

TEACHING AT STERN What I've learned so far....

Some Key Ingredients:

Learning is not a spectator sport. Make students accountable in the classroom. Learning requires experimentation & risk taking on your part and the students' part, but you need to create a psychologically safe classroom to make it work.

Possible Strategies for Promoting Positive Engagement:

- You need to discover and leverage your own personal style
- You need to make the first move. It's critical to convey interest & enthusiasm.
 - Communicate that you want to be there
 - Tell students about yourself—your passions as a researcher, the roles you serve at Stern, your professional experience
 - Importance of initial framing: why the content is important in general and to them personally
 - Highlight connections between course content and current events
 - Back up words with actions—use voice & gestures strategically, get away from the podium. Work the entire classroom.
- Make it difficult for students to hide or withdraw. Reduce anonymity.
 - Learn student names & at least one unique piece of information about them. If Stern doesn't provide photos, ask students for a current picture. When possible, direct questions to students with personal knowledge/experience in a particular area --- show students that you know more about them than just their name & ID number.
 - Have students get to know one another through small group discussions
- Define expectations and create norms for participation.
 - Set the tone in your first class
 - Define your role in the class
 - Define what high quality participation means in your classroom (*content and process contributions, quality vs. quantity*). Reinforce it when you see it.
 - Define what low quality participation means in your classroom (*digressions, monopolizing the discussion, being uncivil*). Redirect it when you see it.
 - Cold calling is useful early on to set expectations
 - Contact students who do not participate. Arrange for participation in advance.
 - Managing "right" and "wrong" answers. Students want to know when an answer is right or wrong, yet they don't want to be the one who is wrong. The challenge is to find a way to be clear, but non-punitive. Sometimes it's best to note an inaccuracy and move on; other times I ask the class if there is another way to view the situation and then discuss the merits of each approach.
 - Balancing control and flexibility in managing class discussions. Knowing when to break from your agenda or class plan is critical.

- Mix up the format, if possible
 - Rather than falling into a routine, try to vary the classroom experience
 - For example: I use combinations of mini-lectures, case discussions, analyses of current events, exercises, small & large group discussions, and videos.
 - Sometimes I allow TAs to lead lectures so I can observe the class dynamics. If I ask my TA to lead a discussion, I often serve as the scribe -- recording important discussion points on the board. This allows students to speak to each other more freely because I'm not part of the formal discussion.

- Calibrate the class periodically
 - Ask students if the pace of the class is working well
 - Using a "one minute memo" (daily, weekly or monthly) provides an opportunity for students to ask additional questions and make comments, and for you get a feel for the climate in the classroom.

- Personalize the learning process by actively involving students
 - Invite students to present personal "mini-cases" that address past/present work situations.
 - Have small groups present their analysis of a "breaking news" event.
 - Design assignments that require students to collect data from local organizations (archival records or employee interviews) and then report back their findings to the class.

- Don't waste students' time
 - Start and end on time; get there early to set up the room.
 - Be organized: put an agenda on the board and get through it
 - Give adequate airtime to assigned readings and cases
 - Return assignments promptly; provide timely and high quality feedback
 - Don't let students waste each other's time

- Think carefully about your policies for grading
 - TAs: I train TAs and review graded papers with them until I believe that they understand my expectations. I then create templates for them to follow for subsequent assignments. I spot check throughout the term.
 - If TAs are responsible for grading, I have them field grading questions.
 - Re-grades: I have students write formal memos that build an argument for their case. I (or the TA) re-grade the entire exam, not just particular questions. I have the option to raise, lower, or not change grades. This usually deters students who are merely fishing for extra points.

- Other issues you'll need to devise strategies for handling:
 - Lateness: Tackle it early on! Ask colleagues about their tactics.
 - Dysfunctional project teams – how much should you get involved?
 - Recruiting TAs: I look for potential TAs during my classes and try to recruit them in advance. I also ask my colleagues for recommendations.
 - Office hours: I ask students to email me in advance that they will be coming and to note their agenda. This helps me to budget time effectively. It also deters students from coming "just to chat" or put in non-productive "face time."