
TEACHING TIPS

FOR INSTRUCTORS

Top Five Quick Tips

- ❖ Know what concepts, skills, and/or attitudes you want students to leave the course having mastered
- ❖ When creating the course, err on the side of narrowing the scope so that there is time to delve more deeply into the content presented
- ❖ Do not lecture for more than 10 minutes without having a brief activity (see below)
- ❖ Include a small group in-class mini-project within the first 10% of the course in order to establish community and show students that participation will be expected
- ❖ Explicitly show your passion for the subject/why you value it



Social Justice

PART OF SFSU'S MISSION IS TO SUPPORT EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. PLEASE CONSIDER REVIEWING THE LINK BELOW TO SEE HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THIS IMPORTANT ASPECT OF OUR MISSION

<http://ctfd.sfsu.edu/content/social-justice-curriculum>



TIPS FOR building classroom community

Learn and use students' names. If you have a large class and few meeting times, simply ask for someone's name when they participate. When they ask their question or make their statement, thank them by their name even if you won't remember it later.

For other ideas, see:

<http://ctfd.sfsu.edu/content/engaging-students>

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<http://ideaedu.org/research-and-papers/idea-papers/39-establishing-rapport-personal-interaction-and-learning>

TIPS FOR pushing advanced students

Include a reading list on your syllabus

Include a list of organizations students can join

Create an extra track to each major assignment, posing more challenging questions for students to address (Why and How questions will often help lead students to deeper thinking)

For other ideas, see
<http://ctfd.sfsu.edu/content/integrating-critical-thinking-curriculum>

Course Overview and Content

Write a paragraph or two that summarizes the broad scope of the topic. (For example, if you are teaching a course on making presentations, your paragraph would be about communication in general). Share this information early on in class so that students have context.

Arrange content from general to specific.

Define all technical terms.

For complex concepts, find analogies to daily life or other commonly shared experience.

Creating a syllabus

FOR FORMAL COURSES, CONTACT YOUR DIRECTOR OR SUPERVISOR FOR DEPARTMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

See:

<http://ctfd.sfsu.edu/content/helpful-syllabus>

<http://ideaedu.org/research-and-papers/idea-papers/27-writing-syllabus>

<http://ctfd.sfsu.edu/content/writing-course-objectives-and-outcomes>

SUGGESTIONS FOR FIRST DAY / FIRST HOUR

- ❖ Welcome students to course, naming the course and introducing self by name.
- ❖ State the main objective of the course (no more than a sentence or two).
- ❖ Consider beginning with a group activity where students introduce themselves to each other and have a small course-related discussion. Place a how or why question on the board and ask students to explore it in groups. Make a question that relates to the topic but a question that allows beginners to access it.



EXAMPLES How do effective leaders make decisions? (*Leadership course*)

Why might plants (like cacti and euphorbias) that are from different parts of the world look so similar?

What makes effective communicators effective? (*Presentations course*)

Why do we have punctuation? (*Grammar course*)

- ❖ If you choose to have students introduce themselves to the whole class (classes of 20 or fewer), be sure to limit them to a minute each. Introduce yourself last.
- ❖ When introducing yourself, build your credibility (experience/degree) briefly and explicitly share your enthusiasm for the topic.

Lecturing Tips

First, break long lectures up into **ten-** or **fifteen-minute** parts.

Create questions for each part that can either orient students and get them reflecting before you start and/or questions at the end of each part that encourage them to explore the material more deeply or apply it to specific contexts.

Ask students at the end of lecture to summarize the key points in writing. Have them share those with the students nearest them. Solicit remaining questions from students and clarify challenging topics.

For other ideas, see

<http://ideaedu.org/research-and-papers/idea-papers/46-effective-lecturing>

<http://ideaedu.org/research-and-papers/idea-papers/57-flipped-classroom>

Example pattern for an hour of teaching

5 min. Pose a warm-up question to orient students to the topic, and then ask students to discuss in trios.

3 min. Solicit a few responses and organize on board (most to least important/complex/etc.)

17 min. Lecture on a narrow topic within the day's focus

Have students apply learning via a non-graded quiz, case study, or other problem-solving activity.

15 min. Students can work alone at first and then form pairs or trios to compare findings and work through problems together.

Solicit responses. Compliment. Explore less defensible answers in non-threatening ways by complimenting the thought behind the wrong answer and soliciting other responses. Clarify remaining questions.

10 min.

5 min. Give students a few minutes to write. Have them summarize what they obtained from the lesson, directing students to summarize main points and find applications to their academic or work life.

ENCOURAGING & EVALUATING student writing

For short essays and reports in longer courses, consider assigning rough drafts and creating small group peer workshops for students to discuss ideas and clarify prose.

If **providing evaluative feedback** for students on their written work, narrow your scope. Do not try to address all writing issues and all conceptual issues. If the student product has a depth and breadth of errors, summarize the most important issues and consider asking the student to redo the assignment.

For non-writing assignments, consider adding a brief written component. For design or physical projects, have students write a paragraph that justifies their approach or design/artistic choices. For readings, have students write a brief summary and brief statement of how they'd apply the reading's concepts to their academic or professional life.

Maintain the **best student responses** and use in future quarters as examples.

Encouraging Discussion

On the first day of class, set the expectation that students are to be strong participants in discussion. Do this by providing students a complex or interesting primary source or case study that matches their level of experience with the subject. Write a few questions on the board for them to answer in writing (to allow them to develop some ideas on their own).

- SAMPLE** What is social justice?
◆◆ What are the traits of effective writing?
QUES- TIONS What are the key questions recruitment specialists should ask potential employees?

Lastly, put students in a circle, when possible, asking them to share one idea (and one idea only) or to respond to another student's idea (expanding it, contrasting it, providing an example). All students must participate once before anyone participates twice (Waiting out in silence as the instructor is challenging, but can be powerful). Let students know that you will not be speaking for the next 15 (or so) minutes, barring emergencies. This will show students that they are responsible for maintaining discussions (As they discuss, take notes to summarize the discussion, compliment key insights, and add missed ideas).

- ❖ **For more introverted classrooms or less experienced students**, consider assigning roles for students in discussions. Number students off 1-6: 1) affirmers, 2) questioners, 3) idealists, 4) realists, 5) social justice focused, 6) budget focused, 7) summarizers, 8) gate-keepers (keeping the discussion on track)
- ❖ **For discussions where you want to play a more active role**, prepare a list of questions you can pose to the group about the topic, so you can guide discussions without immediately providing answers. (Consider taking notes as students talk so you can clarify points or summarize concepts at the end of the discussion.)
- ❖ **For career-focused classes**, create an activity where students pretend they are at a networking event, exchanging ideas about the concepts they just learned.
- ❖ For other ideas, see: <http://ideaedu.org/research-and-papers/idea-papers/49-effective-classroom-discussions>

Active Learning

(pairs, small groups, and the like)

The easiest, quickest, least intrusive way to use active learning is to determine a **provocative or substantive question** that matches each 10-15 minutes of lecture and then pause during lecture, pose the question, and ask students to discuss it in pairs or trios for 2-3 minutes. Solicit a few responses. Add your perspective briefly. Move on.

For other ideas, see:

<http://ctfd.sfsu.edu/content/student-centered-teaching>

◆
<http://ctfd.sfsu.edu/feature/enhancing-classroom-participation>

◆
<http://ideaedu.org/research-and-papers/idea-papers/53-active-learning-strategies-face-face-courses>

Resources Drawn From the Following:

SF State's Center for Teaching and Faculty Development: <http://ctfd.sfsu.edu/>

Evidence-based tips briefs from Kansas State University: <http://ideaedu.org/research-and-papers/idea-papers>

USING iLEARN

SFSU's Learning Management System

“iLEARN IS SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY'S LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, BUILT ON [MOODLE](#). IT PROVIDES A PLATFORM FOR INSTRUCTORS TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE MATERIALS, ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT INCLUDING ONLINE QUIZZES, LIBRARY ERESERVES, DIVA RESOURCES, COURSESTREAM LECTURES AND OTHERS ALL IN ONE PLACE.”

[HTTP://AT.SFSU.EDU/ILEARN](http://at.sfsu.edu/ilearn)

❖ iLearn Quick Start/General Beginning and End of Semester Checklists

- <http://at.sfsu.edu/onlinequickstart/faculty>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/start-semester-checklist-faculty-using-ilearn>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/ilearn-faculty-checklist-end-semester>

❖ Setting up the iLearn Course Shell/Adding Content

- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-set-number-weeks-or-topics-your-ilearn-course>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-add-resource-file>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-to-create-assignment>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-create-link-external-web-site>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/faculty-quiz-overview>

❖ Student Orientations to iLearn

- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/getting-started-ilearn>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/onlinequickstart/students>

❖ Inviting, Emailing, and Engaging with Students

- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-make-course-available>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-enroll-users>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-use-quickmail>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-create-web-conference-activity>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-create-forum>

❖ Transferring Content from One Semester to the Next

- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-backup-course-content>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-import-course-data>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-restore-course-content>
- <http://at.sfsu.edu/support/how-make-your-ilearn-course-unavailable-students>