Leading an Effective Classroom Session

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The latest version of this presentation can be obtained from http://sahan.org/teaching_presentations.html
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Session Description

- Sahan will share his ideas about what makes an effective class session. He will discuss organization, presentation techniques, active learning, and use of examples specifically as a means to achieve a good discussion.
Outline

- Introduction
- Planning the Lesson
- Starting the Lesson
- Perfecting Your delivery
- Questioning Techniques
- Effective Groups
- Active Learning
- Ending the lesson
Planning the Lesson

- Plan your lesson
  “If you don’t plan you plan to fail”.

- Refer to “planning a lesson” small group session

- Make sure you have
  - Topic
  - Objective
  - Content Summary
  - An ordered outline of the material preferably with the amount of time
  - A very clear ending, summarize the material
Planning the Lesson

• Think of the big picture and where your lesson falls in the semester.

Examples?

◦ If it's before an exam then the students expectations are going to be different, don't do lots of new material try to review.

◦ If it’s the end/beginning of a sub section then use some time to summarize the subsection and put it in context.
Planning the Lesson

- Don’t include too much material
  - too many faculty and TA’s try to cram as much information as possible into the lesson

- Divide the material both in terms of time and content
  - We like small chunks of information

- Microteaching Lesson Plans
  - You only have 8 minutes
Planning the Lesson

• Microteaching Lesson Plan
  ◦ Topic
    • Not too general or too specific
  ◦ Objective
    • Something achievable in 8 minutes
  ◦ Content Summary
    • The main points you want to get across

• Share a few of your Microteaching topics, objectives and key points.
Starting the Lesson

• Go to class a little early and talk informally with students
  ◦ A little bit of small talk helps build a good rapport with the students and encourages them to ask questions

• Put your lesson plan on the board or have it on the power point
  ◦ easy to do and gives the students an idea about what is coming up and how things are organized
  ◦ Helpful when students are preparing for the exams
  ◦ Helps you keep track and on time

• Spend a minute to put the class in context with the course and relate it to the previous class
Perfecting Your Delivery

- Don’t lecture continuously for the whole time; engage your students.
  - Use examples
  - Get the students to solve a problem
  - Ask the students to come up with a scenario or give examples

- Watch your students and make eye contact.
  - You can react and respond to the student
  - Students are more likely to answer questions
  - Students are more alert
Perfecting Your Delivery

- Vary the pace at which you speak.
- Vary your voice.
  - No one likes to listen to a monotonic drone.
- Walk around the lecture room.
  - You are able to get more attention this way.
- Use pauses.
  - Pauses are a very effective speaking tool that is under utilized.
- Be conversational.
  - Use simple colorful language, student respond better to conversational inflection and tone and pitch variations.
Perfecting Your Delivery

- Lecture from notes or an outline, instead of using complete text.
  - Caveat, for the first few lessons, if you are nervous then write everything out, learn it before the lecture and practice the delivery instead of worrying about the material.

- Don’t turn your back to the board for too long.

- Don’t talk while writing on the board.

- Make sure you solve your examples/problems before coming to class.
Questioning Techniques

- Questioning done properly can add greatly to the learning process

- Look back to Bloom's taxonomy of questioning and knowledge types

- Take the time to create good questions that get the students to think

- Ask a few easy (not dumb) questions at the beginning of the lesson
  - It makes the students comfortable with answering the harder ones later on.

- Make a three bad questions and three good questions for your microteaching (5 minutes)
Questioning Techniques

- If no one answers your questions.
  - Don’t point at a student and ask them to answer
  - Change the wording and ask the question again
  - Try to use silence effectively
  - Ask questions from the front back left right or this row next row

- One or a few students will always answer
  - Tell them one student can only answer once
  - Ask questions from the front back left right or this column next row etc
Effective Groups

- Group work can be an efficient method to:
  - let students get feedback from each other
  - solve large complicated projects/assignments
  - change the monotonicity of the lesson
  - Interact with students in large classes
  - Allow students to get to know each other
Effective Groups

Group Types

- Base Groups – Formed for the duration of the semester for large projects
- Random Groups – Students randomly get into groups for specific assignments
- Different Groups – Students get into different groups each day
- Assigned Groups – Students are assigned to groups
- Assigned Groups with roles – Students are assigned roles in each group
- Assigned Groups with roles and trade – Students can trade their roles
Effective Groups

- Methods to form base/assigned groups?
  - A’s and F’s
  - Gender Balance
  - Racial/Ethnic Balance
  - Obtain skills information from students and assign according to skills.
Active Learning

- I hear....I forget.
- I see......I remember
- I do....I understand

- Confucius
Active Learning

We retain,

- 10% of what we READ
- 20% of what we HEAR
- 30% of what we SEE
- 50% of what we SEE and HEAR

- William Glasser

- 70% of what is DISCUSSED with OTHERS
- 80% of what is EXPERIENCED PERSONALLY
- 95% of what we TEACH TO SOMEONE ELSE
Active Learning

- Active learning is the process whereby the students learn by engaging the material using higher order cognitive tasks.

- As opposed to learning by passively listening to lectures or memorizing information from textbooks.

- Bonwell and Eison state that active learning strategies are comparable to lectures for achieving content mastery, but superior to lectures for developing thinking and writing skills.

(Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom. ERIC Digest, Bonwell & Eison, 1991.)
Active Learning

- We retain information when we use it, and instead of merely lecturing if we get the students to use the material in class there is a higher likelihood of them retaining it.

  - In my classes we do 15-20 minutes of practice questions during every discussion
  - The students work in small groups and talk to each other and I walk amongst them answering questions
Active Learning

• Examples and questions can be used as an effective tools of Active Learning
• Use examples that require the students to process and apply the material.
• Spend time to create questions that require the students to process and apply the material.
  ◦ This gives them an opportunity to clarify doubts while in class
• Come up with an example to use in your microteaching.
Ending The Lesson

- Summarize the main points
- Re-emphasize how things are connected
- Given an idea about the next lesson and how they can prepare
- Don’t leave as soon as the lesson ends.
  - Some students like to clarify things at the end of the lecture.
The End

Thank you for listening
Good luck on your teaching!

If you have questions/suggestions please e-mail me:
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