

Classroom Strategies

Questioning/Sharing Strategies—in the moment

Ask three before me
Budd-ee-buzz
Concentric Circles
Discussion Boards
Discussion Preparation Guides
Gathering
Listening Pairs
Posting Grades
Quizzes
Small Group Work
 Jigsawing
 Taking/tabulating a survey
 Questioning evidence
Teachable moments

Questioning/Sharing Strategies—long term

Making Movies
Oral Presentations
Papers
Podcasts

Overall Organizing Strategies

Counting off/Reorganizing
Debate
Into-Through-Beyond
Role Plays
What do you know? What do you want to know? What did you learn? How can you apply it?

Presentation Strategies

Films
Guest lecturers
Lecturing (with the board)
Lecturing from various parts of the room
Online resources
PowerPoint
Teaching through Questions

Discussion Preparation Guide

Name:

Course:

Date:

Week Number:

Week Topic:

Draw on all the readings for the week to address the following questions.

1. List and define three words that are unfamiliar to you or seem to have been used in a special way.
2. List three items that seem especially significant or puzzling to you, and explain why. Items can be anything of interest—a statement, the title, the setting, a fact, etc.
3. What are the three main points of the reading?
4. Which theories were the authors using?
5. Briefly, what were the authors' methods?
6. What were the authors' findings?
7. Capture the essence of the readings in a motto or bumper sticker.
8. If the author(s) were to visit class, what would ask him/her/them?
9. How has the class discussion expanded your understanding of the selection?

Appendix: Motivating Students to Learn

The suggestions below are meant only as a *beginning*. They are in no way comprehensive. Note as you look through them that many could be under more than one heading (as, in fact, many of them *are*).

1. Demonstrate the relevance of the subject matter.

a. When teaching abstract concepts, start with concrete examples; in fact, it is best to *reverse* the common order used to explain a concept. Here is the common order:

- i. write the concept (cult, habeas corpus, metaphysics, species, standard deviation, prime number, calorie) on the board;
- ii. give a glossary-type definition;
- iii. explain that definition;
- iv. provide examples.

Note that every step is an effort to remedy the confusion created by the previous one: the definition seeks to capture the word, the explanation seeks to clarify the definition, and the examples seek to concretize the explanation. Instead of each step preparing students for the next one, each is reduced to doing damage control for the preceding one. Putting aside the conceptual difficulty, we need to think about what the students experience with this order; it is not until the final step that they actually have a sense of what the concept means in the world with which they're familiar. Finally, they have a motivation to learn – if, that is, they are still listening. By reversing the order, we give students the motivation to learn at the *beginning*.³⁴

- b. Where appropriate, employ case studies and “problem-based learning.”
 - c. Challenge students to find commonplace examples of the subject you're teaching.
 - d. Encourage students to stop you at *any* point in the class and ask, “Why does this matter?”
2. Set high standards and have high expectations of student success.
- a. Don't accept late papers without a penalty.
 - b. Where appropriate, make it clear that you expect students to attend class.
 - c. Make it clear that you expect students to arrive on time.
 - d. Provide feedback on students' work (not just a grade – see 4); make sure the feedback is timely, since timeliness is not only helpful to the students, it also models high standards.
 - e. Have students draw up a contract for the course (see 7c for more details).
3. Create a safe and supportive learning environment.³⁵
- a. Flag insensitive remarks and discuss why they are not permissible in the classroom.
 - b. Encourage students to share with you any fears or anxieties they might have.
 - c. Use weak student remarks to your advantage:
 - i. think of such a remark as an unreflective thought that needs to be given voice if the more considered ideas to which the class aims are to make sense;
 - ii. as such a remark often reveals a deep confusion that other students have, consider that the student has done you a favor and thank him or her for allowing you to clarify the point;
 - iii. blame all student errors on yourself – you might not deserve all of the blame, but take it anyway.
 - iv. Bottom line: student errors are not opportunities to flex your intellect and put them in their place! Nothing creates more tension (for everyone) in a classroom.

4. Give students feedback that encourages them to continue working and is not harshly critical.
 - a. Emphasize what they have done well.
 - b. Present problem areas as places improve.
 - c. Don't coddle. The idea is to tap into the feedback mechanism that is mostly likely to motivate further learning.
 - d. The more prompt the feedback, the better; if grading an assignment takes twelve hours, two six-hour days is far better from the students' perspective than six two-hour days.³⁶
5. Be aware of, and work to minimize, students' anxiety over tests and assignments.
 - a. Give low-stakes assignments and tests; five assignments or tests worth 20 percent each is preferable to two worth 50 percent each.
 - b. Where possible, allow students to redo assignments and retake tests.
6. Work to give students the confidence they can do what you ask of them, and that they can make the adjustments you ask for in your assessment of their work.
 - a. Refrain from overly onerous, confidence-crushing assignments.
 - b. Offer opportunities for students to revise their work.
 - c. If grades for a particular assignment or test are generally low, be open to accepting responsibility. In this regard you might:
 - i. offer a retake; or
 - ii. scale grades, although there are potential hazards here – see 9c.
7. Show students that they have control over their learning.
 - a. Allow student input on assignments; offer a wide choice of essay topics, for instance, and encourage students to add their own topics.
 - b. Offer a choice of assessment schemes – for example, two papers and one test or two tests and one paper.
 - c. Have students draw up a course contract that might involve rules surrounding civility (such as cell phone use), as well as policies on late assignments and academic dishonesty. Make sure the

- contract includes *your* obligations to the students (showing up on time, being prepared, and so on). Students should sign and submit the contract.
- d. Emphasize that you don't give grades; students receive them.
 - e. Take time to explain your pedagogical decisions: what is behind your particular assignments and methods of assessment? why do you have a late policy? Give students the chance to discuss your reasons, and be open to incorporating their changes.
 - f. If possible, avail yourself of mid-semester feedback – many teaching centers will send staff to speak with your students at that time. In discussing the results with your students, let them know their views matter (as they do: you will get helpful information to use in the latter half of the course).
8. Employ active learning techniques. At the most basic level, active learning involves any pedagogical strategy that *actively* engages students in their learning. It's at the opposite end of the spectrum from a passive strategy such as lecturing. The most common forms of active learning, known as collaborative or cooperative learning, involve students working on assignments in groups. Problem-based learning – where students work on concrete problems designed to illustrate concepts and ideas – is also active, and can also involve group work. There is a voluminous literature on active learning; the best place to start is at your campus teaching center. Standard teaching texts also provide good primers.³⁷ Meanwhile, think about the following:
 - a. Interject an active moment into any class simply by asking students questions or by eliciting their responses to things you have said.
 - b. Go one step further by having students initially answer your questions in small groups and then report their discussions to the class.
 - c. Form questions that involve higher levels of learning, such as applying knowledge to unfamiliar contexts, evaluating and critically assessing theories and arguments, and even creating new theories.

- d. Allow students to explain complex material to one another - they can often do it better than we can - they speak the same language and are often more in touch with the conceptual difficulties involved than we are.
 - e. Set short, in-class writing assignments that can help students express the ideas they have picked up from the class, even if what they express is how little they understood.
9. Emphasize what makes the class material worth learning.
- a. Allow and encourage students to revise their work, thereby promoting mastery of the material, rather than simply the quest for high grades.
 - b. Give students feedback on assignments first, and only then, after a delay of some days, give them a grade.
 - c. Avoid norm-reference grading; students should know they are being graded on the basis of their mastery of the material, not on how they compare with their peers.
 - d. Show your *own* enthusiasm for the material. This is vital!

Teaching Personas

For reasons I will get to, I begin this chapter with a few confessions.

First, I have had students in the past whom I really disliked. I am not talking about being annoyed with or frustrated by them. I mean I *really* did not like them, and not just as students, but as people. If perhaps you think that, as a professor who sees individual students only for two and a half hours a week and then only in a room with many other students, I couldn't possibly have had enough exposure to *know* them, let alone dislike them, you might be right: my judgment might have been purely superficial, but I stand by it - call it intuition. These students darkened my day and, like cats who gravitate maliciously toward people who do not like them, these students seemed to revel in showing up religiously at my office hours and droning on endlessly about their difficulties with interpreting Rousseau, or their problems with the course, or with preparing for tests, or ... well ... who can keep track? I tend to zone out.

Second, if there's one word I cannot bear to hear uttered, it's "rubric" - meaning those little matrices that instructors share with students that indicate to them, and to the instructor, how their work is to be assessed. As soon as someone in an educational workshop even hints at rubrics, I feel an overwhelming desire to hit the snooze button, not because I'm tired, but because sleep is preferable to violence, which is the other overriding temptation. To my mind, rubrics are the distorting distillation of any and all kernels of wisdom I want my students to grasp,

John Jay Students on What New Faculty Need to Know

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This material comes from an in-class informal oral 10/2018 survey. Students were eager to share suggestions.

1. Be on time to class.
2. Make sure students have the syllabus the first class, not two weeks before the end of the semester.
3. Give us a manageable course load. Many of us work more than one job outside John Jay and raise kids. If you want us to do an assignment outside the classroom, DO NOT schedule it at a specific time and day, and do not make it mandatory that we have to do this assignment with other students.
4. In each class, know what you are going to focus on, and focus on it. Get organized.
5. Don't read off your PowerPoint in class and then post your PowerPoint on Blackboard. If you're doing that, why do we need to come to class?
6. Do not speak in a monotone. Demonstrate enthusiasm in your tone.
7. Make lessons interesting and engaging.
8. Be open to questions. Don't shoot down students who ask questions. It's "gross" "manslaughter."
9. Give anecdotes to illustrate confusing material.
10. What you know seems easy to you and you talk too fast for us to take notes. Slow down so we can learn.
11. Likewise: We don't understand things as fast as you do. You're an expert. We want to learn. Give us time to learn it.
12. If a student does not do the readings, do not humiliate the student in class. Do not be a jerk. No public shaming.
13. Promote discussion.
14. If you are teaching something quantitative that involves statistics, put formulas on the board. When you are teaching quantitative materials and put nothing on the board, students get lost.
15. Be understanding when life happens to a student. For example if a student commutes from upstate to take your class, and Metro North has cancelled trains due to a blizzard, do not penalize the student if John Jay stays open.
16. Use technology. Using paper is "nasty" and bad for the environment.