45%, term paper 15%, oral report 10%, final exam, 30%. This teacher places three times as much value on the objectives measured by exams compared to written and oral presentations.
• Model 2: Accumulated points, e.g., tests 0-150 points, paper 0-50 points, oral report 0-20 points, final exam 0-120 points, total points available in the course 0-340 points. Then, letter grades are determined by taking a percent of the total, (e.g., A = 90% or 306 points). Here a student can compensate for poor performance in one area by doing well in another area, so the system allows students to make educated decisions about how they should balance their limited time in studying for the course.

• Model 3: Definitional system. This model is used less frequently. "To get a particular course grade, you must meet or exceed the standards for each category of work" (Walvoord & Anderson, 1998. p. 96). All areas are equally important and students cannot compensate for poor performance.

• Model 4: Mastery grading. This model sets criteria for performance, such as getting 85% correct on all examinations, then allowing students to retake different forms of each exam until they reach the criterion for mastery, or rewriting drafts of a paper until an acceptable version is produced. The assumption is that although students have different learning strengths, they all have the ability to achieve the objectives and should have the opportunity to do so.

• Model 5: Contract grading. This model places even more value on individual differences in students' learning preferences and their responsibility for their own learning. Teachers negotiate learning tasks and methods of assessment. The important thing is to help all students achieve the course objectives, although they may choose to do that in different ways.

Tools for Teaching (Davis, 2009), Chapter 44, contains more information on calculating and assigning grades.
Activity:

What statements in your teaching philosophy can provide guidance in determining how you will determine final grades in your courses? Will that depend on which course you are considering? Consider the assumptions related to the grading approaches that were discussed. Which of these are consistent with your teaching philosophy?

Use the syllabus that you designed in the section on course planning to design assessment assignments and construct a grading system for that course. How will you make this system clear to your students? Allow for a significant amount of time to complete this activity.
Looking Ahead

At this point, you have used your philosophy to design a course and develop a plan for teaching the course. The next Unit will introduce you to strategies to help gather information to determine if your plan was successful.
References


(Available: [http://www.facultyfocus.com](http://www.facultyfocus.com))
Appendix 7A

Term Paper Evaluation

[Modified from a table provided in a personal communication to Jim Korn by Barbara Nodine.]

Use a 5-point scale to evaluate the extent to which a student meets each of the criteria, with 1 = low and 5 = high. You may want to give more weight to the primary criteria. Rather than simply adding numbers to get a final score, you may want to use the criteria to guide your overall, global evaluation.

A. Primary Criteria: The Problem and Its Analysis.

1. Statement of the problem.
   a. Is the problem appropriate for this assignment?
   b. Is the question studied formulated clearly?
   c. Is the relation of the question to the topic clear?

2. Evidence.
   a. Is the type of evidence to be used well defined?
   b. Is the evidence reviewed well, with the relevant aspects of method and results emphasized?

3. Conclusion.
   a. Are the conclusions clearly stated?
   b. Are conclusions supported by the evidence?
   c. Do the conclusions relate to the question asked?

4. Implications.
   Are the implications of the conclusions for theory, applications, and future research presented clearly?

B. Secondary Criteria: Presentation.

1. Quality of the writing: sentence structure, transitions from idea to idea, comprehensibility, and readability.
3. References: style (APA or other), completeness, use of quotation marks where required.
4. Quality of manuscript: spelling and typographical errors, cleanliness of copy, formatting.

C. Overall Evaluation.

The author has:
1. thought about and analyzed the problem clearly and logically,
2. developed a good understanding of the issues involved,
3. formulated a clear question or issue,
4. assembled and critically examined the evidence and observations bearing on the question,
5. been creative in integrating findings and drawing conclusions, and
6. written clearly and effectively.
Unit 8
Evaluating Teaching

Objectives:

- Know what to evaluate in your teaching.
- Know different methods for evaluating teaching.
- Design a formative evaluation to get feedback while your course is in progress.
- Design an end-of-semester evaluation for your course.
**Purposes of Evaluation**

This is the model that we are using to guide you through this book:

Philosophy > Objectives > Methods > Learning > Evaluation > Reflection.

Evaluation of teaching provides a way for teachers to discover what is working and what might be changed to become more effective. It is a way to document strategies that are successful, so that over time the likelihood of successes increases. Evaluation of teaching helps us to create the best environments and strategies to maximize student learning. While we may share some results of our evaluations with others for reasons we will discuss shortly, a major way we personally use results from evaluation of our teaching is to assist us in our own professional and personal development as teachers.

**Personnel Decisions**

Evaluation data often are used to determine annual salary increments, and for promotion and tenure decisions (Hoyt & Pallet, 1999). These personnel decisions are significant for many reasons beyond the associated implications for one’s career. Answers to serious questions like “How comfortable will I be financially during trying economic times?” or “Do I have a stable occupation that will help sustain my quality of life for years to come?” can weigh heavily on the minds of academicians. They can also impact one’s self-image.

**Evidence for a Job Search**

Evaluation data can help substantiate teaching experience and success when applying for an academic position that includes teaching responsibilities. When you develop a teaching evaluation plan, keep in mind that prospective employers and potential colleagues will want to get a comprehensive picture of all aspects of your teaching in summary form. One way to do this
is through a teaching portfolio. Unit 10 will focus on developing a teaching portfolio, and evaluation data will be an important part of your portfolio.

Evidence of Professional Development

For the purposes of your development as a teacher, the evaluation process should be as extensive and unbiased as possible and allow you to make well-informed decisions about how well you are teaching and what aspects you might want to improve. By examining an archive of your evaluations you can track your development as a teacher using evidence based standards and document your development as an educator. Creating a teaching portfolio is one way to organize and archive your evaluations from year to year. Developing a teaching portfolio requires not only documentation of your teaching effectiveness but thoughtful reflection on your teaching.
What to Evaluate

Teaching is a highly complex human activity that is not easy to describe or judge. Evaluation of teaching involves much more than the average scores on end-of-semester student rating forms. Rather, it should include multiple components and offer a detailed picture of who you are as a teacher and how you got there. There are a variety of aspects of teaching that could be evaluated such as your syllabus and materials, communication skills, methods of testing and grading, and student learning outcomes (Cashin, 1989, Table 1).

Given all the possibilities, how do you decide what to evaluate? By this time in our program, one answer should leap to mind immediately -- use your philosophy of teaching as a guide.

How will you decide what dimensions of your teaching to evaluate? You might also consult articles and books, conference workshops on teaching, university teaching centers, and colleagues. All these resources can help you identify the most important dimensions of your teaching. If your school has a teaching center we encourage you to use their services, and we strongly suggest taking advantage of opportunities to attend teaching conferences and workshops such as those offered by your professional organizations or more general ones, such as the annual Teaching Professor conference. Elon University maintains an up-to-date online listing of such conferences.

Goals of the Course

In Unit 3 on planning a course we discussed the important of stating specific course goals. Doing that should provide you with some clear direction in developing an evaluation plan. Some of your goals will relate to student performance – what students know and are able to do. Other goals may relate to class dynamics; for example, having students participate in class
discussions. Still other goals may relate to student thinking and evaluation styles – offering opportunities for students to think critically and synthesize information effectively. Success in achieving these goals can also be viewed through the lens of your success as a teacher, and become an aspect of evaluating your teaching.

**Student Feedback**

Students often contribute a major portion of your evaluation data. Throughout the semester students can serve as a resource to help you decide what to evaluate with respect to your teaching. Student feedback can be obtained in a variety of systematic ways as well as informal ways such as talking with students before or after class, and asking questions such as: "How do you think our discussion went last time?" “What do you think could have been improved about class today to help you understand the topic?” If you have established a good rapport with your students, they will be honest with you.

**Your own Experience**

With experience you will be able to discern which perspectives may be most helpful to you and to draw your own general conclusions about what is important with your teaching. For example, Jim uses an article by Murray (1983) who concludes that enthusiasm and rapport are the two most basic dimensions of teaching, so Jim wants to be sure to evaluate himself on those dimensions. Jason believes strongly that in order for life long learning to occur, students have to start the process by thinking and analyzing information outside of class, thus one of his goals is to be available to students outside of class. Therefore, it is important for him to evaluate students’ perceptions of his availability. Mary believes it is important to show respect for her students’ experiences, ideas and struggles as learners. Her success in doing this is an important consideration as she evaluates her teaching.
Activity:

Use your philosophy to find those statements that identify the aspects of teaching that are most important to you. For example, you might value the diversity of your students or having them become critical thinkers. Think about how you might go about evaluating your progress in adhering to these important principles. This exercise should set the stage for best understanding and eventually implementing material covered in subsequent sections of this unit.
Evaluation Methods

There are many methods available for evaluating teaching as we mentioned earlier in this unit. We have found it helpful to use multiple methods when evaluating our teaching and encourage you to do the same when evaluating your teaching.

Evaluating before the first day of class

Evaluation can happen even before a course begins. Just as a scientist can evaluate a research design in terms of its adequacy as a test of a hypothesis based on a theory, you can do the same even before a course begins. In teaching, your hypothesis is that your methods will result in student learning and the theory on which it is based is your teaching philosophy.

Activity: Planning for evaluating a course

Review your teaching philosophy as it applies to one particular course. Consider a course that you are teaching for the first time or one that you find most challenging to teach. Does your course plan reflect your philosophy? Write a narrative to accompany the syllabus that gives your rationale for the plan based on your philosophy. How are your course goals, class activities, and assessment methods linked to your philosophy? Show your syllabus with the narrative to a colleague for a critique.

Evaluating Teaching in Progress

Some of what we do when we evaluate teaching while a course is in progress is the same as the formative assessment we discussed in Unit 7. In that Unit the focus was on finding out
what students know; here we are concerned with evaluating what we, as teachers, are doing to facilitate that learning.

The *Classroom Assessment Techniques* (CATs) (Angelo & Cross, 1993) presented in Unit 7 also apply here. Most of the techniques provide you with immediate feedback and do not take much time to prepare, administer, and process. If you use CATs to evaluate teaching consider adding a question that specifically asks about your teaching. For example, one CAT asks, “What was the muddiest point in today’s class?” You might add, “What could the teacher have done to make this clearer?”

Another approach that can be used regularly throughout a course is The Critical Incident Questionnaire developed by Brookfield (1990). This questionnaire invites the students to reflect on the week’s classes and identify moments when they were most engaged and most distanced by what was happening in the class. In addition, students are asked to identify specific actions (by teacher or students) that they found most helpful or affirming, most puzzling and most surprising.

**Early term evaluation.** We suggest doing a general evaluation about one-third of the way through a course to see how things are going. Ask students to write their answers to these questions:

- What is going well in class?
- What things can we improve? Note the use of the word, *we*, to indicate that improvement is the joint responsibility of teachers and students

Responses to those two questions should provide sufficient information to gauge how the course is going, unless there is a particular issue you want to learn about. For example, in the case where you are trying a new technique and want to be sure all students comment on its
effectiveness, you will want to include a question on the new technique. A variation to this evaluation technique is to invite a colleague or a staff member from your campus’s teacher center (if your school has a center) to conduct a focus group in which students respond to those same questions. Students are often more comfortable and honest when these sessions, often called Small Group Instructional Feedback sessions (SGIF), are conducted in a setting where they are anonymous and can’t be identified through handwriting. When using this early-term evaluation it is important to let students know what you learned and what you will do with the results. There are some student suggestions that you cannot follow (put windows in the room) or will not follow (don't make us learn these terms). Other suggestions are good ones and you should adopt them as soon as you can (speak louder, use more examples). Some suggestions or recommendations might require clarification or discussion with the class. These discussions are worth pursuing, at least for a few minutes of class time. Students appreciate receiving your feedback on their comments and it demonstrates your concern about creating the best learning experience for them.

Observation. "You can observe a lot by watching," is one of those humorously profound quotations from Yogi Berra. One of the least helpful evaluations occurs when a friend visits your class and later says, "That was a really good class. I liked your examples." These general, friendly pats on the back are of little value in the absence of perceptive, constructive criticism. Observation is likely to be more helpful if it is directed at specific aspects of teaching, rather than general impressions. The loudness of my speech and my use of examples is not only a matter of opinion, but behavior that can be observed. There are several ways of getting at these specifics, each of which involves the application of some system of observation categories. Appendix 8A presents categories that Jim has used. Other resources that you might find helpful
are Perlman and McCann’s extensive overview of peer review of teaching (available online), and Peer Review of Teaching: A Sourcebook (Chism, 2007).

**Videotaping.** Videotaping has the advantage of capturing your teaching in a format so that you can view it and that can be repeated or interrupted for analysis and discussion. Some individuals find being videotaped a frightening or even threatening prospect. The discomfort felt when facing a video camera usually goes away as the teacher becomes involved in the class. If that does not happen, it may help to tape two or three classes until the teacher becomes accustomed to the presence of the camera. Permission from students should be obtained in advance if they will be included in the taping. Students who do not want to be taped should be seated out of camera range.

The teacher should review the tape alone the first time to get over the emotional reactions that tend to result from viewing one's self in action: "Oh, look at my hair." or "I shouldn't be pulling at my ear so much." Many of these personal things often are not seen by observers. However, the tape should reveal teaching behaviors to you that an observer will note, and you will be able to consider changing things that may have a negative impact on the class. After viewing the tape alone, ask an experienced observer to watch it with you. A helpful observer will ask questions to clarify what you did and may call attention to specific details, but not offer suggestions until the end of the tape. In the section on videotaping in Tools for Teaching, Barbara Davis (2009, Chapter 53) provides some good suggestions to guide the review of a videotaped session.

**Student opinion.** If you want to know how things are going in large classes, but do not have time to review a couple hundred responses every week, consider asking a random sample of students for comments. You should be able to get a dozen students to give thoughtful, honest
comments about the course on a weekly basis. You only need to be concerned about anonymity if there appear to be sensitive issues in the class, for example, tension in the class because of a cheating incident. In most cases, students will be open about issues concerning clarity of presentations, effectiveness of methods, and fairness of assessment. You or an assistant can interview a sample of students asking them to speak for the class, as well as for themselves, which allows students to take on more of a group identity. Another approach is to form a class advisory panel as a means of obtaining regular student feedback (Brookfield, 1990).

**On-going reflection.** A strategy that many faculty members find helpful in evaluating their teaching is to set aside quiet time shortly after they teach a class session during which they reflect upon what went well and what they would do differently the next time they teach the course. This provides an opportunity for a faculty member who has used one of the CATs or other strategies mentioned to review and incorporate feedback from students or peers into actions items. One of Mary’s colleagues keeps a journal in which she enters the results of such reflections following each class session. The journal entries guide teaching decisions during the current term and when the course is taught again. It serves as documentation of adjustments made in teaching in response to student and peer feedback for annual reviews or teaching portfolios. It also assists with end of term reflection which is discussed later in this unit.

**Activity:**

What information about your teaching would you find useful while your course is in progress? How would you get that information? Develop a plan for formative evaluation of your teaching. Where possible, indicate when you will get that information during the course.
End-of-Semester Evaluation

The most familiar form of evaluation of teaching is the end of semester, student completed rating forms. Much research has been conducted on this process and it continues to provoke much controversy. However, there are other ways to get information about your course at the end of the semester that is more useful for revising a course and for improving your teaching techniques. If you consider evaluation as a system, not as data from a single end of semester source, you can combine data gathered from multiple methods during the course with the end of course evaluation to gain a richer understanding of the relationships among these methods and data.

Student ratings. The numbers we get from student ratings at the end of a semester are not very useful for developing our teaching and improving our courses; what do you do in response to a rating of 3.8? However, these ratings are used at many colleges and universities for administrative decisions about salary and promotion.

The research on student ratings shows that student evaluations of teaching are reliable and valid when administered properly (Cashin, 1995; Davis, 2009, p. 534-537). The ratings are also controversial (McKeachie, 1997). Those who question the validity of student ratings of teaching primarily are concerned with biasing factors. However, most of this bias can be prevented by proper administration of the rating forms.

Proper administration means that you use a well-designed form under controlled conditions. Many schools and departments design their own forms, which may or may not be designed to adequately collect meaningful data. Many institutions purchase forms such as those available from the Kansas State University IDEA system that includes forms for a variety of
courses combined with an administration and interpretation system that allows comparison of the results from individual courses with a national database of similar courses. That is an excellent system, but it is relatively expensive. Davis (2009, p. 537-540) provides guidelines for designing or selecting a questionnaire. A locally developed form that has been checked by an expert in measurement will work well for most purposes. The form that Jason uses appears in Appendix 8B. Another form to consider is the Teachers Behavior Checklist, which is based on a study of the behaviors of award-winning teachers (Keeley, et al., 2006). Controlled administration is not a simple matter of handing these forms out at a time that is convenient for the teacher. Cashin (1989) provides 34 recommendations for managing student ratings of teaching. Some of these recommendations are common sense: do not administer the form on the day of the final exam. Some recommendations concern requirements for statistical adequacy: get data from at least ten raters and from at least two-thirds of the class. Other important recommendations are that the instructor should leave the room while students complete the form and that the forms be collected by a neutral party.

Unfortunately, many of the recommendations are not followed by individual instructors or by their departments, and then the results are used to compare courses and teachers and to make important decisions. That is an ethical issue and it is the instructor's responsibility to be as careful as possible in designing and implementing an evaluation system. The instructor's competence in evaluation can then itself become an aspect of teaching that is reported.

Quantitative student ratings are often used to compare instructors across courses and in individual instructors’ courses from semester to semester. Because numbers do not provide specific suggestions for improvement, you will want to provide students with an opportunity to respond to open-ended questions. This can be done on a separate form in which you ask about a
variety of aspects of the course, or at the end of the quantitative form, or after each item on that form. We do not favor the second alternative (including open-ended questions at the end of the quantitative form) because students tend to feel that the rating task is finished and take a casual approach to the narrative items at the end. The other two suggestions work better. Providing space for a comment after each quantitative item allows students to give examples that can help teachers understand the rating and make improvements.

One of the problems in administering student evaluations is motivating students to take them seriously. One solution to this problem that Jim uses is to create a situation where doing the evaluation is the students’ primary task and for which there is group support. Jim sets aside one class period of at least fifty minutes that he indicates on the syllabus is for "course summary and evaluation." On that day in most of his classes he follows this schedule:

- Review the major objectives of the course and how we tried to achieve them, giving examples from the course content.
- Ask students to indicate why these objectives and this course are important for their education. The intent is to get students to take a broad view of the course, rather than focus on the most recent topic.
- Next, give an overview of the evaluation process for this class period, which begins by handing out a form with the items for which students are to write narrative responses. Typically, Jim asks them to write strengths and needed improvements in specific course areas like discussions, exams, and the textbook.
- Once students are finished with the previous step, Jim facilitates a class discussion about their narrative responses. Often students' comments may stimulate other students to agree or disagree, and to consider things they hadn't thought of previously.
• Students then complete the open-ended items, adding ideas from the discussion.

• Jim then leaves the room as a student distributes the quantitative rating form to the students and collects it upon completion. This student will later take the forms to the department office where the completed forms are held until final grades are submitted. This maximizes anonymity and seeks to protect students who might be concerned about an effect on their final grade.

• It is important to take one more step. Students are told that the ratings are not the end of class for that day. This is done to prevent them from rushing through the form so they can leave the class early. After allowing enough time for all students to complete their ratings carefully, which usually only takes about 5-10 minutes, Jim returns and thanks the students for being there and makes whatever personal comments fit the situation. This may include recognizing some unique event (e.g., the year of 9-11), an activity that worked particularly well, or an opportunity to be inspirational.

   When there are less than ten students, Jim does not use the quantitative form, but invites a student assistant or colleague to interview the students as a group. The interviewer uses open-ended questions as a guide and takes notes on student responses. The interviewer then types up the notes, which can be filed and submitted for evaluation by others.

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**Activity**

Design an end-of-semester evaluation of your course and your teaching that uses multiple methods. Outline how you will administer this evaluation.
Reflection

Imagine that you have completed your course, submitted your grades, and now can look at the evaluations that you collected. Although we approach this task with some trepidation, there is the urge to jump right to the over-all rating on the quantitative form to get our “grade.” Resist this temptation.

Before you look at your data, find time to sit quietly and think about your course. What aspects are you pleased about and why? What things will you change the next time you teach this course? Are there critical incidents you wish you could repeat and others you will try to prevent happening again? Write your thoughts down without editing them, and then look at your data.

Jim looks at the quantitative data first, yielding to the temptation to see his final scores. He then reads through all the written comments to get a general sense of what issues the students identified as positive or needing improvement. [I (Jim) note here that in almost 40 years of teaching there always was something that needed to be improved.] He then puts the comments in categories and totals the number in each category.

After completing the previous steps, Jim returns to his self-evaluation and adds the students’ perspective. (See Appendix 8C for one of Jim’s self evaluations.) We all place a good deal of credibility in the judgments of students as a group. While a few individuals may be picky or vindictive, most give honest helpful comments and positive reinforcement. While, unfortunately it is often the one critical comment that keeps our attention, it is important to focus on the whole picture that emerges.

The final step is critical in terms of the model we are using in this guide. Take the narrative evaluation you have written that includes your evaluation of the semester and your students’ feedback and compare it to your teaching philosophy. Does your evaluation show that
you were true to that philosophy? Where are the discrepancies? If you see discrepancies, then consider what you should change. Either you will change your teaching methods or revise your teaching philosophy or both. And the cycle continues.
Looking Ahead

Most of our previous Units in this guide have focused on the mechanics of teaching (designing a course and choosing methods) and data collection (assessment of students and evaluation of teaching). Unit 9 looks at how we include values and maintain ethical standards in our teaching.
References


Appendix 8A

Observation Categories for the Evaluation of Teaching

[This is a brief version of a long form that is part of an observation system developed by James Korn.]

Most of these categories use a 5-point scale, and allow for additional written comments and examples. It is possible to observe all items in these categories in any one class, but it may be more helpful to focus on a smaller number.

Speech

- Speed (slow-fast)
- Loudness (soft-loud)
- Expressiveness
- Clarity
- Reads from notes (little-a lot)

Non-verbal Behavior

- Movement (little-excessive)
- Gestures
- Eye contact
- Distracting mannerisms (no/yes)
- Energy/Enthusiasm (little-much)
- Nervous-Relaxed

Explanation

- Use of examples (few-too many)
- Defines terms clearly
- Rephrases difficult ideas
- Effective use of visual aids and demonstrations

Organization

- Teacher is organized well (disagree-agree)
- Provides overview and class, and structure (no/yes)
- Smooth, clear transitions
- Summarizes periodically
- Reviews major points at end of class
Interest

- Teacher shows interest in the topic
- Uses humor appropriately
- Shows practical applications
- Relates material to contemporary events
- Presents ideas and questions that stimulate discussion

Rapport

- Addresses students by name
- Talks with students before and after class
- Shows concern for students
- Respects students’ ideas
- Appears friendly, easy to talk to

Participation

- How much student-student interaction is there?
- Encourages questions and comments from students
- Asks questions of individual students
- Divides class into groups that are managed well
- Praises students for good ideas
- Corrects students
- Manages class well (extraneous talking, other disruptions)
Appendix 8B

Sample Instructor Evaluation Form
from Jason Sikorski

Were you provided with a course outline or syllabus at the beginning of this course?
Yes  No

Was an explanation of course attendance policies given at the beginning of the term?
Yes  No  Uncertain

Were the title and catalog description of this course consistent with the course content?
Yes  No  Uncertain

Was a written explanation of grading policies distributed at the beginning of the course?
Yes  No

Did your class begin and end at the schedule time?
Always  Generally  Rarely

Were any classes in this course ever cancelled?
Never  Only rarely and with an Explanation  Often

The time in this class was worthwhile.

1  2  3  4  5  Don’t
Strongly
Disagree

[This 5-point scale is used on all remaining items.]

The methods of instruction have helped me understand the material.

Major points in this class were made clear.

The instructor has been available to me for individual consultation.

It was possible for me to make comments, ask questions, or express ideas in class.

Class meetings have been intellectually stimulating.
Reading the assigned material has helped me understand this subject.

Exams and out of class assignments have helped me understand this subject.

My work for this class has been graded fairly.

The number of exams and other graded assignments has been sufficient to evaluate my progress.

My experiences in this class make me want to learn more about this subject.

I would rate the quality of instruction in this course as high.

I would rate the overall quality of this course as high.
I received among the best quantitative student ratings that I have ever had, but this is not my long sought-after “great course.” The students’ comments and my own experience tell me that I can do better. I don’t like the so-called Spring semester; the weather is often gloomy and students too often seem tired of school, so in that context I was quite pleased with the over-all strong positive evaluations that I received.

What I did well: getting to know my students (N = 22), planning class activities, and developing study guides for tests. I provided opportunities for students to meet with me individually, but less than 50% did so. I tried to help students who were doing poorly, but had two failures. Most of the learning activities worked well, but I probably should reduce the number and do a better job of evaluating them.

What I want to improve: active learning and critical thinking activities in class. I still am oppressed by the habit of wanting to cover material. Students did learn the five views of human nature, but I’m not sure they could apply these views. Most students liked the class and small group discussions, but I can do better in managing them.

I see two possibilities for the next version of this course: (1) just tinker with details, maintain enthusiasm and closeness, and I will do just as well, or (2) take some risks and try new things to promote active learning, critical thinking, and closeness learning.
Unit 9

Values and Ethics

Objectives

1. Become aware of the values you hold, teach, and practice as a teacher.
2. Develop and clarify ethical principles related to your teaching.
3. Know strategies for preventing academic dishonesty and incivility.
4. Understand ways to encourage integrity and respect.

In the first part of this unit we examine values and in the second part we develop and clarify ethical principles for our teaching. Those beliefs that we hold most strongly are bound to influence our teaching, so it is important for us to become aware of our core values and how they influence our actions.

Values and ethics are closely related. Respect for others and fairness are values that form the basis of ethical principles. These values also relate to the behavior of students and teachers in and out of the classroom. Behaviors related to issues of civility might include simple courtesies like not talking when others are speaking and more serious offences such as insults and physical assault. Academic issues related to ethics involve dishonesty, cheating in its various forms, and the promotion of integrity.
Values

Wilbert McKeachie has been giving practical advice on teaching for more than fifty years. In his book, *Teaching Tips* (2002), he has a chapter titled, "Teaching Values: Should we? Can we?" that includes a personal statement of a kind we rarely see in books of advice to teachers:

I'm a strongly religious person, a humanist active in my local American Baptist church. I believe strongly that love and respect for other human beings is not a *relative* value -- simply a current norm taught in our society -- but rather a universal value that should guide the behavior of all human beings at all times. . . . I believe that no one has the ultimate answer to the question human beings have wrestled with since the beginning of human self-consciousness -- What is Good? Each of us must make a commitment to the best we can conceive of, to give our insights to fellow human beings, and to welcome their thoughts in order that we may come closer to ultimate truth (p. 292).

This is a statement of deeply held belief based on religious faith. One does not have to share that faith to understand the value and how it can influence teaching. But should we teach our values to others? McKeachie says, "we can't avoid teaching values" (p. 333), such as honesty and respect, and we should help students become sensitive to issues pertaining to values.

Activity:

Highlight the sentences or phrases in your teaching philosophy statement that indicate particular values. Will you try to teach these values? If so, will you do this explicitly or indirectly, and what methods will you use? Write your answers to these questions and, if it seems to fit, include this information in your philosophy statement.
Think about whether your values are represented in your syllabus, for example, in class activities, assignments, content, and policies? Should your values be explicitly stated to your students or implied by what you do as a teacher or both?

If you are working with a partner on the activities in our Guide, discuss your answers with your partner.

The questions in the above activity are ones that you should return to occasionally, perhaps whenever you review your teaching philosophy or do a self-evaluation of a course.

Other great teachers have written at length about values. We recommend William James's talks to students that he appended to his *Talks to Teachers* (1899/1958), especially the lectures titled, "on a certain blindness in human beings" and "what makes a life significant." Also see Parker Palmer’s (1998), *The Courage to Teach*.

Coming to understand our own values and the values of others is perhaps the best way to appreciate alternative value systems. Although, respect for persons may be a universal value, individual autonomy is not. As such, it would seem logical that finding a way to implement your values in your own way may represent the purest way to “be yourself” when teaching. The journey toward being yourself is also your own, as there is no known tutelage available for understanding and articulating who you are from a values perspective.
Diversity

For many teachers, embracing diversity represents a personal value. Having students with different cultural backgrounds, abilities and disabilities, can add different perspectives to class discussions because students bring a greater variety of experiences and viewpoints to the discussion (Lynn, 1998). However, greater diversity among students also has the potential to raise ethical dilemmas. For example, to what extent should special testing conditions be available for students with learning disabilities? When your class has a significant proportion of students of color, or when your class is homogenous as far as ethnicity or race, how do you approach discussions of ethnicity and/or race? You may not be aware of gay and lesbian students in class who might be offended by student comments. Will you challenge students who make prejudiced statements against any group? How might you challenge them in a way that is respectful, informative, and still consistent with your overarching value system?

Many graduate programs now include full courses, sections of courses, and workshops on diversity issues, although these might not be directly related to teaching. Two sources that you might find to be particularly helpful in supplementing diversity-based coursework you may have had are Nancy Chism’s (2002) discussion of “taking student social diversity into account” and Barbara Davis’s (2009) coverage of this topic. The following points are highlights of their advice:

- Make all students feel welcome by treating them as individuals with their own preferences and goals. Learning students’ names, including ethnic names that you may have to struggle to learn to pronounce, is important.
• Provide opportunities for all students to fully participate, while recognizing that in some cultures speaking up is frowned upon. Students from those cultures can still contribute by asking questions and posting comments to online discussion blogs.

• Become knowledgeable about the various groups represented by your students. Understanding cultural and lifestyle differences and preferences will help avoid inadvertently embarrassing yourself or your students.

• Take care to be inclusive in your classroom. Use language that includes everyone (e.g., parenting, not mothering), and provide a range of activities that allow participation by all students.

• Be open to diverse views in discussions, but do not tolerate offensive comments. This is an example of teaching a value—respect for others.

• Consider doing additional reading and preparation such as talking with colleagues if you are uncomfortable imagining how you might deal with insensitive comments.

**Critical Thinking Interruption**

Imagine that you have a class of 50 students of mixed gender and race, and other diversities of which you are not aware. In a discussion of child development, a student says, “I think if you let little boys play with dolls they might grow up to be homosexuals.” What will you do in response to that statement?
Ethics

Activity

- What ethical issues concerned you most as a student?
- What ethical issues (will) concern you most as a teacher? These issues may be of concern to you now or may be issues you anticipate in the future.

In 1991, Tabachnick, Keith-Spiegel, and Pope conducted a survey of 1000 members of the American Psychological Association (APA) on ethical issues in teaching. The 481 respondents replied to questions about both their behavior as teachers and whether these behaviors were ethical. Some of their major findings from this survey include:

- Issues of competence (e.g. teaching material sometimes not mastered and teaching without adequate preparation), were frequently identified by respondents as an ethical concern and challenge.
- Teaching when distressed and encouraging competition among students are examples of judgments that respondents found difficult to rate.
- Controversial issues such as sexual thoughts about students or giving credit rather than salary for student assistants produced bi modal results.
- These following additional issues were identified as common concerns of teachers:
  - Bending the rules for selected students who seem more likeable or needy.
  - "Boundary blurrings;" attending student parties; dating students; asking or doing small favors for students.
• Sexual relations with students or other faculty (freedom of association vs. abuse of power).

• Some issues of concern may seem relatively unimportant but proved controversial to respondents nevertheless: selling unwanted complementary textbooks; and a favorite, "There was no consensus among respondents on the ethics of hugging students" (p. 515).

A survey conducted by Braxton and Bayer (1999) of 950 faculty members at a variety of colleges and universities produced a list of seven categories of teacher behavior that should not be tolerated. The seven categories with an example of each category follow:

• Condescending negativity - insulting students.
• Inattentive planning - not having a syllabus.
• Moral turpitude - having sex with a student.
• Uncommunicated course details - not stating exam dates.
• Particularistic grading - bias for or against certain students.
• Personal disregard - teaching under the influence of alcohol.

A survey of 482 students on two campuses showed that students’ views of ethical behavior are generally similar to the views of faculty (Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, & Allen, 1993). "Students rated professors who give some students unearned advantage and who act in ways that embarrass students to be the most unethical" (p. 149). Overall, students were "less condemnatory than teaching psychologists were toward themselves" (p. 161).

A survey of 261 graduate teaching assistants (Branstetter & Handelsman, 2000) produced some disturbing results. Most respondents reported practicing many behaviors that they believed to be unethical, including teaching material they have not mastered, teaching courses outside their specialty, and teaching when too distressed to be effective. Only about 20% thought that
their training for teaching was adequate. Less than one-third had any training at all for teaching and "fewer than 6% reported receiving any ethics training before teaching" (p. 46).
Selected Ethical Dilemmas

Self Disclosure

How much should you tell students about yourself and what should you ask them to tell you about themselves? For the teacher, some disclosure helps students know something about you and that you experience problems and joys just as they do. Jim uses his children and grandchildren as examples in class. He talks about applying operant conditioning to controlling his exercise and has students design a behavior modification program for him as a class project.

We should avoid asking students to disclose anything that would embarrass them or others. In some situations, there may be things we should not know about students, even if they want to tell us. This is a special concern in psychology classes where teachers may be seen as therapists. Even teachers who do have clinical training should not engage in any activity that appears to be therapy when they are in the role of teacher.

Writing assignments, such as journals in which students relate course content to personal experiences, have the potential to lead to students’ self-disclosures that could place you as the teacher in possession of sensitive information. While a rare occurrence, this might happen despite providing students very clear instructions and examples for assignments. Such situations point out the necessity of being familiar with support services with experts trained in handling sensitive situations available at your institution for students. In an introductory community-building exercise, Mary asks students to email her three things about themselves that others in the class most likely would not know about them. She stresses that they should select things that they do not mind having others in the class know. She then compiles these into a list and students attempt to identify which students submitted which items. On a few occasions, instead of submitting a list of three facts, students have written lengthy essays containing very personal
information, one of which resulted in a referral to the campus counseling office, and another, to a financial aid counselor.

*Critical Thinking Interruption:*

What are the limits on what you will disclose about yourself to your students? What limits would you place on what students should disclose to you? How will you inform students about those limits?

**Maintaining Boundaries**

Is it OK to meet for coffee with a few students from your class? What about having a few beers with them at the local bar after a challenging final exam? The truth of the matter is that these types of issues can arise frequently in the life of a professor, perhaps even more frequently for younger professors who are sometimes fairly close in age to their students.

Many professors actively attempt to relate to their students so that students see them as approachable. Being approachable can be very important as it opens up the possibility of responding to specific student questions in a one-on-one setting and encourages students to seek out answers to questions. The culture of your institution often helps define where to set boundaries when interacting with students. For example, many institutions encourage faculty members to meet their advisees in informal settings, such as over coffee, in order to get to know students and their goals and better advise them on course selections and future plans, while other institutions might discourage any interactions between faculty and students that could potentially appear to be social in nature. At many schools serving as faculty advisor for a student organization comes with expectations of attendance at the organization’s events both on and off
campus. Some institutions invite faculty members to assist freshmen with moving into dorm rooms and welcoming students and their parents to campus. At other institutions, inviting groups of students for a meal at a faculty member’s home is the norm as is attendance at sporting events and on-campus student performances. Mary previously taught at a college that required faculty to attend a minimum of two such events each semester to show support for students and increase faculty rapport with students. Most institutions, however, leave decisions of whether or not to participate in student sport and social events up to the individual faculty member.

Where to set the boundary with socializing with students outside the classroom requires serious consideration and is dependent on several factors including your comfort level in such settings, your view of how this might affect in-class teacher-student relationships, as well as your age and the age of your students. For example, relationships with graduate students on one’s research team are often more social in nature and sometimes involve eating a meal together or watching a local baseball game. One caution is to be sure whenever you make a decision about outside interactions with students, that you are careful not to place yourself in any situation that could potentially lead to unethical behavior or reduce your effectiveness in the classroom. Alcohol-use (particularly excessive or underage drinking) or situations that might be perceived as sexual harassment raise serious ethical concerns.

*Critical Thinking Interruption:*

What boundaries do (or will) you set with students? Why have you established boundaries in this way? How might your establishment of these boundaries facilitate student learning?
For an extended discussion of ethical issues in teaching and sample cases, you might consult *The Ethics of Teaching: A Casebook* (Keith-Spiegel, Whitley, Balogh, Perkins, & Wittig, 2002) and *The Ethics of Teaching* (Strike & Soltis, 2009).
Academic Integrity

In *The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity*, the Center for Academic Integrity, a consortium of over 200 colleges and universities, defines academic integrity as “a commitment even in the face of adversity to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideals into action.” (Center for Academic Integrity, 1999, p. 4) In this section, we will focus on issues related to the first value, honesty. Research quoted in the document just quoted found that at the time of publication, over 75% of college students surveyed indicated that they had cheated at least once during their college years (p. 2). The number was even higher for college-bound high school students (80%), the majority of whom did not consider cheating to be a ‘serious transgression’ (p. 2).

As teachers we have an obligation to act ethically and to teach certain values, one of which is honesty. This section focuses on strategies for addressing issues related to academic integrity.

**Critical Thinking Interruption**

Why do students cheat? List three or four reasons why you think students might cheat on tests or plagiarize on written assignments.

In surveys of more than 6,000 students from a variety of colleges and universities, Davis and his colleagues (Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992) found that rates of cheating in college ranged from 9% in a sample of women at a small, private college to 64% of men at a small regional university. The research focused primarily on cheating on examinations; 80% of
respondents said they simply copied from another paper or used crib notes. When students were asked why they allowed other students access to their answers, the most frequent reason (range of 76% to 88%) was because the other student was a friend. Other reasons included: "He was bigger than me." "I felt sorry for them." "I didn't like the teacher.”, and “I knew if I got caught nothing would happen.” This last reason seems particularly important. Davis’s own research and that of others whom he cites indicate a widespread view that "everyone cheats" and that it is "a normal part of life. . . . Academic dishonesty is reinforced, not punished" (p. 17).

A major reason that students cheat is that teachers seem not to care about it or do anything when they find that it has occurred. You may recall teachers who sat in the front of the room reading a book during an exam. Two ways that teachers show they care about integrity are: to be actively involved in the administration of examinations and the process of completing writing assignments; and to understand students' problems and establish a classroom climate of trust.

In Tools for Teaching (Davis, 2009, Chapter 38), Davis provides suggestions for preparing and administering tests that make cheating difficult, including using multiple forms of the test, having students sit in alternate seats and rows, if that is possible in a crowded classroom, and having proctors walking around the room. You also should talk to your students about cheating, how you are trying to prevent it, and what happens when cheating is detected.

Preventing academic dishonesty is a process that requires teachers to be consistent and explain to students why they believe that honesty and integrity are so important. Strategies to consider are clearly presenting your policies on the first day of class in tandem with your values of fairness and integrity or pointing out that the procedures you use to prevent cheating are used in the interest of fairness to all students.
Increased use of emerging technologies has made cheating easier (Hartnett, 2011), and is believed to contribute not only to an increase in cheating, but a rising belief among some students that using technology to cheat is not ethically wrong (Etter, Cramer, & Finn, 2006). Schools.com, an Internet site containing trends in higher education, reported that 71% of students surveyed did not believe that copying from the Internet was plagiarism (Schools.Com, 2011). The Internet contains sites where students can purchase completed papers, find solutions to textbook problems (e.g. Cramster) and videos demonstrating new ways of cheating (e.g. How to cheat on any test). Mobile devices, such as cell phones that can be used to take photos of tests, message a friend for an answer, or search online for an answer, and store information for tests make detecting cheating more challenging. Many institutions use commercial programs, such as turnitin to detect plagiarism on written assignments.

________________________________________________________________________

Activity

What will you do if you think a student is cheating? How will you handle this situation if it is clear that you are right? This is something you should consider before it happens. Write a plan detailing how you will move from thinking that cheating is going on to concluding that it is going on, and the actions you will take in such a situation.

________________________________________________________________________

Establishing a climate of understanding and trust to prevent cheating is even more important than knowing how to catch and deal with cheaters. The following suggestions have been adapted from McKeachie and Svinicki (2006, p. 116-117):

• Reduce the pressure. For example, do not put too much weight on any one exam or assignment.
• Make reasonable demands by making assignments of realistic length and difficulty. It is better to set modest goals and find ways to challenge students than to ask too much at first.

• Develop group norms supporting honesty. Involve students in designing a system to promote honesty, like the honor system. Remember that fairness is the ethical principle of most concern to students.

• Preserve students' sense of individuality. Learning their names is the most effective way to do this when class size permits.

• Talk about integrity as a value.

  Plagiarism presents some different problems. Understanding and trust are just as important here, but in addition, students need some specific instruction in the writing process.

Do not assume that students, even seniors, know what plagiarism is. In some departments your course may be the first one in which students have had a writing assignment or, if they had one before, where anyone talked with them about plagiarism. You should discuss this at the beginning of the course, when you discuss different forms of honesty, and then again when you make specific writing assignments. Your discussion should include:

• Forms of plagiarism: (a) Handing in an entire paper written by someone else. Show students that you are aware of Internet sources that provide completed papers. (b) Copying entire sections from an article or other source without quotation marks and a citation. (c) Paraphrasing without giving credit by a citation.

• Give examples of the second and third forms, including good and bad paraphrasing.

• Clarify college penalties for cheating, department policy if there is one, and your penalties; put these in writing in your syllabus.
Know what you will do to detect plagiarism and to confront alleged perpetrators. You might add that process to what you wrote for the previous activity. However, there is a delicate balance here between detecting offenders and maintaining the climate of trust you may want to develop. Rebecca Howard (2001) pointed out the importance of working with students as they develop their idea for a paper, critiquing early drafts (at least one) without grading them, and providing thoughtful comments on the final paper. She recognizes that in large classes this may be difficult, if not impossible. Refer back to our discussion of writing assignments in Unit 6.

Part of your preparation for dealing with academic dishonesty should be to find out the extent to which you will have administrative support when you have to apply penalties for cheating. Know who the people are who will (not just who should) back you up: department chair, college dean, student honor court, or others. There have been cases where instructors have been left out on a limb, while others sawed it off. Confronting cheating is difficult and time-consuming, but it is the right (i.e., ethical) thing to do.

Activity

Write an academic integrity statement for your syllabus. How and when will you talk with students about these issues? How do these things relate to your philosophy of teaching?

On line courses present other challenges to maintaining integrity. For good advice on dealing with cheating and related issues in those courses see the Distance Education Report, “Promoting Academic Integrity in Online Education¹” (2010).

¹ Requires free subscription to Faculty Focus
Civility

A few years ago an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* began: "It's every professor's nightmare: losing control of the class. And if anecdotal evidence counts for anything, it's happening more and more" (Schneider, 1998, p. A12). Well, anecdotal evidence should not count for much, but the incidents of abuse described in this article did happen, and teachers should be prepared to respond, whether to the common problem of students talking during a lecture or the infrequent insults or threats.

Respect for others is the value in question here. Some of the points made in our discussion of integrity apply here. Understand the situation in which students find themselves, including the demands of your course. Model respect for others and discuss it as a value. Treat students as individuals (again, we stress the value of learning their names) and establish some kind of personal relationship.

The large class situation concerns many teachers. Jim’s Saint Louis University colleague, Michael Ross, has over 300 students in his General Psychology class. Jim has visited this class in a large auditorium and was amazed at the level of attention from this mass of students, so this approach seems to work. Ross describes what he does when students talk during lecture:

1. I stare directly at them while I lecture. Once they make eye contact with me, they get the message.
2. Walk to where they are sitting and lecture directly to them.
3. Stop lecturing a stare at them until they stop talking.
4. Same as step 3 followed by saying that only one of us can talk at a time, and if they prefer that it be them or me. I wait for an audible reply.

5. Same as 4, but as I dismiss the class I walk to where they are seated and ask them to see me after class. I tell them either to stop talking or drop the course.

6. I have never had to do this, but I would request their removal from the class.

Extreme emergencies may occur. For example, two students in an evening class at Jim’s school were prepared to fight because of a dispute. You should not worry much about these unlikely events happening to you, but you should know how to reach your campus security personnel in the event something unanticipated does occur.

Of course, civility is a two-way street; teachers also may insult and threaten students. Sometimes, this is simply subtle sarcasm, but at other times the insults are direct: "Most of you aren't smart enough to pass this course, and you won't." Sexism and racism may be overt or covert, and sexual harassment continues to be a problem. Any sign of lack of respect for students by teachers can become an occasion for a reaction by those students, individually or collectively.

The ethical teacher will work hard to behave civilly toward students, and when mistakes do occur, these teachers learn from these errors and work hard to prevent their recurrence. However, there are less obvious forms of incivility to which teachers should be sensitive. Judith Gibbons (2000) described developmental vulnerabilities in college students. A developmental vulnerability is a problem that people face because of their age and stage in life. For example, separation from one's mother is a problem for an infant, but not for most teenagers. Gibbons points out that certain "groups of students might be particularly vulnerable. For example, students whose first language is not English may be worried about oral presentations in class.
Ethnic minority students often feel pressure from increased visibility. . . . Students with disabilities continue to suffer from negative stereotypes. . . . Gay and lesbian students are often the 'invisible minority' and may suffer from heterosexist assumptions implicit in some course materials" (p. 87). Civility requires not that we "walk on eggs" and avoid discussing anything that might conceivable offend anyone, but rather acknowledge that these issues exist and that we are sympathetic to those who experience them.

Teachers who respect their students will be respected in return. You can begin to respect students by trying to understand them as individuals and as a group at a particular stage in life with the attendant vulnerabilities. Making it clear to students that you value honesty and fairness will promote integrity and enable you to maintain an ethical classroom. For an excellent and extensive discussion of all the issues in this Unit see Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002).

**Critical Thinking Interruption**

Develop a sketch of a situation in which several students are disrupting a class, first by talking, then by challenging the teaching in an unreasonable way, then by insults. What should the teacher do? How might such a situation be prevented?
Conclusion

The values that professors hold are difficult to hide. Professors speak and interact with students on a daily basis, and represent important parts of students’ lives. Therefore, it is important for us to reflect on our own personal values, how these values are communicated to students and how students interpret these values inside and outside of class. We appreciate the value of the environmental context in coming to understand the wholeness of individual behavior. In this spirit if teachers wish to maximize the chances that their students will learn and benefit from the class, they should consider their personal values, even if these values are not the lessons to be taught according to the syllabus.
References


The Center for Academic Integrity (1999). The Fundamental values of academic integrity.


Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Unit 10
Developing Your Teaching Portfolio

Objectives

- Understand the purposes of a teaching portfolio.
- Know what to include in your portfolio.
- Begin to organize materials for your portfolio.
- Prepare or revise your curriculum vita.
- Determine how you will present your teaching materials.
- Plan alternate versions of your portfolio.

In this Unit you will learn how to create a personal teaching portfolio to present yourself as a thoughtful and unique teacher. If your institution requires academic portfolios that include sections on teaching, research and service rather than a portfolio that focuses on only teaching, you will find that the suggestions contained in this unit for developing a teaching portfolio can be used to develop corresponding sections on research and service.
Purposes of a Teaching Portfolio

Constructing a meaningful teaching portfolio requires a lot of work. The following are several reasons why you will want to create such a portfolio:

- **Improving your teaching.** The portfolio will provide a record of your development as a teacher. You can build on what has worked well for you in the classroom and show evidence of your versatility by noting how you changed those things that did not work out well for you.

- **Survival.** When Jim first began to work with students on constructing and revising teaching portfolios in 1994, he told students that having a well constructed portfolio would make them unique in their job search. Today you need a teaching portfolio to keep up with others in the job search, and later for salary and promotion decisions.

- **Recognition.** If (we hope, when) you are nominated for a teaching award, your portfolio will provide the necessary documentation to support your nomination. It can also be used as a source of documentation for annual reviews if required by your institution.
What is it?

A teaching portfolio is an organized collection of material that reflects your ideas about teaching and your performance as a teacher. The italicized words are particularly important:

- “Organized.” There should be a structure that enables the reader to use the portfolio to easily find information about your teaching. We will provide suggestions for organizing your materials.
- “Performance.” The portfolio should provide clear evidence of what you do in your teaching from planning through evaluation. We will discuss the kinds of evidence you can use.
- “Your ideas.” The portfolio shows who you are as a teacher; it is not enough simply to document your performance. A good portfolio will include a well-crafted teaching philosophy that tells the reader why you do what you do and shows your commitment to teaching and your students.

The remainder of this section contains our suggestions for creating and organizing the structure and contents of your portfolio. There are other approaches available both on the Internet and in books on teaching for structuring and developing content for your portfolio. For example, the best-known approach is that of Peter Seldin (2004; Seldin, Miller, & Seldin, 2010) which specifies that a portfolio should be about 7-9 pages long plus appendices. We prefer to organize the portfolio in sections that may vary in length from one to several pages. Both approaches have merit.

Many institutions are beginning to require that materials be stored and submitted electronically in which case the structure and headings for the portfolio may be pre-determined by the institution. Submitting your portfolio in electronic form will require you to scan paper
documents while allowing you to include digital videos of your teaching or student activities. Some institutions require materials to be stored electronically with a printed summary of materials being submitted for rank and tenure decisions. Regardless of whether you are creating a digital or paper version of your portfolio, you will find the following suggestions for organizing materials useful.
Portfolio Structure

Consider the following structure in preparation for your first activity.

Your portfolio should contain a detailed Table of Contents that is related clearly to the contents of the portfolio. One way to do this is by numbering all pages in the portfolio as you would in a book. However, this reduces your flexibility in adding new materials to a hard copy because you would have to renumber everything when you teach a new course. Obviously this is not a problem for a digital version.

Your portfolio should include the following sections:

1. Personal information.
   - Summary of your background, development as a teacher, and career goals. Your complete vita would go in an appendix.
   - Description of teaching responsibilities.
   - Philosophy of teaching.

2. Separate sections for each of the courses you have taught.

   Some of your teaching experiences might have been as a lab instructor, discussion section leader, or independent study supervisor. Treat these types of experiences as if they were separate courses, as they often represent important mentoring and learning experiences for your students.

   For each course provide:
   - Rationale for the course. How does your course design follow from your philosophy?
   - Syllabus.
   - Assignments (e.g., term paper).
   - Descriptions of how you measure student learning. Put examples of student performance in an appendix.
• Course evaluation data, summarized. Use multiple methods. More complete data may be in an appendix.

• Your self evaluation of the course.

3. Teaching development activities.

This section would include anything you have done to help yourself become a better teacher such as pursuing a teaching certificate program, involvement in professional teaching organizations, and attending conferences or workshops on teaching. Provide a description of each activity. Some materials might belong in an appendix.

4. Other relevant information.

This section might include descriptions of awards you have won, newspaper articles about your teaching, and abstracts of relevant research articles on teaching that you have published (with complete articles in an appendix). If you have videotapes of your teaching, describe them and how the reader could obtain them.

______________________________________________________________________________

Activity:

• First, get a container (e.g., large bag, box, file drawer) and put all of your potential portfolio stuff in it. The point is to find what you already have and get it in one place. One of Mary’s colleagues keeps a file folder on his desk in which he puts any materials as he receives them that he might consider using in his portfolio. He also has a file folder on his computer in which he inserts copies of emails and other electronically received materials that might be useful in the portfolio.

• Second, get a 3-ring binder with index tabs, and an electronic storage device such as a USB flash drive on which to store and organize finished items. Consider keeping both a
We will now focus on developing the different sections of your portfolio. At the end of this Unit you will find a checklist that can be used to track your progress.

**Personal Information**

**Summary of your background.** This is a brief story of your development as a teacher. What or who got you interested in teaching and academic life and in your discipline? If you already have teaching experience, say a little about that. The purpose is to add life to your portfolio. You might conclude this section with a statement of your teaching career goals. Consider your audience carefully for this story and other items in your portfolio. Readers may be put off if your language is too informal or your format is unusual (e.g., poetry). See Appendix A at the conclusion of this unit to see a version of the background section of Jason’s teaching portfolio. Use Jason’s as one example, but develop your own format to communicate your personal evolution as a teacher.

**Activity:**

Write a draft summary of your background. Ask peers and your mentor for comments on your draft, and consider their suggestions as you revise the draft.

**Curriculum Vitae.** The CV is a standard document that every academic person submits when applying for jobs or promotion, but there are right and wrong ways to write it. The
jobsearching website contains examples and templates for writing your CV. The following list contains our recommendations:

- Do not include marital status, birth date or age.

- If you are applying for a position where teaching will be your primary responsibility, then put your teaching experience in the most prominent position in your vita before your research and other professional experiences.

- For each position you have held related to teaching, briefly describe your teaching responsibilities. For example, Teaching Assistant responsibilities can range from clerical duties (e.g., paper grading) to having full responsibility for teaching a class.

- Under Publications include only items actually published or “in press” in peer-reviewed journals. Use APA, MLA or the style appropriate for your discipline carefully when listing publications. Include separate sections for articles submitted and in preparation, book reviews, invited comments, and conference posters and presentations rather than lumping these things together under the Publications heading.

- Restrict “honors” to college and graduate school academic honors unless the honor relates directly to the position being sought. Being an Eagle Scout or Most Popular Delta Gamma will not be impressive.

- Either list your references (no more than four) or indicate that they are “available on request.” Be sure you have asked individuals for their permission to use them as references in advance. Include at least one person with direct knowledge of your teaching as a reference.
Activity:

Write or revise your vita. Ask someone with experience in hiring faculty to review it.

Teaching Responsibilities. This is an expansion of the teaching experience section of your CV. Describe each of your teaching experiences. For graduate students, include assistantships held; responsibilities for laboratories, independent studies or discussion sections; and clubs or groups supervised. The purpose of this section is to tell the reader what you did on your own as opposed to what you were told to do.

Activity: Write a description of your teaching responsibilities.

Philosophy of Teaching. This is the keystone of your portfolio. In Unit 2 you wrote the first draft of your philosophy. If you have not completed Unit 2, you will want to do so now before proceeding with the remainder of this unit.

Activity:

Review the most recent version of your teaching philosophy. We strongly encourage you to take at least an hour to review this statement, reflect on it, and then revise it. Be sure that it does not contain any spelling and grammatical errors Potential employers will be interested in both the content and style of this statement.
**Teaching Experience.** Prepare separate sections for each of your courses. You will want to emphasize those courses where you have had full responsibility for all aspects of the course. However, some of your teaching experiences may have been as a lab instructor, discussion leader, or independent study supervisor. At this time in your career, we suggest that you present these experiences as courses. You might also include your design for a course that you have not yet taught, but that you expect to teach in the future.

Recall our definition of a teaching portfolio: an organized collection of material that reflects your ideas about teaching and your performance as a teacher. For each course include available materials (performance) and your reflections on those materials.

---

**Activity:** Select one course to use as a beginning for this section. Collect all your materials from that course. Each course should have at least the items noted below.

Prepare all the items noted below for your selected course.

---

**Syllabus.** This document shows how you plan your teaching. Apply what you learned in Unit 3.

**Rationale for the course.** Explain how your course design (syllabus) is related to your teaching philosophy. This is an important link that is missing from many portfolios. Show that your philosophy is something that you actually use to guide your teaching. For example, if your philosophy stresses critical thinking, your course objectives and assignments should reflect that. Your attendance policy may show that you value responsibility or freedom to choose. Your rationale should make these connections clear to the reader of your portfolio. That reader will then have a greater understanding of your philosophy statement.
**Assignments.** Include copies of your assignments such as papers and projects. Explain how these assignments are related to your course objectives.

**Measures of student learning.** Describe your assessment methods, but do not include entire examinations unless you have designed something innovative. Explain why you use these methods to measure student learning.

**Other materials.** Include copies or descriptions of demonstrations, exercises and handouts in an *organized* fashion under this category. Differentiate those materials or activities you created from those you borrowed. Briefly explain why you use these materials,

**Evaluation Data**

In this section you will document your teaching effectiveness. Your evidence will be more convincing if you use multiple methods of evaluation. If you have not used multiple evaluation methods in the course you are working with now, make sure to do so in the future. Review Unit 8 for details on different evaluation methods.

**Student ratings.** Describe briefly the tool used to obtain student ratings. For example, you may have used a departmental form on which students circle numbers on a 5- or 7-point scale. Present the average (mean) for each item and standard deviation (if available), and include the number of students responding out of the number enrolled in your course.

Quantitative ratings are useful as an easy summary of student opinion and comparison to previous performance, but they provide minimal information about how to improve your teaching. You also should have qualitative comments from students. Write a summary of the student comments to include in this section of the portfolio. Present criticism as well as praise, and give the reader a fair idea of the dominant opinion. If the number of students is not too
large, consider putting all comments even if you consider them unfair in an appendix to your portfolio.

**Observations.** Include a written summary of comments from peers, mentors or teaching center staff who have observed your teaching. Ask individuals who observe your class to write a letter that you might include in your portfolio. If your class was videotaped, include a summary of the review. You may want to provide a video sample of your teaching.

**Examples of student performance.** Student learning is the gold standard for measuring your effectiveness as a teacher, but it can be difficult to demonstrate student learning in a portfolio. The following are suggested ways you might use to demonstrate student learning:

- Compare quiz or exam scores before and after you implemented a change in your course.
- Present an example of a typical student’s project or paper on which you have written comments. This shows how you use feedback to facilitate learning.
- Ask students to write self-evaluations of their learning.
- Include student presentation materials or publication resulting from independent study projects that you coordinated or collaborative activities with students.

Components of the type just describe would be placed in an appendix.

**Self-evaluation.** Include your reflections on what went well in this course and what you would want to change. Comment on the evaluation data provided and how you might respond to the evaluation data. If you taught this course more than once, discuss how your teaching has developed. Relate this information to your teaching philosophy statement.
Activity: Collect all your evaluation data for this course and organize it. Write your self-evaluation.

Teaching Development Activities

In this section you will include anything you have done to help yourself develop as a teacher, including completing this program. For each item describe the activity, present materials (or examples), and state what you learned and how you used what you learned.

Examples of items that might be included are:

- Completion of a teaching center certificate program, including a list of the seminars you attended and a description of the certificate requirements. You might also include general contact information for the teaching center. As director of a teaching center, Mary was contacted often by representatives of search committees interviewing candidates who had received the teaching certificate offered through the teaching center.

- Conferences or workshops on teaching that you attended.

- Involvement in professional teaching organizations.

- Completion of a graduate course on teaching within your discipline or in higher education. Consider including the course syllabus and samples of your completed assignments in an appendix.

Activity: Add these items to your portfolio.
Other Relevant Information

In this last section include relevant information and materials that do not fit in the earlier categories. Such items might include descriptions of teaching awards you received, letters from students (with permission) about your teaching, abstracts of research on teaching, etc.

Activity: Add any relevant information to this section.
Your Completed Portfolio

Congratulations! You have completed the contents of your teaching portfolio. Assemble all your materials in your 3-ring binder. Label the tab dividers to correspond to major sections in your table of contents. Add a title page: “Teaching Portfolio of John Q.” Your portfolio should look good; professional but not glitzy.

You should also have an electronic version in a format that is easy to revise. Putting your portfolio on a website or storage device that can be easily replicated makes your information accessible to potential employers.
Alternate Versions

At the beginning of the unit, we stated three primary purposes of a teaching portfolio: improvement, survival, and recognition. Having versions of your portfolio of different lengths will help you better meet these purposes.

The complete version includes all your materials for all courses and other experiences, with your commentary developed over time. You should have this version in your three-ring binder or electronically or your computer or your storage device. This long version includes all your materials and allows for a central place to make additions and revisions over time.

A portable version of your portfolio includes basic information (e.g., philosophy, vita) and a sample of materials. You might store it in a thinner binder, an electronic storage device or a website. The purpose of this version is to provide a condensed version that can be easily reviewed by potential employers and search committees. Finally, a brief 2-3 page summary of your philosophy and the contents of your portfolio can conveniently be sent to places where you want to attract interest in your teaching. In the next unit, we will discuss the “hook, line, and sinker” approach to landing a job. This brief version is part of the hook.
Final Advice on Constructing a Teaching Portfolio

The following tips come from two sources: Maria Lynn (1994) and Barbara Linneweh-Heine (1994), who constructed teaching portfolios as graduate students, and Peter Seldin (1997), who has written extensively on this topic.

1. Don’t procrastinate; just do it.
2. Appearance matters; make it look good. You need both substance and style.
3. Make it user friendly with a detailed table of contents and tabs in your hard copy or links in an electronic version.
4. Proof read carefully. Many readers will be put off by careless use of language.
5. Get feedback from experienced faculty.
6. Stay current with your portfolio. Keep it up to date and do not let your ideas become stale.

Please see Appendix 10C for a checklist to help you chart your progress in completing your teaching portfolio.
References


Appendix 10A

Sample background section of teaching portfolio

*History.* For my first class as a teacher of record, I was merely handed a sample syllabus, given the textbook, and offered the best of luck for an excellent semester. There was no instruction or accountability for my work in the classroom. Teaching was seen as an afterthought to my clinical work and research, and the only part of my graduate training that was seemingly undeserving of instruction or supervision. Through extensive reading and teaching experience at a number of institutions of higher learning, my philosophy of teaching has evolved. With this evolution has come a greater appreciation for my role as an educator in this society.

Immediately upon arriving at Auburn University, I consciously strived to be accountable for my work in the classroom. I had the pleasure of having discussions with colleagues pertaining to developing critical thinking in students, refining my presentation skills, and handling difficulties that commonly arise when teaching. I developed a research program pertaining to the teaching of psychology in which I sought to better understand the relationship between student textbook use, pedagogical aids, and learning. It was not long before I was presenting at a couple of regional conferences. I even published a journal article pertaining to teaching in a well respected journal. In time, I became an active member of the American Psychological Association’s Division 2, The Society for the Teaching of Psychology. In getting to know members of this organization, I got to rub shoulders with some really good teachers, get tons of tips on issues that continue to challenge me in the classroom and even made some friends along the way. In short, my journey as a teacher of psychology has been a truly fulfilling professional and personal experience.
Appendix 10B

Sample Quantitative Summary of Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness

[Note: Results often are presented as means, which obscures the shape of the distribution. Having the number of responses out of the total N and percentages is more descriptive.]

Jason F. Sikorski, Ph. D.
Quantitative Feedback Summary
Two sections of XXXXXXXXXX
Spring XXXX

Were you provided with a course outline or syllabus at the beginning of this course?
Yes = 33/33 100%

Was an explanation of course attendance policies given at the beginning of the term?
Yes = 32/33 96.97%
Uncertain = 1/33 3.03%

Were the title and catalog description of this course consistent with the course content?
Yes = 31/33 93.94%
Uncertain = 2/33 6.06%

Was a written explanation of grading policies distributed at the beginning of the course?
Yes = 33/33 100%

Did your class begin and end at the schedule time?
Always = 27/33 81.82%
Generally = 6/33 18.18%

Were any classes in this course ever cancelled?
Never 13/33 39.39%
Only rarely and 20/33 60.61%
With an Explanation

The time in this class was worthwhile
Strongly Agree = 27/33 81.82%
Agree = 6/33 18.18%

The methods of instruction have helped me understand the material
Strongly Agree = 29/33 87.88%
Agree = 4/33 12.12%
Major points in this class were made clear

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>29/33</td>
<td>87.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4/33</td>
<td>12.12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The instructor has been available to me for individual consultation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>31/33</td>
<td>93.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2/33</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was possible for me to make comments, ask questions, or express ideas in class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>31/33</td>
<td>93.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2/33</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class meetings have been intellectually stimulating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>28/33</td>
<td>84.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2/33</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3/33</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading the assigned material has helped me understand this subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>23/33</td>
<td>69.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>7/33</td>
<td>21.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3/33</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Exams and out of class assignments have helped me understand this subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>26/33</td>
<td>78.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>5/33</td>
<td>15.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>2/33</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** 93.94% agree or strongly agree that exams and out of class assignments have helped them understand the subject

My work for this class has been graded fairly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>26/33</td>
<td>78.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6/33</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1/33</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of exams and other graded assignments have been sufficient to evaluate my progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>25/33</td>
<td>75.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>7/33</td>
<td>21.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1/33</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My experiences in this class make me want to learn more about this subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>24/33</td>
<td>72.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4/33</td>
<td>12.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2/33</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2/33</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>1/33</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I would rate the quality of instruction in this course is high.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>30/33</td>
<td>90.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1/33</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2/33</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would rate the overall quality of this course as high

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>26/33</td>
<td>78.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>5/33</td>
<td>15.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2/33</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 10C

Checklist of Progress

___ Get a 3-ring binder with tabs for your hard copy. You want this thing to look good.

___ Set up a folder with subfolders on your computer or storage device such as a USB flash drive to store an electronic version of your portfolio.

___ Create a detailed table of contents.

You probably will complete this after you have organized your other sections. Make the table of contents user friendly. Readers should easily find what they are looking for in the tabbed sections or through links in the electronic version.

Personal information.

___ Summarize your background, development as a teacher, and career goals.

___ Prepare a curriculum vitae. You can find examples here.

___ Describe your teaching responsibilities.

___ Write or revise your philosophy of teaching.

Courses

Create separate sections for each of the courses you have taught or are teaching. For graduate students, some of your teaching experiences will have been as a lab instructor, discussion section leader, or the like. At this time in your career, treat some of these experiences as if they were courses. For each course provide:

___ Rationale for the course. How does your course design follow from your philosophy?

___ Syllabus.
___ Assignments (e.g., term paper).

___ Descriptions of how you measure student learning. Include examples of student performance in an appendix.

___ Other course materials.

___ Course evaluation data, summarized. Use multiple methods. Include more complete data in an appendix. Indicate if a video is available.

___ Your self evaluation of the course. Include what went well and what you would change in the future. If you taught the course more than once, include information on how your teaching developed.

**Teaching development activities.**

This section includes anything you have done to help yourself become a better teacher.

___ List conferences you attended or workshops on teaching. Provide a description of the activity and say what you learned. Some materials might belong in an appendix.

___ List your involvement in professional teaching organizations.

___ Indicate if you completed a teaching center’s program and include details of the program.

___ Include information on any graduate courses on teaching in your discipline or in higher education that you have completed.

**Other relevant information.**

This section might include descriptions of awards you have won, newspaper articles about your teaching, and abstracts of relevant research articles that you published (with complete article in appendix).
Unit 11

Landing a Teaching Job

Objectives

- State your immediate teaching career goal.
- Know what should be done when preparing for a job search.
- Know how to write a cover letter and present other materials for an initial contact.
- Develop a plan for making a visit to a prospective employer and for follow up.
If you have completed the first ten units in this program, you must be seriously considering a career in teaching. A career in teaching could mean either full- or part-time teaching. There are various ways that teaching becomes part of one’s professional life, including:

- teaching full-time at a community college or college where teaching is the institution’s primary mission,
- teaching courses at a research-oriented University,
- teaching courses for an online institution,
- teaching part-time while working in a different professional field, or
- providing training and continuing education workshops for other professionals.

All these kinds of teaching require the skills and knowledge included in the units you have just completed. Your task now is deciding what type teaching you would like to do, discovering what opportunities are available, and presenting yourself in a way that will allow you to compete successfully for the type teaching position you would like to obtain.

**Activity:**

- What is your teaching career goal?
- If you now are in graduate school, think about the position you want after you complete your degree. What kind of teaching position will you be seeking and why have you chosen that kind of teaching position? Write this as a goal and keep it in mind as you work through this Unit.
Getting Started

The primary audience for this unit is graduate students. However, faculty and other professionals wanting advice in the job market should also find this material of value. While we can provide help with planning your search and organizing materials, acquiring the experiences that will attract employers is up to you. Ideally, you will have had a series of teaching experiences with increasing responsibility for developing and teaching your own course. The best experience would be to have taught a course that most colleges offer, such as the introductory course in your field, in addition to a core course in your specialty area. If you have not have the opportunity to teach such courses, hopefully by completing the previous units you will have a plan for teaching them.

Knowledge of typical requirements of academic life and being able to discuss important issues in higher education also will serve you well in your job search. Academic life typically includes responsibilities such as serving on committees and academic advising of students. Some departments use “collegiality” as a criterion in hiring decisions; that is, will you get along well with your colleagues and be willing to do a fair share of service activities? Our colleagues call these sorts of behaviors associated with being an academician, “being a good departmental citizen.”

Being able to speak about general issues in higher education in an interview will demonstrate to members of the hiring department and academic Deans that you are knowledgeable on current issues that affect academics today. For example, knowing the importance of emphasizing cultural diversity initiatives in each class you teach or being able to speak about the challenges associated with facilitating critical thinking and active learning in students may serve you well. This knowledge shows an appreciation for the interrelatedness of
societal, institutional, and personal factors in teaching college students today. The Chronicle of Higher Education is an excellent resource for learning more about these issues. Another resource you may find helpful in obtaining information on responsibilities and challenges of being an academic is the book, Life on the Tenure Track (Lang, 2005) in which the author discusses the many responsibilities, issues and challenges encountered in the first year of a teaching career.

The following sections are organized using the fishing metaphor, “hook, line, and sinker,” developed by Jane Halonen (1994) to describe the academic job search process. The hook, with bait, is what you need to attract interest; the line is what you play out when you get the interview opportunity; and the sinker refers to what happens when you land your desired job.

You can prepare for the job search process in several ways, including:

- Discuss strategies used with individuals who have successfully completed job searches as well as talk with individuals who have not been successful about what they learned from the process and perhaps would do differently.

- Attend professional meetings where you can meet and talk with faculty who do hiring.

- Read the job ads in the professional journals in your area and in The Chronicle of Higher Education.

The first step in your fishing trip is to prepare your equipment. You will need your vita, portable and electronic versions of your teaching portfolio, statements of your teaching and research interests, and a cover letter.

You have been writing and modifying your teaching philosophy throughout the earlier units of this e-book and have used it as a basis for making decisions about several aspects of teaching. It is not unusual for a department interested in your teaching to request your philosophy statement as part of the application. As you have learned from the earlier exercises, your
teaching philosophy is not the same as stating your teaching interests, which refers to the courses you are prepared or hope to teach.

Your cover letter should include a brief statement of your interest in the job, including why you think you are a good match for the position. It will also include a list of the items you are enclosing in your application packet. Writing a cover letter is discussed in greater detail later in this unit. You will want to be sure to include your vita in the application materials. Unit 10 contained information on writing a vita.
Networking

Networking is a buzzword used quite often in job searches. In its best sense it means that you can learn helpful things from other people who might also provide you assistance in achieving your goals. Learning from others, working with them in the job search, and making personal connections are certainly part of an effective and ethical search strategy. We strongly recommend joining your local and national professional associations and graduate student organizations. Actively participate in these organizations by attending regional meetings and teaching conferences where you can interact with and learn from experienced professionals who may be able to provide you with information on potential future available positions. Networking is not a short-term activity that you do the year you go on the market. You should begin to develop your networks early in your graduate career and continue the process beyond the job search.
The Hook and Bait

Fishing experts know that different kinds of fish prefer certain types of bait, so you must know what you are fishing for. You are seeking a good match between your teaching goals and interests, and an available position.

Activity: Use a professional job listing such as those available through your professional organizations or publications such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to find positions for which you might be interested in applying. Be selective and consider such factors as size and type of school, and location. Often these listings include part-time positions. Remember to check websites for schools where you might be interested in teaching since many schools include job listings on their websites.

Cover Letter

Your goal at this stage is to make yourself stand out in a positive way from other applicants. The first thing a reader will see when your file is opened is your cover letter, and so it is important this letter be well crafted. The following suggestions are based on work by Halonen (1994), and Brems, Lampman, and Johnson (1995), and our own experiences.

1. *Do your homework.* Find the web site for each school to which you will apply and study it to gain an understanding and sense of what is important to the institution and the department. Mission and goals statements for the university and the department can tell you something about the values and priorities of your potential employer. There often are clear differences, for example, between a small liberal arts college, a regional state university, and a university sponsored by a religious denomination. Typically, you will
find a list of departmental faculty with their research and teaching interests as well as a listing of departmental course offerings. How would you fit in with the faculty and their interests? What might you contribute in terms of course offerings?

2. **Decide if you are a good match with the institution and its needs.** How will your interests complement those of the university? Are you prepared to teach the courses listed as needs in the job advertisement? Are there unique contributions that you can make? Do not apply if you have serious concerns about whether you will fit in at this institution or department.

3. **Draft your cover letter.** After you have done your homework on the institution and department and decided that you are a good match, you will be able to respond specifically to the job ad. You might consider an outline such as the following for your letter:

   - Introduce yourself briefly. The details are in your vita.
   - State why you are applying for this position, showing that you have done your homework and know something about the institution and department.
   - State your teaching interests and why you are qualified to teach the courses they need. Indicate additional ways you can contribute to their program.
   - State your research interests. Even if research is not expected, for example in a community college, you can still indicate that you are an active scholar and how this contributes to your teaching.
   - If you expect to continue clinical or other professional practice, state what you hope to do and how that will complement your teaching.
• Add other relevant academic information. Do not include personal information such as marital status, family, hobbies, or personal preferences.

• Do not simply copy your letter for each job for which you apply. Except for your personal introduction, each letter should be crafted to the potential employer’s institution.

Proofread your letter carefully before mailing. Ask a colleague or mentor to proofread your letter as well. Sample cover letters can be obtained by visiting the website for the University of Washington Career Center website contains examples of sample academic careers cover letters.

Vita

The advertisement for the job will tell you what the department wants you to send, but it will always ask for a vita. Unit 10 contained information on writing a CV.

Other Material

While you will want to provide materials and information that make you stand out from other candidates, you do not want to overburden the search committee with stacks of paper that they may not have time to read. In most cases it is reasonable to include your teaching philosophy and a summary of the contents of your portfolio including a web address if your portfolio is available online, even if these items were not requested. Send reprints or preprints of publications only if these were requested. An exception might be a particularly unique, high quality paper that shows you are involved in the scholarship of teaching.

In general, search committees will contact you requesting additional materials if you are being considered for an interview.
Recommendation letters

Job ads often ask you to arrange to have a specified number of recommendations sent to the search committee even if you have included a list of references from whom you have obtained permission to include with contact information on your CV. It will help them write a good letter if you give each reference a copy of the job ad and your CV, and talk with them about the nature of the position for which you are applying and reasons why you are appropriate for the position.
The Line and Sinker

Congratulations! You have been invited for an interview. Your goal in the interview is to provide first-hand evidence of your potential as a teacher, scholar, and an effective, thoughtful colleague.

Preparation

Do even *more homework* in preparation for your visit. Get a sense of the recent history of the University and the department. Find out if there are any significant issues under discussion, such as the need to develop an assessment plan, that you may have experience or expertise enabling you to make unique contributions. If the department is small, learn names of the faculty, and their interests and expertise if possible. Many web sites include faculty photos.

Be prepared to present yourself as a teacher. Consider bringing an electronic or other copy of a larger version of your teaching portfolio that includes a plan for the courses the department wants you to teach. In Unit 2 we suggested that you prepare a “sound bite” to use in response to questions about your teaching philosophy. When interviewing for a teaching position, most candidates are asked to teach a class. Find out about the intended audience, and if allowed to select the topic, choose a topic with which you are very knowledgeable and prepare a lesson that fits comfortably within the allotted time. Do not simply tell students about your research, unless you have been asked to do that. Instead, find out what the class has been studying and engage them in that topic. If you have been asked to teach a class as opposed to giving a public lecture, do not feel that you must only lecture. Rather use the opportunity to demonstrate not only your knowledge in the content area, but your skill in using different teaching strategies such as managing discussions or engaging students in active learning activities. Practice these “job talks” as often as possible in front of a live audience.
You should be given a schedule for your visit. Telephone the person in charge of the job search if you have questions about the schedule or any other arrangements.

**The Visit**

Conduct yourself as a professional. This includes how you dress. Even if most of the faculty members are very informal, others, including the administrators, tend to be more formal. Be on time for all appointments when punctuality is under your control. Conversations should be friendly but consider carefully any personal disclosures you will make. Be sensitive to boundary issues. For example, avoid student parties or barhopping with faculty. However, a quiet dinner with drinks, in moderation, is common and acceptable. Members of the host department want to see that you are a real person that they can get along with and enjoy.

You will be asked a lot of questions in your meetings with administrators, faculty, and students. Many of these questions can be anticipated:

- Why do you want to teach at our University?
- What type of student do you most like to work with?
- How do you deal with difficult students?
- Describe one of your successes as a teacher, and a failure.
- Where would you like to be in your career five or ten years from now?
- How would students describe a typical class that you teach?
- How do you envision yourself contributing to department and university service?
- What type of research projects will you be working on from day one at the learning institution? Can you involve students in your work? How might you do that?
- What does the term cultural diversity mean to you? How do you attempt to incorporate culture into your daily life as a teacher?
• What are your technology competencies and would you be prepared to teach on-line courses?

And you should have questions for those who interview you.

• You can ask a Dean about the strengths and prospects for the department, and its challenges (avoid use of the word weaknesses).

• If you have not been told the salary range, discuss this with the Dean.

• Be sure to clarify the teaching load and service responsibilities with the department chair.

• Inquire if mentoring is available for faculty new to the institution.

• Ask students about department strengths and ways the department might be improved.

• Discuss the rank and tenure process and criteria. This would be the time to ask specific questions about types of work that increase your chances of achieving tenure and promotion.

Inquire as to whether faculty members tend to collaborate with one another on research initiatives both within and across departments at the particular college or university where you are applying. Ask about the timeframe for making hiring decisions.

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**Role Play Activity:**

Find someone who can act as a College Dean or Department Chairperson and ask that person to prepare questions for you, including those listed above. Engage in this role play for about twenty minutes. Ask another person to be an observer to provide feedback on your performance.
Your visit typically will conclude with a meeting with the department chair, search committee chair, or both, and a ride to and from the airport. These are good opportunities for final questions. You may be asked to give your impressions of the department and how you might fit in. Do not ask about your chances for getting the job. If you have other prospects, you are not obligated to say where they are.

A few days after you return home you might make a follow-up call to the department to thank them for their hospitality (which you already have done in a thank you letter) and find out if they need any other information. You might also find out whether their time frame for a decision has changed.

The hiring decision now is in the hands of others, but there still are a few things you can do. Keep records listing positives and negatives factors about the job based on your interview visit. This will be helpful if you must decide between several job offers. If this is your only shot, be sure it is a position you really can fit. Pursue any unanswered questions that you feel are important before making a decision on accepting a job offer.

If you feel a tug on your line and get an offer, it’s time to land your job. You should receive the offer both by telephone and in a formal letter. You should be given a reasonable number of days to respond and consider the offer before providing a response unless there is no doubt in your mind and you chose to make a verbal response when the offer arrives. Make sure that all your questions have been answered and that you are clear about the nature of the contract before making a commitment. You will want to negotiate any salary differences prior to accepting a position. Resources such as your professional organization’s website or the annual salary comparisons compiled by the American Association of University Professors or The
Chronicle of Higher Education will enable you to learn in most cases typical salaries at the institution or at other institutions for similar positions.

There is one more comparison to make in our fishing metaphor. Many people who fish use the “catch-and-release” method. They just want to catch the fish for sport, but not eat it. In a job search, this practice is highly unethical. A University will have invested significant person hours and resources in their search and your visit. If you are not interested, they should know that immediately. Barring extenuating circumstances, when you accept an offer, you must take it.

There are several books that provide guidance once you have obtained your first teaching position. Four additional books besides the book by Lang (2004) mentioned earlier in this unit that you might find of value are On course: A week by week guide to your first semester of college teaching (Lang, 2010); What the best college teachers do (Bain, 2004); The new faculty member (Boice, 1992) and Advice for new faculty members (Boice, 2000). The sub-title of the second book is, nihil nimus, which loosely translated means everything in moderation or don’t try to do too much. That’s advice we strongly recommend.
References


