The Art of Lecturing

This session will focus on practices and principles that effective faculty follow when designing and delivering lectures.

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The Art of Lecturing

Today’s Plan:

● What is a Lecture? Why Lecture?
● Strengths and Weaknesses of Lecturing
● Challenges of Planning a Lecture
● Advice for Planning for a Lecture
● Review of Notes and Discussion
What is a Lecture?

from Latin lectūra, lect-, legēre “to read”
Figure 3.3.2 A medieval lecture

Artist: Laurentius de Voltolina;
Liber ethicorum des Henricus de Alemannia;
Kupferstichkabinett SMPK, Berlin/Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Min. 1233
Why Lecture?
Strengths and Weaknesses of Lecturing as a Mode of Instruction
What are lectures good at? (Strengths)

Done well, lectures are good at …

...transmitting information,

…modeling how a professional in the field acts and thinks,

...organizing complex information,

...differentiating the essential from the ancillary.
What are lectures bad at? (Weaknesses)

Done badly, lectures ...

... reinforce student passivity,

... discourage and disengage students,

... disadvantage students, esp. those already marginalized,

... are inefficient (repeat content already in textbooks, online, etc).
“College is a place where a professor’s lecture notes go straight to the students’ lecture notes, without passing through the brains of either.”
What are lectures bad at? (Weaknesses)

Even when done well, lectures do not

... promote *independent thought* on a subject,

... help *change student attitudes*,

... teach *behavioral skills*,

... adequately *prepare students to apply* what they have learned.
Challenges of Crafting a Lecture
Too Student-focused

Too Teacher-focused
No Structure

Too Rigidly Structured
Advice for Planning a Lecture
How do the best college teachers conduct class?
1. Create a natural critical learning environment
2. Get their attention and keep it
3. Start with the student rather than the discipline
4. Seek commitments
5. Help students learn outside class
6. Engage students in disciplinary thinking
7. Create diverse learning experiences

Tips for Planning a Lecture

1. Know your objectives
2. Present a story that matters
3. Practice Safe PowerPoint
Know your Objectives

Identify your topics (what will you discuss?)

Primary objectives (what do you want your students to learn from you in terms of content or concepts?)

Secondary objectives (what skills, knowledge, values, habits, mindsets are you hoping your students gain?)
Tell a Story: The Beginning

Share your topics and objectives.

Answer the ‘who cares?’ question.

Start with a story that connects your topic to something human.

Start with a question that gets students thinking.

Point forward (how will this topic be relevant to students?)

Point backward (how do these topics connect to past lectures?)
Tell a Story: The Body of your Lecture

Organize your lecture based on the content.

Are you presenting…

... a series of skills?

... several related events?

... steps in a process?

... logically related concepts?
Tell a Story: The Body of your Lecture

Are you explaining a difficult concept?

Start simple
Offer examples
Share analogies, explain differences
Address objections
Correct common misunderstandings
Tell a Story: The Body of your Lecture

Are you explaining a long process?

Break it into logical steps

Describe blind alleys (what doesn’t work and why)

Provide illustrations and examples
Tell a Story: The Body of your Lecture

Give chances for students to apply a concept or contribute

Ask a question; require everyone to write an answer

Have them solve a problem, or write a response.

Have them explain to a partner their view or answer.

Solicit input from students.

Decide in advance level of interaction.
Mark transitions through

Vocal emphasis (pause, volume, pace)

Specific language (“A second reason…”)
Tell a Story: Conclusion

End on time
  Give larger context
    Raise questions
      Discuss implications
        Repeat main points
          Connect back to student learners
“I have a professor who reads off a PowerPoint for an hour and fifteen minutes. He didn’t even create the PowerPoint himself; it was made by the textbook company.”

-Lehigh Student, Fall 2017
Practice Safe PowerPoint: Use Images

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Practice Safe PowerPoint: Avoid “Chartjunk”
Practice Safe PowerPoint:
Minimal, Purposeful Animations

Minimal, Purposeful Animations
Practice Safe PowerPoint:
Annotate, Explain, Interact with Images
Practice Safe PowerPoint:
Slide Basics

Select a simple design template.

Limit text to 6 lines or fewer

Use sans serif fonts, minimum 24 point.

Select a limited color palette

Convert older presentations to display properly on newer monitors
Practice Safe PowerPoint: Test Tech
“Lecture Plan” 1. Identify topics and objectives.
“Lecture Plan”

1. Identify topics and objectives.
2. Plan your Opening
   - Connect to student knowledge & values
     - Invite them to think, reflect, predict...
     - Read a provocative passage
     - Share a story
   State or write topics/objectives/plan
“Lecture Plan”

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3. Content/Concepts
   Organize based on content
   Present - Explain - Apply
   Check understanding
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4. Have a Planned Conclusion and Preview
“Lecture Plan”

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4. Have a Planned Conclusion and Preview

5. Review your plan and make a timeline
Additional tips

- Prepare a handout.
- Communicate to students how they should prepare for class.
- Explain to students how you expect them to take notes.
- Decide which active learning strategies can be applied.
- Practice public speaking.
- Mix it up (don’t stick to the same pattern each time).
- Bring props.
- Plan to use the technology (and prepare for tech failure)