

Ideas On Teaching and Learning From HCC's Social Sciences and Education Faculty

**Recorded by Jim Bell and Maureen Schuler
(2nd edition - Fall 2008)**

This handout has ideas to improve our teaching and better help students learn. Feel free to suggest additional ideas for future editions.

Here are the major topics we focus on:

Improving Our Grading Systems

Setting the Course Goals

Considering the Overt and Covert Curriculums

Improving Our Lectures

Improving Group Discussions

Improving Student Written Work and Avoiding Plagiarism

Improving Student Test Taking

Using More Feedback in Our Teaching

Considering Time on Task (Studying)

Recommended Sources on Teaching/Learning

Improving Our Grading Systems - How can we change our grading systems to increase learning?

A. What are guidelines related to grading systems?

1. Focus on student learning, student outcomes, student performance.
2. Be clear, comprehensive, and fair.
3. Explain both in writing and orally the major requirements.
4. Think about each guideline or rule you set. Does it encourage learning? Is it fair? Is it enforceable?

B. How might we communicate our expectations to students?

1. Clearly written course goals that are shared with students the first class.
2. Provide written and specific objectives for each chapter, homework assignment, class.
3. Provide information on how well previous students did.
4. Give a quiz over course goals, grading system, and expectations the second class.
5. Have previous students make a video to show current students.
6. Ask a previous student to write a letter to future classes to let them know what will be expected
7. Provide letters from previous students on their reactions to the course.
8. Provide detailed written instructions on assignments.
9. Provide examples or model answers prior to learning
10. Provide Answer Keys after learning (very good answers for students to check their learning).
11. Provide Answer Keys with a very good answer, a good answer, and a poor answer with comments from the instructor.
12. Provide a criteria sheet which specifies what will be evaluated on the assignment.
13. Model your expectations: being prepared, being to class early, ending on time, respecting differing views, Amake every minute count.@

C. How might we increase class attendance?

1. Make the class sessions so interesting and relevant students want to be in class.
2. Make the sessions so involving with active learning that students will come to class.
3. Structure the class into groups and stress the importance of not letting your group members down by being absent or unprepared.
4. Give points for class attendance or deduct points if students are absent.
5. After missing AX@ number of classes, grade drops one level due to lack of participation credit which is earned by being in class and being active. If more classes are missed, the grade drops to not passing.
6. Give a quiz each class which earns points only if taken and passed. Have announced quizzes most classes which are given at the start of class. Students earn points only if they are in class, take the quiz, and pass it.
7. Give a written assignment during each class which earns points only if taken and passed.
8. Provide a written policy on class attendance and go over it with students.
 - a. Allow one or two missed classes with no consequences.
 - b. For three or four missed classes required students to do makeup.
 - c. Missing five to eight classes cost one letter grade.
 - d. Missing more than eight classes costs two letter grades.
9. Require students to write something over the homework which is then their pass into class.
10. Require students to fill out a Worksheet to get into class.
11. Use a sign in sheet.
12. Request students to leave a phone message or Email if they can't make class the first weeks.

D. How might you deal with late homework?

1. Points are lost if the homework is not in at the start of class.
2. Points are lost every class the work is not turned in.
3. Points are lost every day the work is not turned in.
4. Give bonus points for every so many assignments turned in on time beyond a minimum number for all.
5. Do not accept late homework.

6. Accept late homework only if prior approval has been given.
7. So many late assignments drop a grade unless student passes a special test over the late homework.

E. How might we deal with coming to class late?

1. Have a clear written rule in your syllabus.
2. Go over the rule in class and restate it.
3. Enforce the rule.
4. Ignore lateness unless it is often.
5. Have coming to class late be equivalent to a late paper with the same consequences.
6. Allow 4 lates to class and then their grade is dropped with more than 4.
7. Speak privately to the person coming late after class to find out if there are unusual circumstances.
8. Request student meet you in your office to discuss being late and ways to change.

Setting the Course Goals - How might course goals be determined?

A. Who sets the goals?

1. Do I alone?
2. Does a faculty team?
3. Does some external group set the goals?
4. Is there a combination of the first 3 ways?
5. Are students involved? How?

B. How might we decide our goals?

1. What should my students be able to do by the end of this course?
2. What do my students want to be able to do by the end of this course?
3. What do my students need to learn to be successful in this course?
4. What do my students need to be able to do at the start of this course?

C. How have the goals for the course been specified?

1. Do all students have to meet all the course goals?
2. Do students have choices in which course goals to meet?
3. Can students create some of their own goals?
4. Have the goals been translated into specific learning objectives?
5. How do you communicate to students your expectations?
 - a. How do you get students to attend class?
 - b. How do you get students to come to class prepared?
 - c. How do you deal with students with poor study skills?
 - d. How do you deal with students who show little motivation?
 - e. How do you get homework turned in on time?
 - f. How do you get students to participate in class? In groups?
 - g. How do you know your students understand your grading system?
 - h. How do you assess student learning?
 - 1) Do you use a variety of ways to assess?
 - 2) Do you teach students how to learn from tests?
6. Do students need to be taught how to use the learning objectives?
7. Are students provided written learning objectives for each week of the course?
8. What higher level thinking skills are goals?
9. What learning to learn skills are goals?
10. How have you dealt with covering all the important content@ issue?
11. Have you considered using mastery learning?
12. Are your tests cumulative?
13. Do you have a final cumulative assessment?
14. How much feedback do you give students?
15. How much overall feedback do students get?
16. How much feedback do you get from students?

Considering the Overt and Covert Curriculums

A. Overview

What do I want my students to do by the end of this course?
What do my students want to be able to do by the end of this course?
What do my students need to learn to be successful in this course?
What do my students need to be able to do at the start of this course?

1. Knowledge - Recall key course concepts
2. Understand - Identify examples, summarize,
3. Apply - Apply to this course, to other courses, to everyday life
4. Learning Skills
 - a. Follow written directions
 - b. Improve time management
 - c. Decrease procrastination
5. Communication Skills
 - a. Use American Psychological Association citation format
 - b. Write scientific summaries
 - c. Proofread written work
 - d. Explain verbally major course concepts
 - e. Improve group discussion skills - active listening, paraphrasing, giving feedback
6. Thinking Skills
 - a. Critically evaluate secondary psychological sources
 - b. Increase brainstorming ideas
 - c. Improve creative problem solving
7. Attitudes
 - a. Increase taking responsibility for learning
 - b. Increase desire to learn
 - c. Increase desire to turn in high quality written work
 - d. Desire to ask questions about evidence
8. Have the goals for the course been specified?
 - a. Do all students have to meet all the course goals?
 - b. Do students have any choices in which course goals to meet?
 - c. Can students create some of their own goals?
 - d. Have the goals been translated into specific learning objectives?
 - e. Are students taught how to use the learning objectives?
 - f. Are student given written learning objectives for each week of the course?

B. Course Goals: The Covert Curriculum

As student learn the content of courses, they also are learning about how to learn which is called the covert curriculum or **learning to learn**. Covert because students are not helped to understand what they are learning. Hettich (1998, pp. 51-52) in Learning Skills for College and Career describes the covert curriculum. AThe covert curriculum may be defined as those numerous, routine skill-related activities, behaviors, and attitudes that are transacted inside and outside of classrooms. Collectively, they reflect a student=s overall work orientation and habits. Sometimes these experiences are called life/learning or lifelong skills, The overt curriculum focuses primarily on the communication of content, such as facts, concepts, and theory. The covert curriculum focuses primarily on the processes involved in learning skill-related behaviors and attitudes.

AHere are some examples of the covert curriculum.

1. Submitting an assignment of the day it is due
2. Taking organized and legible notes
3. Listening attentively in class
4. Increasing your reading speed and comprehension
5. Maintaining an appointment book that lists dates of tests, assignments, and special events.

6. Analyzing the attitudes and behavior of role models (for example, student leaders, teachers, administrators, peers)
7. Learning how to cope with stress
8. Changing the physical environment to strengthen your concentration
9. Practicing techniques to improve your memory
10. Accepting responsibility for your behavior and attitudes
11. Seeking and using feedback about your behavior.@

AEach example is a familiar part of the college experience. Each reflects an activity that we often ignore or take for granted. Think of the cover curriculum as a collection of unscheduled, self-taught, non-credit minicourses that helps you succeed in the overt curriculum and in your non-academic experiences.@

Increasing Learning When We Lecture

A. What might be done during a lecture? After a maximum of 10 minutes, change strategies. For example, ask individuals or pairs or groups to:

1. Summarize -- topic, central idea, key points, evidence
2. Describe what was learned (ideas, concepts, terms)
3. What was important to you? Why is it important?
4. What do you agree with? Disagree with?
5. What was not clear?
6. What questions do you have?
7. How can you apply what was learned?

B. What are advantages of the lecture method of teaching?

1. The teacher controls the topic, aims, content, organization, sequence, and rate. Emphasis can be placed where the teacher desires.
2. The lecture can be used to motivate and increase interest, to clarify and explain, to expand and bring in information not available to the students, and to review.
3. The number of students listening to the lecturer can be in the hundreds.
4. Students can interrupt for clarification or more detail.
5. The lecture can be taped, filmed, or printed for future use.
6. Other media and demonstrations can be easily combined with the lecture.
7. The lecture can be revised and updated.
8. The teacher can serve as a model in showing how to deal with issues and problems.
9. Students are used to the lecture method from high school and other college courses.

C. What are some of the disadvantages of the lecture method?

1. Some students may already know the content of the lecture while some may not be ready for the lecture.
2. Lectures are group paced.
3. It is difficult to maintain student interest and attention for a full hour or longer of lecture.
4. The communication is mostly one-way communication from the teacher to students. Often there is little student participation. The students who do participate are few in number and tend to be the same students each class.
5. Most students have not learned to take good notes.
6. Lecture information is forgotten quickly.
7. There is no immediate and direct check of whether learning has taken place.
8. Lectures are not effective when teaching thinking objectives.
9. The lecture method encourages student dependence on the teacher.
10. Few teachers have been taught how to lecture effectively.
11. Students are not very active when only listening.

D. What are some ways to get feedback on your lectures?

1. Make an audiotape of a lecture and listen to it a week later by yourself. Critique your own lecture. Or request that a video tape be made and review it yourself.
2. Ask some faculty to help you critique the audiotape or videotape.
3. Request other faculty to sit in on a couple lectures and give you their reactions.
4. Pick a specific aspect of lecturing to work on and teach a mini-lesson to some faculty.
5. Ask for a group of students to evaluate your lectures. Train them in what to look for and discuss with them their reactions.
6. Each class has a different group of students provide written feedback on the lecture.
7. Introduce some measure of student learning at the end of lectures to determine if students are learning.
8. Ask a speech teacher to provide suggestions. Videotape the lecture and have the speech teacher present. Then work together to improve your lecturing.

E. What are some ideas to consider about lecturing?

Before presenting the lecture

1. What do students need to learn and retain?
2. How might they learn? Is the lecture the best method to use?
3. What do students know? Build on what they know.
4. What needs to be taught?
5. How might we check their learning?.
6. How might student who miss class or don't learned by helped?
7. Keep in mind that retention during the middle third of the lecture is less than at the start or end. Since forgetting starts during the lecture, think of ways to decrease the forgetting.
8. Provide a written list of topics, key questions, an outline to fill in, definitions, partial notes, full notes (written lecture).

At the start of the lecture

1. Clearly identify the start of the lecture. Take charge. Start on time.
2. Get the students' attention.
 - a. Use a thought provoking question, story, or example.
 - b. State a problem.
 - c. Present a contradiction. State a paradox.
 - d. Bring in a personal example.
 - e. Use a current event to get started.
 - f. Highlight something from the homework.
 - g. Show how the topic is relevant to the students.
3. Tie in the current lecture with previous course learning.
4. Provide an overview of the lecture (sometimes called an advance organizer).
5. Explain to the students how they will be able to use what they are hearing.
6. Provide definitions for new terms and examples. (note the As@ on examples)
7. Don't read the lecture.

During the body of the lecture

1. Carefully organize the lecture.
 - a. Create a logical organization; a cause-effect; a time sequence; problem-solution; pro-con; simple to complex.
2. Keep in mind research on memory and learning.
 - a. Build in internal summaries.
 - b. Hold the key points to about 10 minutes each.
 - c. Don't include many details.
 - d. Rather than repeat, reword. Say it in a different way.
3. Keep in mind research on attention.
 - a. Let your enthusiasm for the topic show.
 - b. Use visual aids.
 - c. Use vivid examples.

- d. Don't rush.
- e. Develop eye-contact with your students.
- 4. Pull together information (integrate). Show how things relate. Develop transitions. Keep bringing the class back to the big picture.
- 5. Be objective to be seen as a credible communicator. Clearly label personal views.
- 6. Develop ways to increase student activity during the lecture.
 - a. Provide an outline on the board for students to fill in.
 - b. Provide breaks for students to write notes on what they understand.
 - c. Stop lectures for buzz groups, question and answer, or partners.
 - d. Provide problems for solving after presenting the relevant information.
- 7. Devise methods to determine what the students are learning (active learning). Students can be asked to write individually, in pairs, or in small groups.
 - a. Ask specific questions over the lecture.
 - b. Ask for examples.
 - c. Allow time for students to ask questions.
 - d. Use a student-response system or have students hold up their hands on practice multiple choice questions from a transparency.
 - e. Ask students at the end of class to summarize the central idea and the key points.
 - f. Keep track of nonverbal clues of inattention, confusion, or boredom.
 - g. Have daily quizzes.
 - h. Try a week test over lectures.
 - i. Identify on exams the questions that come from lecture and analyze the results.

Ending the lecture

- 1. Tie together the beginning and the end.
- 2. Summarize the lecture or ask a student to summarize the lecture verbally.
- 3. Ask all to write a summary.
- 4. Continue to place this lecture in the context of the entire course.
- 5. Review what was to be learned using study questions and then ask for answers.
- 6. Provide a preview of the next class.
- 7. Ask for further student questions.
- 8. Don't give hints that you are about finished since students will close their books and minds before you are finished.
- 9. Develop an end of the class routine so it is clear when you dismiss the class.

After the lecture - provide experiences to help student learn for the long term.

- 1. Work alone to reproduce the key ideas.
- 2. Work in pairs to reproduce the key ideas.
- 3. Work in groups to reproduce the key ideas
- 4. Quiz - alone, pair, group
- 5. Move beyond what has been presented to Think-Pair-Share

Delivery

- 1. Can everyone hear?
- 2. Do you use rate, volume, and pitch to emphasize?
- 3. Do you speak clearly?
- 4. Do you use your sense of humor?
- 5. Are clichés avoided?
- 6. Do you maintain eye contact?
- 7. Do you use appropriate gestures?
- 8. Do you avoid distracting habits?

What are ways to help students write better notes?

- 1. Provide an outline and have students fill in the outline.
- 2. Provide study questions before the lecture to structure note taking.
- 3. Teach students to take better notes.

- a. Put a detailed set of notes on the board or a handout and then lecture. Discuss with students what was put into the notes and why.
 - b. As you give the lecture, have another teacher take notes on a transparency so that students can see the process of taking notes.
 - c. Collect student notes and provide feedback.
 - d. As the lecturer, at first give specific hints while lecturing of what should be noted. In future lectures fade out the hints. Teach students to pick up subtle hints.
 - e. Teach students to take notes (not word for word) on the right side of the notebook. After class request that they rewrite and organize the notes on the left side.
4. Provide complete notes to students. Assign them as homework and use class for summarizing, interpreting, analyzing, thinking, and applying the ideas.

Improving Group Discussions

A. When group discussion is not working

1. Keep same agenda but ask for work in pairs.
2. Provide students with a handout on how groups operate and idea to improve discussion
3. Check pairs - keep notes to turn in, randomly call on some pairs to report to the class
4. Provide types of ideas from B. above to focus the pairs.
5. Provide worksheets for students to show their learning.
6. Ask for suggestions from students of topics they want to discuss
7. Appoint a leader and recorder.
8. Set up groups with 3 to 6 members.
9. Have students number off in each group. Randomly call on all the 2s to report for their group.
10. Have reporters come to the front of the room to make their reports.
11. Move to having students write rather than discuss.
12. Decide whether to sit in on groups, drop in on groups, stay out of groups.

B. Using Pairs (Think-Pair-Share; Think-Write-Pair-Share; Think-Pair-Write-Share)

1. No structure - give instructions and stand back, like a small group discussion
2. Take Turns
3. Divide up the task, each does their part, then join to teach the other
4. One reports and the other asks probing questions
5. One reports and the other disagrees with reasons and evidence
5. One reports and the other reacts
6. Think together
7. Work together to fill out a worksheet.
8. Work together to solve problems.
9. Each is required to write to turn in.

C. Using Groups

1. Full **Class discussion** led by the instructor, often in a big circle.
2. Full **Class discussion** led by one or more students.
3. **Panel Discussion** among a small group of students before the full class.
4. **Debate Discussion** involving two small teams before the full class.

D. Student Centered Discussions

The instructor sits in the discussion but plays a minor roles and talks little. The group is encouraged to take over the leadership functions. The instructor models thinking skills and reinforces students who think.

E. Developmental Discussion

Teacher divides the discussion into four clear categories so that discussion is focused on one step at a time.

The steps:

- a. Formulate the problem (clarify what the problem is)
- b. Suggest hypotheses

- c. Obtain relevant data
 - d. Evaluate various solutions (critical thinking).
- (W. McKeachie, 1999, Teaching tips: A guidebook for the beginning college teacher (tenth ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, pp. 46-47)

F. The Inner Circle (Fishbowl Technique)

With classes up to 30, half of the class moves into a small circle in the middle of the classroom with the rest of the class in a larger circle. The inner group then discusses the topic with the outside group listening. The groups can then be changed so that the outside group has to listen carefully to be able to carry on the discussion. The focus can be on applying thinking skills to whatever topic is being discussed. Or the class can be divided into several groups (4 to 8 students) and groups take turns being in the inner circle. (McKeachie, 1999, p. 57)

G. Leaderless Small Group Discussions

The class is divided into several small discussion groups (4 to 6 students) which are given a task and then allowed to function on their own. The teacher does not belong to any one group. Students can learn to think and later apply what they have learned.

1. Some teachers move around the classroom listening to groups, some drop into groups and participate a little, while other teachers let the groups function on their own.
2. Some instructors answer questions after the group activities but do not monitor the group activities.
3. Some instructors keep the same groups through the entire course, some make changes once or twice, some allow students to change at midsemester, while some use these groups for a topic and then change membership.

H. Buzz Groups

Class is divided into small groups (4 to 8) who are given a short period of time to discuss a problem and come up with one or two ideas to report to the full class. (McKeachie, 1999, pp. 56-57) This type of group is used often with problem solving and creativity. The buzz group can be used with critical thinking skills.

I. Circle of Knowledge or Roundrobin or Roundtable

Class is divided into small groups (4 to 6) with one person appointed as the recorder who writes down the answers of the group members. A question with many answers is posed to all groups. The person next to the recorder starts and each person in the group in order gives an answer until time is called. Ordinarily a short time period is used since this approach is best used with reviewing of previous knowledge. (from a handout with no name or date). In Roundtable each student writes their own answers in turn. Roundrobin for older students is called **Sharearound** with answers being given verbally with no recording. (Spencer Kagan, 1987, Resources For Teachers, Laguana Niguel, CA: author.)

J. Brainstorming

The class is divided into small groups with a recorder. Group members are asked to produce ideas as fast as possible. Evaluation of ideas is not allowed, only the production of ideas. Brainstorming is used for creativity and problem solving.

K. Case Studies

The class is divided into small groups with a leader and recorder. A single event, incident, situation, or story is used. Students are given a set of questions to answer which involves both recall of facts and application of thinking skills. The leader keeps the group on track and the recorder writes down the answers.

L. Group Retellings

Groups of 2, 3, or more each read a different selection on the same topic. Students then retell what they have read to their group. (Karen Wood, October 1987, Fostering cooperative learning in middle and secondary level classrooms, Journal of Reading, 10-18.)

M. Cooperative Learning - Pairs

Students work in pairs over specified material. Both read and study the material. Prompts indicate when to talk and summarize. One partner verbally summarizes what was studied while the other partner with the

material available corrects errors, clarifies concepts, and helps the partner elaborate. Then on the next material the roles change. (Wood, p. 13; Judith Lambiotte et al., 1987, Manipulating cooperative scripts for teaching and learning. Journal of Educational Psychology, 79, 4, 424-430)

N. Research Grouping

Groups of 4 or 5 students are assigned a topic which involves research. The group leader helps the group decide who will do what part of the research so that the topic is covered. (Wood, p. 15)

O. Cooperative Teaching

Students work in pairs over specified material. One partner reads one-half of the material while the other partner reads the other one-half. Each partner then teaches her partner (Lambiotte, p. 426)

P. Jigsaw Method

Groups with five students are set up. Each group member is assigned some unique material to learn and then to teach to his group members. To help in the learning students across the class working on the same sub-section get together to decide what is important and how to teach it. After practice in these "expert" groups the original groups reform and students teach each other. (Wood, p. 17) Tests or assessment follows.

Q. Jigsaw II. Rather than having students study one source, several sources are available. (Kagan, p. 188)

R. Numbered Heads

1. Team of four, each given numbers of 1, 2, 3, 4.
2. Question is asked of the group.
3. Group works together to answer the question so that all can verbally answer the question.
4. Teacher calls out a number (two) and each two is asked to give the answer. (Kagan, p. 142)

S. Interview

1. Team of four members.
2. Question is asked which allows for different responses.
3. A talks to B while C talks to D.
4. Then B talks to A while D talks to C.
5. Each student then reports to the other two what he heard from his partner. (Kagan, p. 175)

T. Paraphrase Passport

Before a speaker can give her own ideas, she must summarize the ideas of the previous speaker. (Kagan, p. 103)

U. Partners

1. Class is divided into teams of four.
2. Partners (two of each team) move to one side of the room.
3. Half of each team is given an assignment to master to be able to teach the other half.
4. Partners work to learn and can consult with other partners working on the same material.
5. Teams go back together with each set of partners teaching the other set.
6. Partners quiz and tutor teammates.
7. Team reviews (processes) how well they learned and taught and how they might improve the process.
8. Teacher gives quiz for individual assessment. (Kagan, p. 185)

V. Grades and Groups

There are a variety of ways teachers use grades and discussions.

1. Some do not grade discussion on group outcomes. Grading is done only on individual work.
2. Some grade both group outcomes (the group takes a test together) and individual outcomes. The individuals each take a test and turn in the answers. Then the group takes the same test and one Answer Sheet is turned in. The percentage given varies with many using 50% for individual work and 50% for the group score. Other percentages can be used.
3. Some grade primarily on tests, quizzes, and papers which have been done with the help of others.

4. Some grade on how well the group works together with a group grade. Some grade on how each individual participates.
5. Some teachers handle all of the group grading, some ask each student to rate their participation which is combined with the teacher's grade, while other teachers give a grade, ask the individual to give a grade, and ask group members to grade the participation of each other.
6. Most teachers include in the final grade at least some individual assessment.

W. Topics in Millis and Cottell (1998) Cooperative Learning for Higher Education Faculty (quoted)

1. Overview of Cooperative Learning in Higher Education - Chapters 1 and 2
2. Planning and Managing the Cooperative Classroom - Chapters 3 and 4
3. Think-Pair-Share, Roundtable, Value Line, Corners, Three-Step Interview - Chapter 5
4. Problem Solving - Chapter 6
5. Using pairs (Flashcard Tutoring, Scripted Cooperative Dyads, Cooperative Note-Taking Pairs, Think-Aloud Pair Problem Solving, Think-Pair-Square, Peer Editing, Reciprocal Peer Tutoring, Paired Annotations, Team Anthologies, Reciprocal Letter Writing - Chapter 7
6. Reciprocal Teaching (Jigsaw, Within-Team, Jigsaw, Dyadic Essay Confrontations, Guided Reciprocal Peer Questioning, Structured Controversy, Group Investigation) - Chapter 8
7. Specialized Uses of Cooperative-Learning Principles (Instructional Games, Problem-Based Learning, Case Studies, Team Learning) - Chapter 9
8. Using Cooperative Technology to Enhance Learning - Chapter 10
9. Promoting Learning Through Responsible Assessment - Chapter 11
10. Using Teacher-Collected Assessment Data to Strengthen Cooperative Courses - Chapter 12
11. Colleague-Assisted Assessment Procedures - Chapter 13
12. Supporting Faculty's Cooperative Efforts - Chapter 14

Improving Student Writing and Avoiding Plagiarism

How can we help students demonstrate what they have learned through written assignments? Here are things to consider when creating written assignments.

A. What is the final written assignment we want students to do?

This assignment follows from the goals of the course.

1. What topics are acceptable?
Do all write on the same topic or are there choices?
2. What format do I expect?
APA or other.
3. What are the specific requirements?
Length, typed, number and type of sources
4. What thinking skills are required to do the assignment?
Summarizing, comparing and contrasting, analysis, synthesis, critical thinking, creative problem solving.
5. What other skills are needed? Are library searching skills needed? Internet searching skills

B. In what ways can we help students understand the importance of writing?

1. Why are we as teachers concerned with having students write well? During college? After college?
2. How does effective thinking fit with written assignments? What is the link between writing and thinking?

C. What do we need to teach earlier in the course so students can do well on the final written assignment?

1. What kinds of assignments have students written for other classes?
2. What knowledge and skills should I help students review?
3. What knowledge and skills do I need to teach students?
4. What knowledge and skills do I need to give students practice on?

D. How might we best sequence what we are teaching about writing for students to learn effectively and efficiently?

1. What are some smaller assignments that are still meaningful that I might assign?
2. How do I convince students that writing is

E. How do we get feedback to students on their written work?

1. In what ways can I get students to learn how to self assess their written work?
2. In what ways can I get students to assess the written work of others?
3. In what ways can I get quick feedback to students?

F. What kinds of Answer Keys should we use and when?

1. What needs to be taught in class?
2. What is best assigned as homework?
3. How do we help students to learn to use Answer Keys?

G. In what ways does the grading system reflect the importance of written assignments?

1. What percent of the final grade is based on written work?
2. Will mastery learning improve written assignments?

H. In what ways can we improve how we are helping students with their written assignments?

1. What errors were made in the assignment?
2. How might we prevent those errors? Help students learn to correct those errors?
3. Helping students avoid plagiarism
 - a. Provide definitions of plagiarism
 - b. Provide examples of plagiarism
 - c. Ask students to identify which examples are plagiarized
 - d. Provide students with well known sentence@ The rain in Spain falls mainly in the places after lunch.@ Require them to use no two words in a row, change the order of words, and change all of the non-article words, and keep the same meaning.
 - e. Ask groups to check the work of each other.
 - f. Randomly call on one person from each group to read aloud for the class slowly their non-plagiarized sentence. Ask class to determine if the criteria have been met.
4. Encourage students to better self assessment their written work.
5. Where can we get ideas for better written assignments?
 - a. From writing across the curriculum coordinators
 - b. From other faculty who require written assignments
 - c. From the literature on teaching writing

Improving Student Test Taking: In what ways can we help students better learn for tests and from tests?

Ideas for Students: Improving My Performance On Tests

I didn't score as high on that last test as I wanted to. Where do I start? Maybe I should list possible reasons why I might have done poorly and then focus on the ones which were true for me. Then I can think of solutions to try next time.

In what ways can I improve my studying and taking of tests to improve my learning and test scores?

I. Reasons I ruled out

- A. I am not smart enough to be in college.
- B. I can't read.
- C. I didn't want to do well.
- D. I didn't know that a test would take place.
- E. I didn't know what the test would cover.
- F. I am not interested in this course.
- G. I was not interested in the topic of the test.
- H. It was impossible to do better on the test.

II. Was I clear on what would be covered and how it would be covered?

- A. Was it clear what the test was going to be over in terms of readings and class activities?
- B. Was it clear what type of questions would be asked?
- C. In what ways can I be better prepared next time to know what will be on the test?

III. Do I know about good study skills and habits? How to take tests?

- A. Did I read the booklet on study skills on reserve in the LRC for PY 101?
- B. Did I read the handout Ideas On Becoming a Self-Directed Student?
- C. Did I pick up any hints from students or the teacher on studying and test taking?

IV. Did I study the right things? Did I study thoroughly?

- A. Did I read the assigned material?
- B. Did I reread and study the materials?
- C. Did I fill out any study manuals or materials?
- D. Did I review notes taken in class?
- E. Did I use other study helps?
- F. Did I pull together all of the above information?
- G. Did I try to form questions and then write practice answers?

V. Did I study enough to do well and learn for the long term?

- A. Did I budget enough time for reading, making notes, outlining, and studying?
- B. Did I leave enough time to review and put the information into long term memory?
- C. Did I plan ahead so that time was available to handle unexpected events in my life?
- D. Do I need to learn how to better manage my time?

VI. Were there things about the test or testing situation that pushed my performance down? (I have to be very careful here not to put the blame on factors outside myself that I have little control over and that could leave me with no ideas for improving.)

- A. Was the test unfair?
 - 1. Was the test over minor points?
 - 2. Were the questions unclear?
 - 3. Were the questions tricky?
 - 4. Were the questions unexpected?
 - 5. Was the format of the test strange?
- B. Was the test situation itself a problem?
 - 1. Was the test too long?
 - 2. Were there distraction during the test?
 - 3. Was there no clock or comments from the teacher to alert me to the amount of time left so I could better budget my time?
 - 4. Were there too many people in the room to concentrate?
 - 5. Was the room too hot? cold?

VII. Did I not handle the test well?

- A. Did I scan over the test to see what was asked and then budget my time?
- B. Did I freeze? Did I panic?
- C. Did I give up when I saw I would not do well?
- D. Did I let personal problems or concerns distract me during the test?
- E. Did I let what others were doing distract me?
- F. Do I get too anxious each test and so not do well?
- G. Did I get over anxious for this test because it counted so much? was new? was unusual? was so specific? was so long? was so comprehensive?
- H. Did I write too much for some items and too little for others?

VIII. Did I use all of the help available to me?

- A. Was I prepared for class so that I brought things to class I was unclear about?
- B. Did I seek help from classmates? Do I have the phone numbers of class members?
- C. Did I ask questions of the teacher before or after class?
- D. Did I go to an office hour for help?
- E. Did I use the tutoring that was available?
- F. Did I review with my study group?

IX. What are my goals?

- A. Am I satisfied with just sliding by?
- B. Do I want to put in the effort to do very well on tests?
- C. Do I want to put in the effort to learn more than is expected?
- D. Do I want to become a self-directed learner?
- E. Do I want to become very competent?
- F. Did I call or talk to the teacher and ask for help?

Ideas on Taking Tests

Irving McPhail in an article Why teach test wiseness? in the Journal of Reading, October, 1981, pp. 32-38, has listed a number of ideas to use when taking tests. Not all of the ideas apply for each kind of test but we thought the list would be useful. Ideas are quoted.

I. Time-using strategy

- A. Begin to work as rapidly as possible with reasonable assurance of accuracy.
- B. Set up a schedule for progress through the test.
- C. Omit or guess at items which resist a quick response.
- D. Mark omitted items, or items which could use further consideration, to assure easy relocation.
- E. Use time remaining after completion of the test to reconsider answers.

II. Error-avoidance strategy

- A. Pay careful attention to the directions, determining clearly the nature of the task and the intended basis for response.
- B. Pay careful attention to the items, determining clearly the nature of the question.
- C. Ask examiner for clarification when necessary, if it is permitted.
- D. Check all answers.

III. Guessing strategy

- A. Always guess if right answers only are scored.
- B. Always guess if the correction for guessing is less severe than a 'correction for guessing' formula that gives an expected score of zero for random responding.
- C. Always guess even if the usual correction or a more severe penalty for guessing is employed, whenever elimination of options provides sufficient change of profiting.

IV. Deductive reasoning strategy

- A. Eliminate options which are known to be incorrect and choose from among the remaining options.
- B. Choose neither or both of two options which imply the correctness of each other.
- C. Choose neither or one (but not both) of two statements, one of which, if correct, would imply the incorrectness of the other.
- D. Restrict choice to those options which encompass all of two or more given statements known to be correct.
- E. Utilize relevant content information in other tests items and options. (As you go through a test there are answers to later items often from other questions and answers.)

V. Intent consideration strategy

- A. Interpret and answer questions in view of previous idiosyncratic emphases of the test constructor or in view of the test purpose.
- B. Answer items as the test constructor intended.
- C. Adopt the level of sophistication that is expected.
- D. Consider the relevance of specific detail.

VI. Cue-using strategy (Only some of the ideas here are listed.) (Summarized.)

- A. Often correct answers are longer than wrong answers.
- B. Sometimes the grammar of the sentence gives away the answer.
- C. Often the correct answer is the second item.
- D. Watch for key words: always, all, most, never, none--Usually not the answer.

VII. Ideas To Consider for Testing

- 1. Allow credit during the test for up to two questions for a student to defend their thinking on an item they find ambiguous in writing on the test
- 2. Ask students to take test individually. Allow students to take test in groups with each test counting 50% of the test grade.
- 3. Post answers
- 4. Provide time in class to review test answers with the instructor or in groups.
- 5. Give credit for looking up and documenting right answers
- 6. Give cumulative tests
- 7. Other ideas

Using More Feedback In Our Teaching

- A. Analysis of formal assessments - quizzes, tests (which items are most often missed? which items distinguish between A and D students?), written assignments (what are the most common errors?), portfolios
- B. Informal feedback - see classroom research sources
 - 1. What did you like about today=s class? What was difficult? What was confusing? What do you want help on?
 - 2. What did you like about the homework? What was difficult? Confusing? What do you need help on?
- C. Collect feedback after the first class
 - 1. What do you anticipate from this course?
 - 2. What are you looking forward to?
 - 3. Is there anything that bothers you? Worries you? Confused you?
 - 4. Do you have sufficient time to do well in this course?
 - 5. Describe your reactions to the introduction to the course.

6. Rate the value of this first day on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 as the most valuable first day class you have ever experienced? Ask for a show of hands with your back turned toward the board and a student in the back telling you the number of hands raised for each number.
- D. Collect feedback after a class.
1. What helped you learn?
 2. What did you like most about today's class?
 3. What did you have difficulty with?
 4. What was confusing?
 5. What might have helped you learn better?
 6. Ask students to write what they learned from class (Idea Notebook entries are used in Logic and Critical Thinking).
- E. Collect feedback each week from students
1. What worked for you?
 2. What did not work for you?
 3. What was the most difficult thing for you this week?
 4. What did you enjoy most this week?
 5. Explain anything that was confusing in terms of the directions for this week.
 6. Ask students to write what they are learning about how they are learning
- F. Collect feedback after each test.
1. Were you clear on what to learn?
 2. What had you learned well?
 3. What topics did you have difficulty with?
 4. What will you need to do to improve your learning for the next test?
 5. How much time did you study for this test? Was it sufficient?
 6. What could I have done to better help you learn?
 7. Allow students for multiple choice items to explain their thinking on up to 3 items if they think their answer may not be the correct answer.
- G. Collect feedback after each written assignment.
1. Does this paper represent 100% of your best effort? If no, what percent would you say?
 2. What would you have needed to do to have done better work?
 3. What could I as your teacher have done to help you?
 4. What would you suggest to make this assignment better?
 5. Ask students to describe how they accomplished the written assignment.
- H. Collect feedback at midsemester.
1. Use a comprehensive form (with answers given) that will also be used at the end of the course. Be sure to check on each objective you are teaching.
 2. Also collect open ended questions, such as (1) What do you like most about this course? (2) What do you like least about this course? (4) What changes would you recommend? (5) What could you have done to learn more? (6) Other comments:
- I. Collect feedback at the end of the course
1. Use a comprehensive form with answers given.
 2. Also collect open ended questions.
 3. This course is like . . .? Let students describe in their own words how they see the learning experience.
 4. Use an outside consultant to interview your students.
 5. Select a sample of student for in-depth interviews each week (evaluators). Ask these students to get reactions from other classmates. Write up ideas and give these back to this sample to be sure you have corrected heard and summarize the suggestions. Provide class a midterm summary and do an end of course summary to provide to the next group of evaluators.
 6. Select a sample of student for in-depth interviews after the last class.

7. Select a sample of student for in-depth interviews the following semester after they have taken another semester of courses.
 8. Use the long form for the IDEA survey.
 - a. Convert T-scores into percentiles for the key items.
 - b. Analyze your ratings to determine where you could improve.
 - c. Go over your scores with a trusted peer.
 - d. Organize the written comments to help focus your future efforts on the course.
- J. Build into assignments a way to get feedback (depends on the course). Design your own feedback sheet for things you have written or for aspects of the textbook.
- K. During lecture
1. Ask a small group of students to give feedback after each lecture.
 2. Ask a rotating group of students to provide feedback weekly.
 3. Ask for each student to answer:
 - a. Summarize the key ideas you learned today.
 - b. What was muddy for you?
- L. During discussions
1. Ask students to evaluate their performance on specific criteria.
 2. Ask students to evaluate their group members.
- M. What ideas are ones you might consider using to get more feedback from students to improve your teaching and their learning?

Considering Time on Task (Studying)

- A. McKeachie (1999) in his book *Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*, the book most recommended for college faculty, reports the following:

AA good deal of your students= learning will take place outside your classes. . . . What happens out of class can be as important, or more important, than what happens in class. And it is what students do, not what teachers do, that determine learning outcomes. . . . Many teachers have little or no idea what their students do out of class, how many hours they dedicate to course work or what they do with those hours. . . . You may more easily be able to improve student performance in your course by changing what students do than by changing what you do in class. . . . >Time on task= is one of the most important learning principles (Chickering and Gamson, 1987). If students don=t spend enough time on it, they simply won=t learn it. Planning a course so that student spend enough time tackling the necessary learning activities is one of the most important things teachers can do.@ (pp. 20-22).

- B. Light (2001) in *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds* surveyed college students.
1. Students reported their most significant learning experiences were outside the classroom, not in.
 2. Students said they learned more in courses which were highly structured, had quizzes, and had many short assignments. Quick feedback on their work and the chance to revise were also preferred. (p. 8)
 3. Students needed to develop new skills to be successful in college. (p. 23)
 4. Students who did well in their freshmen year reported they thought about how to effectively use their time while students who did not do well did not talk about effectively using their time. (p. 24)
 5. Some of the students who needed help did not ask for it. (p. 36)
 6. Improving writing skills is very important and takes time. AThe relationship between the amount of writing for a course and students= level of engagement -- whether engagement is measured by time spent on the course, or the intellectual challenge it presents, or students= level of interest in it -- is

stronger than the relationship between students= engagement and any other course characteristic.@
(p. 55)

- C. Chickering and Schlossberg (1995) in their book *Getting the Most Out of College* point out to students that learning will not occur without significant time and energy devoted to learning. *Learning to use your time well is critical. It is another skill. . . that will serve you well the rest of your life.*@ (p. 224) They go on to suggest that students set high standards for themselves. *When teachers and institutions set high standards for themselves and for students, everyone learns more.*@ (p. 226)
- D. Ellis (1998) in *Becoming a Master Student* reports that students should plan to spend at least 2 hours of focused study outside of class for every hour in class.
- E. During advising students at HCC are told to expect 2 to 3 hours of study outside of class for every hour of class. Students report that some of their faculty tell them to expect to put in that much time. However, they report that only a few classes actually take them that much out of class time.
- F. Higher education sources suggest that students should spend two to three hours in homework for every hour of class time. A three hour science lab earns 1 credit, the same as a one hour lecture because it is assumed that the student is spending on the average two hours of homework for the one hour of in class learning.
- G. There is wide variability across students. Courses often start with some students doing in one hour what others need five hours to do; that ratio moves down to 1 to 3 by the end of the course.

Useful Sources on Learning and Teaching

- Angelo, T., & Cross, K. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bean, J. (1996). *Engaging ideas: The professor=s guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bloom, B. et al. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives. Vol. 1: Cognitive domain*. NY: McKay.
- Bransford, J., Brown, A., & Cocking, R. (Eds.). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experiences, and school*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1999.
- Chickering, A., & Schlossberg, N. (1995). *Getting the most out of college*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Cross, K., & Angelo, T. (1988). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for faculty*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan: National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning.
- Davis, J. (1993). *Better teaching, more learning: Strategies for success in post secondary settings*. Phoenix, AZ: American Council on Education and Oryx Press.
- Druckman, D., & Bjork, R. (Eds.), 1994, *Learning, remembering, believing: Enhancing human performance*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, p. 51)
- Edgen, P., & Kauchak, D. (2001). *Educational psychology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Gamson, Z., & Chickering, A. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, 39, 5-10.
- Grasha, A. (1996). *Teaching with style*. Pittsburg: Alliance Publishers.

- Halpern, D., & Hakel, M. (Eds.). (2000). *Applying the science of learning to university teaching and beyond*. New Directions For Teaching and Learning, No. 89. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. See the last chapter for an annotated reading list.
- Halpern, D., & Hakel, M. (July-August, 2003). *Applying the science of learning to the university and beyond: Teaching for long-term retention and transfer*. *Changes*,
- Hatfield, S. (Ed.). (1995). *The seven principles in action: Improving undergraduate education*. Boston: Anker.
- Leamson, R. (1999). *Thinking about teaching and learning: Developing habits of learning with first year college and university students*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Levin, T., & Long, R. (1981). *Effective instruction*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Light, Richard. (1999). *Making the most of college: Students speak their minds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- McKeachie, W., & Svinicki, M. (2006). *McKeachie=s teaching tips (12th ed.)*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Pace, D., & Middendorf, J. (Eds.). (Summer 2004). *Decoding the disciplines: Helping student learn disciplinary ways of thinking*. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*. No. 98. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Palmer, Parker. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher=s life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. LB1775.P25 1998
- Walvoord, B., & Anderson, V. (1998). *Effective grading*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Wiggins, B. (1997). *Feedback: How learning occurs*. In Ellen Chaffee et al.=s *Assessing impact: Evidence and action*. Washington, DC: AAHE, pp. 31-39. (LB2331.G3.A77)