



Foundations of Teaching Workshop Series

Spring 2016

Sessions held in 116 McNeill Room, LaFortune Student Center

Week 1, January 8, 9:30-10:45

- Understanding your role, communicating expectations, and preparing for the first day of class

Week 2, January 15, 9:30-10:45

- Preparing, structuring, and facilitating discussion/lab sections and presentations

Week 3, January 29, 9:30-10:45

- Grading and responding to student work

Week 4, February 5, 9:30-10:45

- Teaching for critical thinking

Each workshop attended counts toward your "Striving for Excellence in Teaching" or "Advanced Teaching Scholar" Kaneb Center certificate

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Week 2 Outline:

- Introductions
- Structuring class time/running a lab, discussion section, or tutorial
- Crafting a lecture
- Public speaking
- Current issues (and/or leading discussions and visual presentations)

Templates for Labs, Sections, or Classes

Sample Template 1

1. Begin by recapping previous class, summarizing main points and/or asking for any questions that might be lingering.
2. Introduce material for latest text/new lab. Pause in the middle for a joke. Continue lecturing.
3. Have students perform lab/discuss in small groups.
4. End with a few minutes to take questions and preview what's coming next.

Sample Template 2

1. Begin with an activity that gets students to review new material from class with each other and discuss major themes.
2. Have students perform lab/generate group presentations.
3. End with an ungraded quiz to test for understanding.

Sample Template 3

1. Begin with a quiz on previous material.
2. Discuss new material.
3. End new material by having each student write a quiz that he/she thinks reflects the main points of the day's class, and compile these to make an entry-quiz for the next week.

Sample Template 4

1. Begin with a quiz on new material.
2. Have students perform lab/break students into discussion groups with assigned questions. While they work, look over quiz answers to identify topics that are difficult for students. After going over any issues with the quizzes, clarify/discuss these topics.
3. End by having the students write quizzes that they think reflect the main points of the day's material.

Sample Template 5

1. Have students email you questions by some deadline before the section.
2. Ask students to work in small groups to tackle the list of questions you've compiled.
3. Reconvene to find out which questions are still outstanding, and discuss those as a big group. Have groups that answered questions successfully present their solutions.
4. Summarize your own impressions of the overarching themes/topics people are struggling with. Try to provide some big-picture insights, if you have any, that might help contextualize the kinds of questions students find difficult.

Sample Template 6

1. Have a list of various topics on the board. As students enter, have them put a check by the ones they're most interested in discussing.
2. Discuss the material, prioritizing the most popular topics.
3. Jigsaw Method: Share three questions related to the most popular topics and have students form "expert" groups that will each specialize in answering one of the three questions. Ask these groups to confirm/flesh out answers to their question. Reorganize students into groups of three so that there is an expert for each question in each group. Ask students to talk about answers to all three questions.
4. End by reconvening as a class to summarize main points from the activity.

Lab Preparation Case Study

Please read the following case study, paying special attention to the impact and role of interacting with the students before and after lab time.

1:00pm Tuesday afternoon Jessica walked into lab quite confident that today's lab – the first “real” experiment of the semester – was going to go well. She had done this experiment herself as an undergrad and again during lab prep time earlier that week. The students were required to write a pre-lab in which they outlined the procedure they would follow that day, as well as to outline the overall goals of the experiment. Additionally, she had heard that these students were quite smart, so she really expected few problems to crop up during the three hour lab session.

5:00pm Tuesday evening Jessica walks home exhausted having just left the lab with the last two students (over an hour after all of the other TAs had left with their last students). She is just overwhelmed remembering the events of the afternoon. She has never answered so many questions in her life, and if she hears “Hey, Jessica, I have a question....” again, she might snap. And then when Robert caught his bench on fire! Thank goodness another TA saw it and knew what to do! And she still couldn't figure out why so many of them had no idea what to do when they got to their benches or did the steps entirely out of order. She thinks back to the prelab lecture she gave....why did Rachel have such a blank look on her face when I asked her a question that I had seen her answer perfectly in the lecture portion of the class the week before? Nearing home, Jessica is at least hopeful about seeing their lab reports to see just how good these students really are. As for today's lab, it's early in the semester and everyone is just learning; next week will surely be better.

9:00pm Sunday evening Jessica picked up the lab reports from the course instructor earlier that day and just finished browsing through them. Friday evening she had spent over three hours answering email questions from students about the lab they had done. It was clear the students had started their reports earlier that day, but she was curious about some of the questions she had been asked. They didn't seem quite pertinent to the assignment they were supposed to be completing. Now having looked through them, she was overwhelmed by their length and not impressed with the content. Very few of the reports contained a cohesive goal or thesis statement at the beginning and the results and conclusions section were all over the place. Some students drew wrong conclusions from their data, others simply missed the point of the data they were collecting, and still others rambled on at length about minor errors that had no bearing on their overall result. How was she going to grade these?

Lab Preparation Case Study Discussion Questions

1) What problems did Jessica encounter during the lab? What aspects of Jessica's preparation contributed to these problems?

2) What was the source of the problems Jessica saw in the lab reports?

3) Suggest some strategies that Jessica might use before, during, and after the lab section to avoid the problems of this first week.

“Break Out” Session Preparation Case Study

Please read the following case study, paying special attention to how the TA’s preparations impact his leading of his Friday “Break Out” session.

7:00pm Thursday evening After a quick dinner, Lee sits down to work on his Friday “Break Out” session. In that session, he will have one hour to help thirty students discuss and evaluate an important primary text from his field. His students are expected to come to the session having read the text and prepared to discuss it. Lee already re-read the text the day before, so it is fresh on his mind. Uncertain where to begin, he opens up a journal article that covers his text and begins reading. After about 45 minutes, Lee has read the whole article and taken copious notes.

Since he wants to be as thorough as possible, he then decides to skim the article’s bibliography for more relevant secondary material. For the next 30 minutes, Lee hunts around the internet for various articles, downloading PDFs and saving them to his work folder. Then he begins reading through these PDFs one at a time, once more taking notes. At the end of the third article, Lee encounters another bibliography containing many good sources that he has not yet considered. A feeling of panic begins to set in, and Lee tries to read faster. After another 40 minutes of furious reading and note taking, it is getting late, and Lee is starting to fall asleep.

Since he wants to have enough material for class, Lee makes himself some coffee and begins another round. First he rereads his notes from the evening. They are very detailed but unorganized. At 11:30, he has a better idea; he thinks to himself, “I should find some key passages to read from the main text and link these with comments from my notes.” With a highlighter in hand, Lee commences a re-reading of his primary text. Over the next hour, Lee highlights ten essential passages and begins connecting these to the notes he’s taken. He starts to type out a document of quotes and comments that balloons about 15 pages. At 1:30, Lee falls asleep.

6:30am Friday morning Lee wakes up late, takes a five-minute shower, eats a piece of fruit and drinks a cup of coffee, prints out his lecture notes, and runs to his 7:30am Break Out session. Lee greets his groggy students with a cheerful smile and welcome. At 7:31, he promptly begins covering material from his notes. For some reason it does not seem as coherent in the morning as it did the night before, but it’s what he has prepared. Every few minutes he glances up at his students; some are staring at him blankly, a few are looking at their phones, and three have fallen asleep. After twenty minutes, Lee gives in and changes tactics: “OK, that’s enough introduction. What did you think of the reading?” After a period of silence, one student raises his hand to Lee’s relief. Ryan, the willing student, then begins his own monologue of nearly five minutes. Lee is too embarrassed to cut him off. When he stops talking, no one else seems interested in speaking. Lee looks to his notes for some questions to ask, and then reads from his notes again until 8:30 finally arrives. All of the students, save Ryan, leave quickly without saying a word.

“Break Out” Session Case Study Discussion Questions

1) What problems did Lee encounter during the discussion? What aspects of Lee’s preparation contributed to these problems?

2) Why didn’t the students take a more active role in the discussion?

3) Suggest some strategies that Lee might use before, during, and after the “Break Out” session to avoid the problems of this first week.

Lab Topics and Ideas

Possible topics for pre-lab assignments and lectures:

- Protocol/experimental set-ups for the upcoming lab session
- Safety information
- General interest/“real-life application” reading and/or links
- Corresponding lecture information
- Lab write-up/assignment questions for post-lab
- Comments from previous assignments
- Timeline of experimental procedures
- Short quiz to determine/encourage students understanding of the material
- Discussion board/email with questions or concerns about lab or assignments
- Discussion board “hot topics”

Possible post-lab assignments and topics:

- A summary of topics discussed during lab
- General announcements/notes regarding the “success (experimentally) of the lab”
- Guidelines and expectations about post lab assignments
- A couple of key questions on which students should focus their assignments
- Discussion about questions/ideas/problems the students are having processing data

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Ideas for Conveying and Emphasizing Information

- JAMA or other journal article related to lab for the week with focused questions to guide students’ reading
- Survey on Sakai regarding results each person obtained and a statistical analysis question for the report
- Innovative pre-lab assignments regarding experimental plan for upcoming lab (write a song, present a visually artistic interpretation, not allowing manuals that week, require it be 100 words or less, draw a flow chart of tasks, etc.)
- Multiple choice quiz (short!!) about the purpose of the lab posted on Sakai the night before lab or given out as students arrive at lab and highest grade gets 5 extra credit points on post lab assignment
- Design a post-lab assignment with questions such that they have essentially written a lab report and then spend the next couple of weeks rewriting it into the appropriate format

Tips for Smoother Discussions

BEFORE

- Use your syllabus or policy sheet to make expectations clear.
- Get to know your students and vice-versa. Learn their names as soon as possible.
- Arrange the desks/tables in a circle.
- Have students submit questions in advance, or distribute your own questions in advance.

DURING

- Periodically note major points and ideas on board.
- Use discussion plus other strategies (we'll talk about these in week 4).
- Call on quiet students.
- Show respect for your students' viewpoints.
- Don't be afraid of silence. If you ask a question, count to 10 before talking again. Then try rephrasing it. Then put the question on the board and try a 1-minute freewrite.

AFTER

- You may ask students to rotate taking notes during discussions and posting them to Sakai or wherever after each session.
- Learn from each discussion group--would you do anything differently next time?

10 Common Mistakes to Avoid

From The Teaching Center, Washington University in St. Louis

1. Talking too much; answering your own questions or asking more than one question at once.
2. Asking too many questions that are "closed," or have only one correct answer.
3. Letting the discussion become a one-on-one conversation or debate with one student.
4. Attempting to lead a class-wide discussion in a large class (greater than 40 students).
5. Letting a small number of talkative students dominate the discussion.
6. Assuming that quiet students do not have questions or comments.
7. Assuming that students are able to discern, remember, and understand the most important ideas generated in the discussion.
8. Expecting students who are new to a topic to discuss it at the same level as students who have already studied the topic in depth or who are intellectually more mature.
9. Failing to redirect students back to the ideas at hand when the discussion strays off topic.
10. Asking a student to speak for or represent a group of people, especially if that group is in the minority in the class or at the university.

Suggestions for Delivering a Lecture

Adapted from The University College of Dublin's Teaching and Learning Center

Connecting with the audience

- Develop an opening that captures attention
- Engage students with active learning exercises
- Talk to individuals
- Get agreement
- Encourage students to ask questions
- Use students' names (when possible)

Delivery

- Speak clearly
- Don't rush, or talk deliberately slowly
- Use deliberate pauses at key points
- Change the tone of delivery
- Use hand gestures to number points, introduce topics, transition
- Exhibit enthusiasm about the topic
- Project your voice or use a microphone if necessary
- Use a variety of audiovisual media
- Inject the presentation (or materials) with humor

Non-verbal cues

- Spread eye contact around the room
- Smile
- Move out from behind the podium
- Be confident in your delivery and interaction
- Respond to students' reactions, and adjust and adapt accordingly
- Keep an eye on the audience's body language

Things to avoid

- Reading from a prepared script (when possible)
- Standing in a position where you obscure the screen
- Getting lost in an overhead
- Excesses (of movement, enthusiasm, hand gestures, etc.)
- Repetitive words or phrases that may become distracting
- The use of fillers (such as "um," "er," or "you know")
- Overuse of PowerPoint

Tips for Effective Visual Presentations (PowerPoint, Prezi, Keynote, etc.)

SLIDES

- Include only one main point per slide.
- Limit the text on the slide, or eliminate it entirely and use only images.
- Declutter slides and don't be afraid of white space. Avoid unnecessary images (especially clip art!), animation, or fancy slide transitions.
- Try taking the number of slides you would normally include and cutting 1/3 to 1/2 of them from the presentation.
- Use contrasting colors, large, easy-to-read font, and consider using light colors on a dark background for potentially low-vision audiences.

PRESENTATION

- Avoid the temptation to teach from behind the podium – this creates distance between you and the students and puts the emphasis on the screen rather than the ideas being presented.
- Utilize other visual aids in addition to the slides. Write on the board or use the document camera, especially for writing equations, main concepts, or discussion points.
- Incorporate active learning techniques to break up longer presentations.
- To the extent possible, keep the lights in the room on so students can see you and their notes (rather than the insides of their eyelids ☺).

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Use Flickr or other Creative Commons-licensed images in your presentations.
- Plan your presentations or lectures on paper before adding them into the slides. This will help cut down the number of slides you use.
- Have a reasoned plan for whether you will share your slides with students.

For more presentation tips, come to the Kaneb Center's "Presentation Zen" workshop!

-Design Your Class Outline Here-

Class and Topic

Beginning

Middle

End

-Design Your Mini-Lecture Outline Here-

Class and Topic

Learning Goals

Interesting “Hook” or Main Question

Lecture Material and Relation to Learning Goals

How will you assess whether the learning goals were accomplished?