

CTE This Week

September 12 - 16

"The one exclusive sign of a thorough knowledge is the power of teaching"
~Aristotle

Teaching Tip of the Week - Incorporating Discussion Questions into Lecture (from Teaching Tools by Barbara Gross Davis)

One way to consider breaking up the lecture with discussion questions is to divide the class period into blocks of time, one (or more) of which is a discussion segment.

"I found it boring when I was a student simply to listen to a professor talk for an hour and a half," says a faculty member of ethnic studies. "So I try to vary the class activities by dividing the class period into three segments."

For the first 20 minutes of class time, he builds up to a discussion question by presenting evidence, facts or issues. The next 30-40 minutes is devoted to student discussion even though the class has several hundred students. The instructor asks students for possible explanations or interpretations of the facts or issues presented in the first part of lecture. For example, in his discussion of the Chinese Exclusion Act he will ask why it was passed at that particular time rather than in an earlier or later period. Students offer possible reasons which he records on the board, and elaborates, probes or interprets.

The last 20-30 minutes of class is spent analyzing the discussion and bringing the topic to a conclusion. Finally he ends the period by posing a question which students are to think about before the next class meeting.

Incorporating discussion into large lecture classes takes careful preparation: the questions posed to students need to be identified in advance and their responses anticipated in order to ensure a productive discussion. Nevertheless, this approach is very effective for engaging students' interest and encouraging analytical thinking. For more information on this topic, contact the Center for Teaching Excellence (c.wehlburg@tcu.edu).

Resources at CTE - You may be interested in some of these articles. If you would like more information about a topic or a copy of the article, contact CTE (ext. 7434) or just reply to this email.

- **Encouraging Student Participation** by Barbara Gross Davis (University of California, Berkeley). *This book chapter explores methods for encouraging students to participate in discussion. Students' enthusiasm, involvement, and willingness to participate affect the quality of class discussion as an opportunity for learning. Your challenge is to engage all students, keep them talking to each other about the same topic, and help them develop insights into the material. Roby (1988) warns against falling into quasi discussions -- encounters in which students talk but do not develop or criticize their own positions and fail to reflect on the process and outcomes of the sessions. The suggestions in this chapter are intended to help you create a classroom in which students feel comfortable, secure, willing to take risks, and ready to test and share ideas.*
- **Asking Questions** by Barbara Gross Davis (University of California, Berkeley). *This chapter of Teaching Tools focuses on how to ask questions that will lead to student engagement in the material and in the learning process. Asking and answering questions*

are central to the learning process and to effective teaching. Yet studies show that faculty devote less than 4% of class time to asking questions and that the questions they do ask are rarely the type that require students to think. The types of questions posed and the sequencing of questions should capture students' attention, arouse their curiosity, reinforce important points, and promote active learning. When students respond to questions, you also gain insight into how well they are learning the material. Like other aspects of teaching, the ability to develop good questioning skills can be learned .

Upcoming Events at CTE

- **Town Hall Meeting on Student Engagement** - Come and share with the TCU community questions and resources on enhancing student engagement at TCU. Wednesday, **September 14th from 12:00 - 1:00** in the Student Center Lounge.
- **CTE Faculty Fellows Discussion on Team Based Learning and the "Rapid Assessment Test"**. Led by **Laura Meade and Zach Zacharia** from the MJ Neeley School of Business, this gathering will take place on Friday, **September 23rd from 12:00 - 1:00** in the Student Center room 206. Bring your lunch! Cookies and soda will be provided. Go to <http://www.rsvpreister.com/event.php?682#learningteams> or call CTE (ext. 7433).
- **Faculty Learning Community led by Bob Maninger on eGradebooks**. In addition to serving as an informational resource, an online gradebook can also aid in effective classroom management. Various faculty members will be discussing why they have chosen to use an online gradebook, what software options are currently available and how an online gradebook can assist in managing your class? **September 30th at 2:00** in the Student Center room 206. Contact the CTE to let us know that you will be attending! (ext. 7434)

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