

INTRODUCTION

This book has been written to efficiently present teaching strategies and techniques. It is purposely brief to provide adjunct/part-time* faculty a quick and straightforward reference. Most of the topics discussed here are covered in greater depth in *The Handbook for Adjunct and Part-time Faculty and Teachers of Adults*.

As an adjunct faculty member, you make a significant contribution to your institution and to the students who take your classes. Regardless of your reason for teaching, your effectiveness will depend upon the amount of pleasure you experience as a teacher. If you are new or returning to the classroom after being away, you will find that student expectations of college instruction have changed considerably. You'll find this book full of tips, strategies, and proven techniques that address teaching in the contemporary classroom, making your teaching experience productive and enjoyable. So let's get on with it...

* For the purposes of this publication the terms adjunct and part-time faculty are used interchangeably.

Who am I????

... A part-time faculty member!

If I'm early, no one notices ...

... *If I'm late, everyone does.*

If I'm well-prepared for 101 ...

... *I'm assigned 102.*

If I have 25 handouts prepared ...

... *there are 26 in the class.*

If I'm well-prepared...

... *the class is cancelled.*

If I'm under-prepared ...

... *53 students register.*

But I am invaluable! In fact, in some institutions I am responsible for 50 percent or more of the total credit hours taught. I teach anytime, any section, any students. Often, I teach after a full day of work or homemaking. Equally as often, I bring new skills, energy and expertise to the institution where I teach.

Why do I teach? ... I want to share my experience, talents, and skills with others; I want to help bridge the gap between the academic world and the surrounding community; I want to explore new frontiers of learning; ... and I love it.



Check for the KEY icon when reading this booklet. The KEY is used to highlight special techniques and key concepts to improve your teaching.

FACULTY CHECKLIST

So, you've accepted a position as an adjunct faculty member, received your class assignment, and signed your contract. Listed below are some points you'll want to review with your supervisor prior to beginning your first day of class. Add additional items to create your own personal checklist.

1. Have I completed all my paperwork for employment?
2. Is there a department course syllabus, course outline, or statement of goals and objectives available for the course?
3. How do I get a copy of the text and any ancillary materials for teaching the class?
4. When are grades due and when do students receive grades?
5. Is there a college and/or departmental grading policy?
6. Are there prepared department handouts?
7. Are there prepared department tests?
8. What are the library's book checkout and Internet procedures?
9. What instructional aids are available?
10. What are the bookstore's policies?
11. Is there a college and/or department attendance or tardiness policy?
12. Where can I get instructional aid materials such as films, videotapes, etc., and what is the lead time for ordering?
13. What are the names of the department chairperson, dean, department secretaries, learning resource and support staff, and other significant college officials and how can I reach them, if needed?
14. Have course objectives been reviewed to incorporate the latest technology?
15. Who are some of the other faculty who have taught the course and are they open to assisting adjuncts?

GETTING STARTED

Learning is best accomplished when there is a need to learn and when it builds on prior learning and knowledge. So true learning is as much the responsibility of the student as the teacher. Teachers, however, are an integral part of the learning process and require certain professional skills and competencies. Individuals can no more expect to walk in front of a class without these skills and excel, than one could expect to walk into the middle of an engineering project or legal case and succeed.

The critical difference between teaching and other professions is quite simple. Most professions are very content-oriented, requiring an adequate mastery of subject and a considerable amount of hard work to succeed. In the world of teaching, those factors—while necessary—are useless without possessing the ability to communicate with other human beings.

The basic characteristics of good teaching are:

- > Knowing one's subject
- > Being able to communicate it effectively
- > Knowing and liking students
- > Understanding one's culture

Student Characteristics

Today's college teachers encounter few certainties; however, one certainty is that you will face increasingly diverse groups of students. Their backgrounds and aspirations are significantly different from those of the typical "college student" from a few years ago. You must be constantly alert to stereotyping students or classes since it diminishes your chances of success with the group.

Listed below are five common characteristics that may be found in today's college students:

1. The college students of today will probably have a better grasp of where they are going and why they are in class. They may become frustrated if their expectations are not met.
2. Today's college students may view themselves as consumers as well as students. They feel they have purchased a product and they will expect its delivery.
3. They will come to class more mature and more open to sharing their rich life experiences. Many times these experiences can be a valuable asset to the class.
4. They are adults and expect to be treated as such. Very often adult students will rebel at rules and standards that do not seem to contribute to the learning process.
5. Many students have grown up in a culture driven by the fantasy of television, movies, and videos as well as the Internet. This environment may encourage attitudes of disrespect as well as comparisons to professional performers.

In order to challenge these students, instructors need to develop teaching strategies and activities that reach these students, such as group work, cooperative learning, and other activities in which students assume responsibility for themselves and their peers.

Classroom Communication

As pointed out earlier, the principal ingredient of professional teaching is the ability to communicate clearly. In a classroom, communication is more than talking and lecturing. Communication involves eye contact, physical gestures, classroom presence, and proper media and blackboard usage.

Become acquainted with cultural nonverbal communication indicators and, above all, be conscious of any traits that may be construed as offensive or distracting to students. At the same time, you should be conscious of your strengths. Examine and reflect upon your most positive features and mannerisms and incorporate them into your teaching strategies.

And finally, **remember that the three R's of teaching are repeat, respond, and reinforce.** This means that student comments and contributions, if worthy of mention, are worthy of being repeated, responded to and reinforced by the verbal and nonverbal techniques at the command of the teacher.



STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING

Although you may not need to develop a strategic plan for teaching, you should have in your repertoire a variety of approaches to teaching. The following are some contemporary concepts and strategies that have received considerable attention in teaching/learning circles during the past decade.

Andragogy/Pedagogy

With the recent rise in the number of adults attending college, teaching experts have recognized that these new learners brought with them different expectations about their role in the learning process. In fact, it is evident that adults want to play a more active role in their learning experience. In the past, most of us were placed in classes where the teacher determined the activities needed to achieve learning, making the teacher the center of the instructional process. This is called pedagogy and is a vital part of the teaching process. However, experts have realized that pedagogy does not work for all learners in all situations.

Contemporary learners, especially adults, want to be more active in their education. Specifically, they want to know why they must learn something prior to undertaking it; they possess a strong sense of self and feel responsible for their own decisions; and they wish to integrate their life and employment experiences into their learning activities. *These factors influenced the creation of a learner-centered strategy known as andragogy.*



For you as an instructor, the implications are very clear. Your classroom preparation should include learner-centered activities. Many such activities are included here but are not labeled

as such. Remember, however, that the andragogical model does not imply that the pedagogical model should be abandoned. There is still a need for pedagogical planning tempered by the concepts of andragogy.

Developing an andragogical teaching strategy requires a classroom that fosters open communication. Be aware that some adults may be anxious about their ability to learn, so plan activities that build student confidence and provide opportunities for students to share their experiences. You must establish yourself as a partner in learning and not an expert who has all of the answers.



Teaching experts increasingly acknowledge that **students learn from each other as much as from their instructors.** Working together improves all students' achievement in the classroom.

Four important student-centered teaching strategies are cooperative or collaborative learning, partnering, classroom assessment technique, and feedback mechanisms.

Cooperative Learning

Sometimes called collaborative learning, this strategy brings students with differing abilities together in small groups where they reinforce lecture and text material through interaction and discussion. This technique requires detailed planning, including classroom goals, specific activities, and a grading plan. Groups should consist of four or five students. During this activity, the instructor assumes the role of facilitator, maintaining direction and assuring complete student participation.

A good cooperative learning group is established with several conditions. You must make sure all students participate, have a method to capture individual student's participation, and require a tangible result from the group activity.

The benefits of cooperative learning include:

- > students have a vehicle to get to know others in the class (very important for part-time students),
- > students develop a commitment to the group,
- > grades improve,
- > out-of-class group study is encouraged, and
- > students become participants in their own learning.

Partnering



In addition to the small group techniques described later, some instructors find that **assigning students to work in pairs or as partners throughout the course greatly enhances their progress**. This technique can be implemented early in the course through voluntary student selection, lottery, or other suitable methods. This system provides each student with a “partner” from whom to seek help and with whom to share ideas as together they proceed through the course.

Student Feedback

One of the most important ways to monitor your success as a teacher is student feedback. Sometimes it is necessary to create formal feedback vehicles rather than to rely upon impressions. In addition to Classroom Assessment Techniques (see below), techniques for obtaining feedback include:

- ☞ Giving sample questions that do not count toward the grade before testing and asking for the correct answer with a show of hands.
- ☞ Making certain there is open and ongoing communication.

- ☞ Asking students to write a letter to the next class describing the course.
- ☞ Having a post-mortem discussion with your class.

Classroom Assessment

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) are based upon a series of teaching techniques in which teachers use classroom research activities to determine what students are learning. They focus on evaluation of instruction and student involvement in the learning process. To be truly developmental, no credit should be granted for CAT activities. Some basic CATs that you can utilize in your classroom are summarized here.

The Minute Paper. At the end of class, ask students to give a written response on the **most important thing they learned and any questions they have concerning the day's topic**. The query can be worded in any manner—remember the response does not count toward the student's grade. If you are seeking a solution to a problem or an analysis of a situation, the question can be worded appropriately. Responses then can be used to start discussion for the next class session.



The Muddiest Point. Students are asked to identify **something about the topic that is confusing**. This question asks the students to identify where *you* have been unclear. They love this one. You can specify whether the students are to respond to the lecture, a demonstration, or other activity. Remember to specify the activity or you will get general answers of little value.



The One-Sentence Summary. Ask students to **summarize a large amount of information**. This technique is especially effective with important topics and principles. It works well in classes where new concepts are built upon previous lessons. The key question is: “who does what to whom, when, where, how, and why?”

