Teaching Tips: Preparation

Being prepared is critical to a successful course and will give you peace of mind. Preparation also ensures that you establish expectations and set the right tone for the entire course. This will give your students a great first impression that will bring them back excited for your next class. Instructors who have subject matter knowledge, real world experience to share, and are well-prepared are more effective in the classroom.

1. Knowledgeable and Experienced
   - Bring your real world experience into the classroom. It provides valuable insight and perspective for students in their particular field.
   - Share your real world experience. It is a teaching tool that gives a more realistic viewpoint and can give your students an edge.
   - Follow the important intellectual and scientific or artistic developments within your fields, study carefully and extensively what other people are doing in the field, read extensively in other fields, and take a strong interest in the broader issues of your discipline; the histories, controversies, and epistemological discussions.
   - Think of these four fundamental questions when you prepare: (1) What should my students be able to do intellectually, physically, or emotionally as a result of learning? (2) How can I best help and encourage them to develop those abilities and the habits of the heart and mind to use them? (3) How can my students and I best understand the nature, quality, and progress of their learning? And (4) How can I evaluate my efforts to foster that learning?

2. Organized and Hardworking
   - Borrow from your experience as a student and as a listener in planning your presentations.
   - Define learning objectives by deciding on why you are there. What do you want students to know? What should students know and be able to do for this class and by the end of the semester?
   - Draft a list of learning outcomes. What do you expect your students to know, do, demonstrate, or produce as a result of taking the course? Writing down these learning outcomes will help you (1) clarify what you want your students to accomplish; (2) determine what will count as evidence of student achievement; and (3) select appropriate teaching methods, materials, and assignments.
   - Map out your master schedule and course outline in a calendar or scheduling software program so you plan an entire semester in advance. This big picture approach will help you schedule and track your class schedules, office hours and lecture topics to ensure you cover everything necessary during the course of a grading period. It will also help you stay on top of issues such as university events, personal obligations and holidays.
   - Break material down into one-week segments so you can focus on and organize your responsibilities on a smaller scale. You can expand on these schedules by noting specific lectures, assigned reading materials, project deadlines and test schedules. From this, you can break the schedule down into daily or even hourly increments. Continually update and revise your schedule using a daily planner or software planning application.
   - Develop lecture notes, tests and course materials before the start of the semester and separate them by course. Maintain separate files for each course. Segment the files into categories such as lecture notes, blank tests, graded and ungraded tests, class lists and student evaluations. Include a miscellaneous file for anything not designated in its own
segment. You can opt for a stationary filing system in your home or office, or a portable system that lets you take your materials from location to location.

- Come to class with a comprehensive teaching plan, which includes (1) the principal objectives of the lesson, (2) The questions (and backup questions) you intend to structure the discussion around, (3) your board plan (what do you want your white-board to look like at the end of the discussion so that it is easily understandable for yours students, and (4) lecture outline-make sure, however, that the content in your lecture could have been delivered using reading materials which students could have read before class.List the sequence of what you hope to accomplish in class--"goals for the day".

- Write down the questions asked by students in your lecture. Incorporate the answers to these questions into your lecture notes for the next time you teach the course.

- Write comments on the lecture notes immediately after giving a lecture about what didn't work, what didn't seem clear to the students, if you had enough time to cover all of the material, or if you need to include more material. Use the notes as guides for revision the next time you use the lecture.

3. Use Practical and Real World Examples

- Use examples that relate the subject to the students’ experience and knowledge. Since no single example can represent a concept fully, you usually need to give more than one example. If you can find a cartoon or funny story that illustrates your point, humor helps maintain interest. But the danger is that the students will remember the humor and not the concept, so repeat the concept. And, most important, give students a chance to give examples.

- Utilize examples that are current and that are relevant to students' Interests and everyday life

- Tell students how the material will relate to their futures; use real world examples/documents.

- Use multiple examples of how the same idea applies in different contexts.

- Select concrete, “real life” examples or personal anecdotes to elaborate on points.

- Have students read the chapter and bring in an example themselves, before you lecture on the material. Sometimes you can give them a specific topic from the chapter to illustrate; other times allow them to pick a topic from the chapter.

- Ensure that students do the assigned work prior to class. Sometimes require the students to bring properly formatted letters to class explaining why they think their examples are good ones. Other times, students post their explanations to the course discussion board at least one hour before class. Students are not allowed to post an example already posted by another student. This way, if students don’t quite understand the concept, they can read and learn from other students before picking their selection.

SOURCES:


Berman, Adam. Personal interview. 2 March 2011.


<http://study.com/articles/Is_it_More_Important_for_Professors_to_Have_Higher_Degrees_or_Real_World_Experience.html>.


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