

Getting Students to Prepare for Class

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April 29, 2005; 8:30 – 10:00 am, Proctor Classroom 42, Knight Library

What if you could get your class of 150 students to engage in the material without having to grade 150 homework assignments? Wouldn't it be wonderful to know your students completed the assigned reading before class? Imagine how great those final papers would be if students started sooner. Come experience some easy-to-implement strategies that will encourage your students to read, prepare and participate.

(Note: Information taken verbatim from cited sources.)

IDEAS

Class Preparation Assignments. Lack of student preparation for class is a common problem. One way to improve the quality of their preparation is to ask students to respond in writing *before* class to several thought provoking questions. These could be based on assigned readings, but the questions should relate directly to the topic of the next class period. To insure they respond thoughtfully, ask students to email their responses to you the day before class. Or, better yet, have several of them post their responses on a web site where all the students are asked to read them prior to class. In addition, ask everyone to bring a hard copy to class. Not only does this engage students more thoughtfully in the material, but their responses help you gauge their understanding before class: very useful information in planning for class.

<http://www.uwlax.edu/wimp/teach/write4understanding.htm>

In order to achieve these goals, Introductory Biology will be redesigned around an extensive set of online resources for class preparation, quizzes, and supplemental instruction and tutoring. Faculty will create Web pages to guide student preparation for class. Students will review learning objectives and key concepts listed on the Web pages for each class meeting. Students also will review supplemental material from the publisher's Web site, which may include figures, graphs, movies, or animations that emphasize key concepts. Students then complete online quizzes to assess their preparation for class. Quizzes will provide instructor-generated, immediate feedback to students and provide data for instructors to assess student levels of competence with the material. As learning shifts outside of the classroom with the use of online materials and more frequent assessment, class meetings per week will decrease from three to two and exams decrease from four to three.

<http://www.center.rpi.edu/PewGrant/RD2%20Award/UMAPlan.html>

We will have periodic quizzes (unannounced, but approximately once a week) to assess **student preparation for class** and to encourage students to stay current with the reading assignments. You will be responsible for the reading material assigned for that class period (text and articles) as well as the material covered in the class prior to the quiz. Quizzes missed may not be made up, but the lowest two scores will be dropped at the end of the semester.

<http://www2.truman.edu/~dcart/MM036syl.doc>

Students will read the assigned chapters in the text and the articles, documents and other readings on reserve and posted on the class web site to be prepared for each class session. Over the course of the term there will be four brief, unannounced in-class writing exercises (short answer and identification) based on these readings to assess student preparation for class. There will be no make-ups for these exercises but at the end of the term the lowest exercise score will be dropped.

<http://www.wou.edu/las/socsci/kimjensen/203sp05.htm>

Class Preparation

The English 104 curriculum is based upon student preparation for class; this is not a class of teacher lecture. The curriculum of any given day is dependent upon the reading and writing work the students have done in preparation for the class. You should count on a minimum of one-two hours of homework per class. All students, therefore, are required to be prepared for class. Homework will be checked throughout the semester, but checks will not be announced in advance. The instructor has the right to reduce points for a unit if it is found that a student has not prepared for class. Homework will become part of the write-to-learn folder.

As you can see, throughout the semester this class will require much work outside of class: reading, annotating, summarizing, brainstorming, systematic questioning, outlining, drafting, revising. It is a very active course, requiring on-going commitment. This is not a course in which you can wait until the last minute to do the work. If your schedule is such that you cannot do much work outside of class, then you should consider changing your schedule or taking this course when you can accommodate the extensive outside work.

<http://www.calumet.purdue.edu/engphil/eng104.html>

Unannounced quizzes are the option of the professor should student preparation for class deteriorate to unacceptable levels.

http://www.usna.edu/Users/oceano/pguth/website/so503/so503_policy_2004.htm

One of our discussions this week centered on student preparation for class on a regular basis/or should I say their regular lack of preparation. There was almost unanimous consensus that far too many students are consistently unprepared for college work in general, let alone unprepared for class each day. Some of their lack of preparation can be attributed to normal immaturity or lack of sufficient preparation for the expectations that would be placed on them once they reached college. But we almost all agreed that the problem is also due to a lack of caring and a sense of entitlement on the part of many students, which is fostered when faculty decisions about a student's poor performance are overturned. The UTM Administration must let students know in no uncertain terms that while faculty are here to support them whole-heartedly in their educational endeavors, and breaches of appropriate faculty conduct or faulty faculty evaluation of a student will be corrected, the students themselves must take serious responsibility for their own education and produce quality work in all their classes. And when faculty hold students to high standards, UTM must back up its faculty should students challenge those standards because they chose, for whatever reason, not to perform to those standards.

<http://www.utm.edu/staff/voicel/Huse%2004.html>

Conduct of the Course:

This section includes a general description of how the course will be taught. The purpose is to define the expectations the instructor has for how the educational objectives will be achieved. This may include lectures, student presentations, class discussion, group work, library research, computer usage or other pedagogical techniques. This is also an opportunity to describe the instructor's expectations for student preparation for class sessions. Subsections can be used to describe specific assignments in greater detail.

<http://www.loyola.edu/academics/academicaffairs/documents/SylITem02.doc> (downloads as a document)

Knowledge

Sometimes we ask questions simply to test or discipline students to develop knowledge of terminology, specific facts, elements and doctrines. Our questions demand only that students remember previously learned information. In law school, we generally expect that students will come to class with the basic knowledge in hand, based on their class preparation. Thus, we ask students for simple rote recitation as a method of assessing and encouraging preparation for class. Questions that ask about knowledge might begin with verbs such as "define, describe, list"

For example

"Mr. Jones, what are the facts in this case?" (Asked about a case in which facts are relatively straightforward)

"How did the trial court rule?"

"What are the elements of X?"

These types of questions should be sparingly used, as they tend to waste time for those students who are prepared and the shaming of those who are not prepared often creates a negative climate for learning for all students. Rather, faculty can facilitate student preparation for class by providing them with clear instructions on what and how they are to prepare for class along with clear notice that you expect all students will have achieved this minimal level of preparation before each class.

<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/profiles/glesnerfines/questions.htm>

Discussion or response papers shall be used to assess a student's preparation for class. These papers shall be called for without notice several times during the semester and shall be assessed only as participation or preparation in the final grade point analysis.

<http://library.kcc.hawaii.edu/external/asdp/history/asian/his122.html>

INSTITUTIONAL EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT PREPARATION FOR CLASS:

This class is scheduled to meet formally for 40 contact hours of instruction. ECU states that the minimum preparation expected of students is two hours of outside preparation for every scheduled hour of class. This means that in a class meeting 2.5 hours every week students are expected to put in an additional 5 hours outside. Activities may be in the form of homework, reading assignments, projects or performance oriented activities.

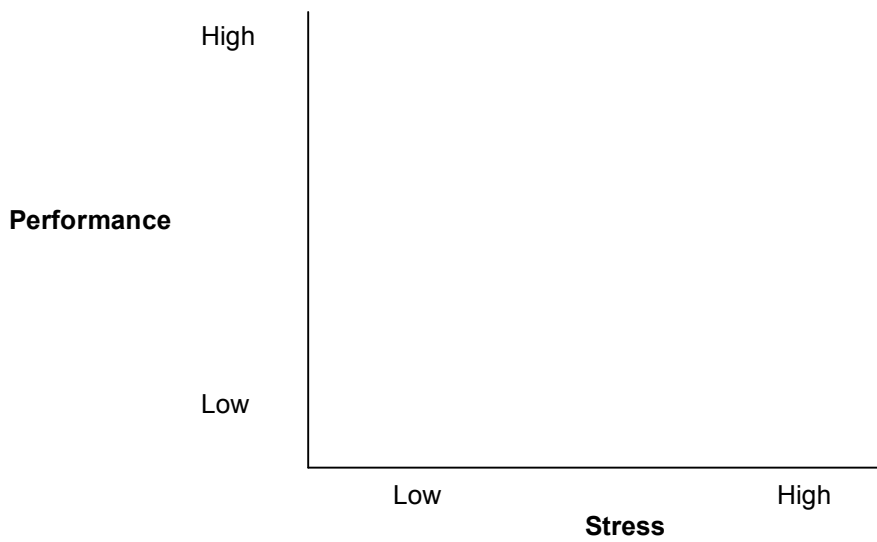
<http://people.eku.edu/fardos/tte261/updated/syllabus.htm>

- Students are expected to read the assigned chapter before coming to class.
- Student participation during class is expected. This will include group activities during class.
- Several daily quizzes will be administered to test the student's preparation for class. Although attendance is not mandated, the daily quiz will not be an item that can be made up due to absence.

<http://wtclass.wtamu.edu/viewSyllabus.php?courseId=3689&sFile=0>

WHAT WOULD YOU PREDICT???

What would you predict that a graph of the relationship between stress and performance would look like?



Why do you think it would look like this?

EXPECTATIONS—collected from student comments in various classes over the past few years

How do we make this the best class you've ever taken (up until this point)

Hands-on activities
Field trip
Easing the workload in my other classes
Variety, no repetition
“A” for perfect attendance
Fun
Group interaction
No tests
Snacks
Little homework
Activities
No reading
Curve high
No papers
No final exam
Get something out of the class
Make up tests
3 free absences
No attendance policy
No busy work or notes
Rewrite papers
Opportunities for personal and spiritual growth
Have a positive attitude during class
Lots of class discussion
Use pictures to help us understand the material
Provide us with some practical tools
Opportunities to share our thoughts and opinions
Connections with each other
Humor is always good
The class needs to be profound
Low stress assignments
No papers longer than two pages
Provide a sense of WOW! (Tom Peters via Tim)
Food--both nutritious and sugary
The class needs to speak to something really important to my life
Some physical activity would be good
Relate this class to other classes

How do you learn best?

Visually--pictures, graphs, videos, etc.
Through interaction and discussion
By listening
By connecting course information to real life
By taking notes and discussing material in class
From examples
When inspired
Through experiences/activities with other people
By reading
From other people--their experiences and stories
From lectures
Through hands-on/interactive experiences

Expectations of the Instructor (by students)

Be fun, friendly, and approachable
Want us to be here
Let us know what's expected
Be clear, concise, and patient
Communicate via e-mail
Be passionate
Tell it like it is—don't sugar-coat it
Motivate me to work
Relate the material to life
Share that magic
Be available
Respect
Be understanding
Teach don't lecture
Friendly
Down to earth
Treat students equally
Grade high

Expectations of Students (by students)

Mutual respect
Share knowledge and ideas
Be friendly and open
Be willing to work and participate
Make it fun
Get to know each other
Be friendly
Talk
Listen
Don't laugh at stupid questions
Don't act like a rod
Be yourselves
Provide direction
Be insightful
Be positive
Be realistic
Cry
Provide interesting information
Teach don't dictate
Share selves
Be open-minded
Provide specific expectations for assignments
Challenge each other
Be honest
Participate
Be direct with communication
Be respectful

Expectations of Students (by the instructor)

Show up
Do your best

Comments by students in an ALS 199 “Study with Focus” class—Spring, 2005

I prepare for class when the instructor...

- holds pop quizzes.
- when there are assignments due periodically.
- one of my instructors gives extra credit for doing the readings weekly and writing a summary on Blackboard.
- encourages involvement.
- tells me there is going to be a quiz the next class time.
- says we’re going to break into small groups and talk about it.
- says I’ll have an automatic A.
- has quizzes on assigned reading material.
- tells me that the material will be on the midterm.
- is friendly and encouraging.
- asks questions to specific students.
- is good at presenting the information.
- doesn’t berate (us) for not knowing an answer.
- reinforces what is in the text but also expounds upon it.
- is motivated/enthusiastic.
- is approachable.
- welcomes and greets class.
- assigns reasonable readings/assignments.
- does not shoot down answers or responses (makes you feel stupid).
- does a discussion based on readings.
- calls on random people.
- random quizzes (“small ones”)
- tells us exactly what we need to do and stresses how and why this preparation is important to us. If it’s not important I probably won’t do the work. It helps if the thing I have to do is personally interesting but that isn’t the deciding factor.
- is excited about what he/she teaches.
- also if the teacher is straight forward about what he/she will test on. Don’t give out pages and pages of readings that will only confuse us.
- asks questions in the class.
- is prepared him/herself. Setting clear expectations on the syllabus.
- reminds me of upcoming assignments during the class.
- engages his class and encourages class participation.
- specifically says if you do not prepare then you will feel lost in the next class.
- makes it clear that the material will be necessary to understand the lecture, activities, or information.
- shows the importance of reading the material, studying, and so on.
- involves the students and engages in discussion while lecturing. This way the student will want to be prepared so they can talk about it.
- makes you want to come. Is interesting.
- makes you participate. You don’t want to look dumb.
- randomly calls on you, does pop quizzes, gives random participation points for being there.
- has the class set up so being prepared is required. Such as if I am quizzed on the reading. Otherwise there is no incentive for me to do the reading. I shouldn’t say that though since I dislike quizzes.
- engages me.
- demands my respect (earns it) so I don’t want to disappoint him or her.
- I also will feel that he or she can really teach me something.
- motivates me to learn.
- varies what we do—not just lecture.
- requires attendance.
- says notes are the key to success.
- says bringing certain items are required.
- says bringing books to cite lines during discussion is essential.

I prepare for class when the class is...

- the instructor is passionate, enthusiastic and approachable.
- the instructor invites class participation and relates the topic to our lives.
- something I find to be valuable to my life.
- simple to relate to my life.
- related to a career goal.
- using a textbook that is easy to read and understand.
- a review but more explanatory than just the text alone.
- other students are excited.
- something that I really want to learn.
- in full discussion.
- small discussion.
- a continuation on the reading.
- engaging. If I feel like I'm having fun and learning something useful then I'll be much more motivated to prepare for class.
- interesting. When I actually want to go. I'm not staring at the clock.
- also when the class has variety. Lecture, here, video clip there...Change it up.
- interesting and I need to be prepared in order to pass or get a good grade.
- smaller because you connect with people in class and would actually want to do well.
- depends on your being prepared so it can move forward and not leave you behind.
- when the class is one that provides me the opportunity to show that I prepared for class.
- when there are group activities predicated on the material I'm supposed to read.
- when I know I'll have to share my interpretation of the material to the class.
- relevant to my life and interests.
- comprehensive and intriguing.
- necessary to prepare for in order to receive good grades.
- small and makes you participate.
- gets you involved.
- fun.
- when the class work isn't overwhelming for each day. I start falling behind more and more.
- when I enjoy the class structure is interesting.
- involved in group discussion.
- test review.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Classroom teaching strategies and techniques - What to Do When Students Don't Read

Specific ideas for what to do when students do not do the reading from the Instructional Consulting Library developed by the School of Education at Indiana University-Bloomington.

<http://www.iub.edu/%7Eicy/noread.html>

Getting Students to Prepare for Class

Concise summary of a number of things you can do to encourage students to prepare for class. From the Office for Professional Development at IUPUI.

http://opd.iupui.edu/ctl/idd/docs/tipsheets/prepare_for_class.pdf (Downloads as a PDF file.)

Getting Students to Read the Book

Professor Bob Megginson from the University of Michigan offers specific suggestions about how to get students to do the reading assignment for that day.

http://www.math.lsa.umich.edu/courses/Instructors/Guide/Classroom_Management/read_book.html

Increasing Student Attendance

Strategies you can use to encourage students to come to class. From the Office for Professional Development at IUPUI.

http://opd.iupui.edu/ctl/idd/docs/tipsheets/stud_attend.pdf

Class Evaluation

Includes section entitled "Student Preparation for Class".

<http://bokcenter.fas.harvard.edu/docs/EvalnFac4.html>

Classroom Assessment Techniques

By Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross

From *Classroom Assessment Techniques, A Handbook for College Teachers*, 2nd Ed.

Overview of the topic. Much of the information is contained in the Nilson chapter. (From the University of Hawaii.)

<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/assess-1.htm>

Classroom Assessment Technique Examples

By Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross

From *Classroom Assessment Techniques, A Handbook for College Teachers*, 2nd Ed.

Specific examples with directions on how to use. (From the University of Hawaii.)

<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/assess-2.htm>

Classroom Assessment Techniques

A number of specific examples with instructions on how to use them. (From SIU-Edwardsville.)

<http://www.siu.edu/~deder/assess/catmain.html>

Classroom Assessment Techniques

Overview of the topic with specific examples. From *The National Teaching and Learning Forum*.

<http://www.ntlf.com/html/lib/bib/assess.htm>

Classroom Assessment Techniques (Overview)

Overview of the concept and a wide-range of specific examples. Worth checking out. (From *The Field-Tested Learning Assessment Guide* (FLAG) produced by The National Institute for Science Education's (NISE) College Level One (CL-1) Team, based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

<http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/archive/cl1/flag/cat/cat.htm>

Classroom Assessment Techniques Designed for Technology

Paper by Mary Barone Martin (Middle Tennessee State University)

The "designed for technology" part makes this article unique.

<http://www.mtsu.edu/~itconf/proceed99/Martin.htm>

An Introduction to Classroom Assessment Techniques

Paper by Diane M. Enerson, Kathryn M. Plank, and R. Neill Johnson

Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence (Penn State University)

Discussion of the concept with examples that include variations of standard uses.

http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/Resources/class_assessment.asp