

Paul Brown's Tips for Teaching 3-Hour Classes

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- Divide the session into distinct parts. Some faculty suggest two parts, others three, but partitioning is universally recommended.
- There is no consensus on whether the separate session parts should be of the same length. Two schools of thought exist - (1) let the length of the sessions' parts be driven by topics covered and/or need to minimize class fatigue; (2) fix the length of the session parts so that class participants have a clear understanding of exactly when the break or breaks will be held (executive education model).
- Avoid lecturing in the latter part of the session (and needless to say, avoid lecturing for the entire session). Other options include presentation of group work, case discussion or introduction/discussion of next week's topics and their tie to the materials presented to date. The latter point - introduction of next week's topics - can be especially effective if it is geared toward helping students prepare problems or cases for the next week.
- Related to the point above, most faculty recommend the use of cases, presentation of group work by participants, and current illustrations and examples as much as possible toward the end of the session.
- Use a varied set of pedagogical tools during the session. That is, use relevant websites, course management tools (e.g., blackboard), power point slides, "white board" (yes, it is still very effective!), among other tools, throughout the session.
- Generally, anticipate more in-depth coverage of topics, possibly at the expense of a slightly less range of topics covered. This is probable because participants are better focused (one course versus two or three each day/night) in a longer concentrated period of time. In addition, both continuity and student participation can be enhanced by the format.
- Use guest lecturers in one part of the session, followed up or preceded by cases or articles related to the topics addressed by the guest lecturer. Choose the lecturers carefully, ensuring that she or he understand the challenge of keeping participants engaged in the classroom.
- In those courses offering midterm exams, faculty indicate a mild preference for holding the exam at the beginning of the session, ensuring that participants understand that the session continues after the exam.
- Tell jokes. Finding a politically correct joke these days can be a challenge, but the point is: anything that breaks up the session is effective. Perhaps more acceptable than jokes as an effective means of breaking the "marathon" aspect of the session is a discussion of current events related to the topic of the day.