Preparing, Presenting, Interacting, and Engaging:
The Fundamental Principles of Effective Teaching

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5-Minute Discussion

• With the person(s) next to you, introduce yourselves and discuss the following questions:

  • Why are you attending this session?
  • Do you have any teaching experience?
  • If so, what would you like to work on in your teaching practice?
  • If you have never taught before, what are you most concerned about?
This session outlines four fundamental principles of effective teaching, which include:

- Brief tips for developing curriculum from course outcomes
- Tips for preparing and presenting content and materials (and)
- Interacting and engaging with students.
How to prepare and present course content?
Tips for Developing Course Outcomes

The following guide may help you when you are working on designing and developing your course curriculum.

• **LECTURE/PRESENTATION** of information and content.
• **DEMONSTRATION** of skill/outcome.
• An opportunity to **PRACTICE** the skill/outcome, receiving feedback from peers, instructor, or both.
• Then, the **ASSESSMENT** of that skill/outcome.
Differentiated Learning

• When you are preparing course content, keep in mind the value of **differentiated learning**.

• Differentiated learning (DL) is a framework/philosophy which calls for providing students **various avenues** for acquiring learning materials, processing and applying them.

• In brief, (DL) calls for variations in *how instruction and content is provided* and *how content is assessed/measured*.
Methods of “Presentation”

• Most professors, adjuncts, and teaching assistants default to LECTURE–based styles of presenting information, accompanied by visual aids (PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.)

  • There are many benefits to this style of teaching, and we will discuss general tips for improving your lecture-effectiveness.

• However, we will also address the benefits of differentiated presentation styles, including:

  • SMALL GROUP
  • LARGE GROUP
  • STUDENT-LED DISCUSSION
Preparing & Presenting

• As you prepare for your lectures, be sure to verify your information with different resources
  • These may include books, as well as former professors, advisors, seniors, etc., who may have taught that class or used the same materials.

• Ask yourself the question, “What am I trying to accomplish?”

• Keep your audience in mind and their ability levels:
  • Undergraduates and their rankings: freshman vs. junior
Keeping Your Lecture Focused

Build your lecture around major points, providing those major points explicitly to your students early in your lecture.

• Give students a “roadmap” of your lecture to follow, so they know what it is leading to.
  • Emphasize your objectives and key points in the beginning, as you get to them, and as a summary at the end.

• Limit your main points to five or fewer and time yourself in order to ensure you’re covering as much as you need to in the time allotted.
Keep in mind: structure and clarity

• The way you organize your lecture depends on your topic, i.e.,
  • You can base your lecture on points/sub-points
  • Use examples or arguments to build your lecture
  • Explain the important terms (and)
  • Repeat information if necessary

• Prepare and practice a short conclusion that will tie the strands of the lecture together and place the lecture in the wider context of the course.

If you plan to use technology aids, prepare backups in case of technological difficulties.
Other “Presentation” Methods

Small & Large Group Discussion

• Low-risk setting for brainstorming and discussion topics, tasks, assignments, and/or concepts

• Work collectively to apply skills and concepts

• May facilitate understanding and comprehension

• Groups/group leaders then contribute to a larger-group discussion with instructor contribution and feedback

Student-led Discussion

• Divide lecture topics into small groups and students give “introduction” to instructor lecture
  • Prepare a presentation
  • Video/visual handout or display to accompany lecture
  • Creative demonstration of concept through play, skit, or other creative means
  • Prepare/facilitate discussion question for before and/or after lecture

• Promotes understanding, comprehension, and accountability
Using Visual Accompaniments

• If you use PowerPoint or Prezi to accompany or deliver your lecture materials, keep in mind some general formatting and style tips:
  
  • Don’t fill the slides with text; white space is good for the brain!
  • Watch your font size! No smaller than 16/18!
  • Avoid too many color schemes, distracting images and videos

• Provide a printout of your slides at the start of class so that students can take notes as you move through the lecture
  
  • This will help them stay focused and follow along with your lecture more effectively.
Differentiating Your Materials

• **Video/visuals**
  - Prezi, Power Point, Google Slides, etc.
  - Remember: provide outlines of slides for easier note-taking!

• **Use video platforms like YouTube or TEDTalks**

• **Get them physically involved with their learning**
  - Create or use models together
  - Create timelines, graphs, posters, pamphlets, or other 3D objects etc.

• **Have students give presentations as demonstrations of their understanding/application of course content**
• **Differentiate your assessments, too!**
  • Vary your kinds of test questions, types (consider oral exams!)
    • prompts to hit higher level thinking skills
      • Refer to Bloom’s Taxonomy and revised Taxonomy (References page)

• **Give quizzes periodically on lecture objectives, not obscure material. Are they getting it?**

• **Avoid lengthy in-class exams. Work through the test yourself and then time it for your students.**
How to interact and engage with your students?
Main Points

- Use Ice-Breakers
- Engage your students
- Get feedback
- Q&A Sessions
Use Ice-Breakers

- First day of class: create an inviting classroom
- Encourage group activities throughout the semester
- Take the initiative to learn their names, their interests and their concerns
- Respect them as not only your students, but also as individuals
Engage Your Students

- Use a quote, a dramatic visual, or an anecdote to engage their interest.
- Link new material to students’ prior knowledge, such as common experiences or previous coursework.
- Show enthusiasm for the topic and information. Remember, you are modeling your discipline.
- Give students time to think and to respond.
Pay attention to your language use itself
- Avoid using obscure language
- Don’t assume students “know” – ask for volunteers to define/explain, and then hedge their definitions appropriately
- Be aware of cultural boundaries and “gaps” in American-based references, clichés, or common expressions

Use open and expressive body language
- Be “happy” to ‘make’ “happy”; confidence is key!
Get Feedback

- Observe students’ non-verbal communication: note taking, response to questions, eye contact, seating patterns, and response to humor. Are they “with” you?

- Use the “minute paper” or other assessment techniques. Ask students to respond in one or two sentences to the following questions:
  What stood out as most important in today’s lecture?
  What are you confused about?
Give **quizzes** periodically on lecture objectives, not obscure material. Are they getting it?

Avoid **lengthy in-class exams**. Work through the test yourself and then time it for your students.

Conduct **midterm teaching evaluations** or simply ask the students for suggestions and comments at the midpoint of the quarter.

**Office hours**: come out from behind the desk, keep candy on hand, and consider requiring every student to come in once early in the semester.
Handling Questions

- When asking if there are any questions, don’t simply ask “Any questions?” Try to rephrase it as: “What parts of this are still a little unclear or confusing for you?” or “What do I need to explain again?” or “What are you wondering about that I haven’t yet addressed?”

- Make sure you understand the student’s question before launching into a long explanation. Restate the question and let the student clarify, if necessary.
In a large class, **repeat a student’s question** so that all the students know what question you’re answering.

Consider **reserving two- to three-minute blocks** for questions at transition points in your lecture.

Let students have the full time to think, even if nobody asks a question.
Finally, if you don’t know the answer to a question, don’t bluff.

- Volunteer to find the answer and report back
- Ask the student to investigate and report back to the class
- Or, consider trying to work out an answer with the students
In Conclusion:

- Try to teach in a relaxed, conversational tone.
- Allow yourself to think out loud, and engage with the material as you present it.
- Never read out your notes.
- Maintain eye-contact while teaching or talking.
Always, time yourself!

Confront your hidden biases’ about students.
- It can be easy to assume a student is just “lazy,” “unmotivated,” or “disinterested”.

Avoid “locker-room” talk.

Lose the ego and be human.
Other Relevant Breakout Sessions

While this discussion was brief, we hope that we have been able to provide you with some beneficial tips and strategies to keep in mind as you begin your new term here at Kent.

Other helpful sessions might include:

- **First Time TA**
  - 12:20-1:05p or 1:15-2p in KSC 313

- **Grading and Creating A Syllabus**
  - 1:15-2p and 2:10-2:55p in KSC 310c

- **Technology Tools for TAs**
  - 2:10-2:55p and 3:05-3:50p in KSC 313
Questions?

Feel free to contact us:

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References

• Differentiated learning. (n.d.) Wikipedia, Wikipedia, retrieved from https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Differentiated_instruction. (Offers a good introduction to the concept and provides a great beginning list of resources and references for more information about concepts and strategies.)

• http://ctl.yale.edu/teaching/ideas-teaching/preparing-lecture

• https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/resources/teaching-resources/teaching-strategies/checklist-effective-lecturing/lecturing-guidelines


• https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/cft/guides-sub-pages/lecturing/

• https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/first-day-of-class/

• https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/resources/teaching-resources/teaching-strategies/checklist-effective-lecturing/lecturing-guidelines
Teaching Assistant Training Program

Sponsored by Graduate Student Orientation and the Division of Graduate Studies

- Gain access to teaching resources that will help you as a teaching assistant now or in the future
- Watch the video lessons with valuable information
- Take the quiz at the end
- If you pass, you will receive a TATP Certificate of Participation that you can put on your CV or resume

For more information, visit: https://www.kent.edu/graduatestudies/teaching-assistant-training-program