



The First Day of Class: Setting the Stage for a Successful Semester

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REFLECTING ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS

What are three things you as the instructor want to accomplish during the first day?

Why are they important to you?

Which of those three things are also important to your students?

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

What do we know about first impressions?

“You never get a second chance to make a first impression.”

(author unknown)



MOST IMPORTANT DAY???

Some say the first day is the most important day
of the semester . . .

What do you think?

What do you suppose the students think?

CLASS NORMS

The first day will set the “norms” for the rest of the semester.

What does the “ideal” class look like for your course?

Take a moment to briefly describe the ideal class for a course you are teaching.

SETTING THE NORMATIVE TONE OF YOUR CLASS

- Do you want classroom participation?
⇒ make it happen on day one
 - Do you want small group work?
⇒ make it happen on day one
 - Do you value student input and opinions?
⇒ make it happen on day one
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TEACHING/ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR DAY ONE

Take a moment to reflect upon the type of teaching or engagement strategies you could use to set the ideal norms for your class.

Make note of at least one strategy to implement next week.

FULL CLASS OR PARTIAL CLASS ON DAY ONE?

- Literature is a bit mixed on this.
 - Don't do this: Hand out syllabus, read it to class, and let them go.
 - Try to have some substantive engagement with course material on that first day, but not necessarily a full session.
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SUGGESTIONS

- Present the syllabus in some way to the students.
- Introduce the course content and/or some initial material.
- Get at least some students to participate and set the desired tone for the class.

SYLLABUS

- Should you read it? Expect students to read it?
 - Suggestions to make it interesting?
 - How about a “syllabus quiz” for homework?
Something hidden in it? Other ideas?
 - Find a way to highlight important information.
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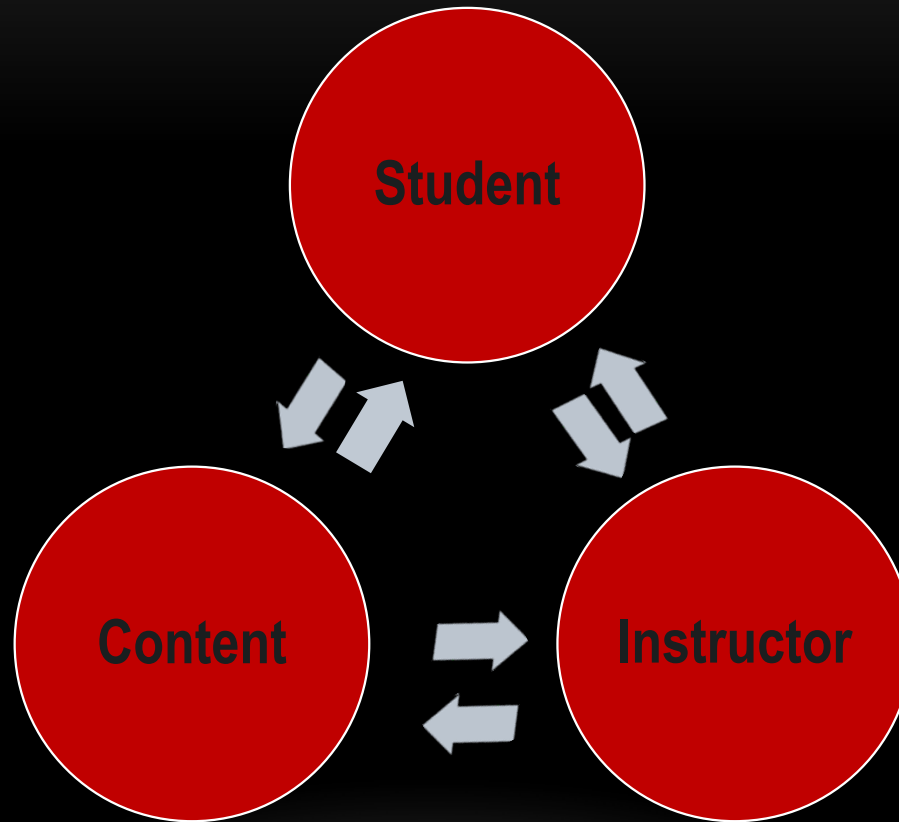
MAKING CONNECTIONS

“Use the first day to make connections
rather than to give directions”

(J. Kreizinger, 2006)

- Connect students to instructor.
 - Connect instructor to content.
 - Connect content to students.
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MAKING CONNECTIONS



ICEBREAKERS

- Mixed review in literature - some students like them; others don't.
 - Think of primary purpose: get students to interact, connect with each other, and “breaks the ice”.
 - Try to think of an icebreaker that relates to your course.
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INFORMATION “SHEETS”

What would you like to know about your students?

- ✓ Name
 - ✓ Phone number
 - ✓ Where they are from
 - ✓ Where they would go if they could travel anywhere in the world
 - ✓ Favorite type of music
 - ✓ What they hope to learn from the course (or a question you pose about their knowledge of topics in the course)
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SHARE YOUR ENTHUSIASM FOR YOUR COURSE MATERIAL

- Sharing intriguing questions, paradoxes, or mysteries that relate to your course material will grab the students' attention from the beginning.
(see J. Lang, 2008, p. 37)
 - Provide reasons for students to become excited about the course material.
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LEARN STUDENT NAMES

- Any helpful hints?
 - Remember the importance of making connections with students.
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FINAL THOUGHTS OR IDEAS?

I hope that you will consider incorporating some of these ideas into your teaching as you begin classes next week.

Our center is always available to work with you regarding any aspect of your teaching.

Thank you for your participation!



Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
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