How to Teach Large Lectures Effectively

Teaching Effectiveness Workshop
College of Business
CSULB

April 2012

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You have to keep them awake!

- They are
  - Tired
    - Morning
    - After lunch
    - Night classes
  - Distracted
    - Smart phones, ipads, computers
  - Disinterested
You have to keep them awake!

• This is especially difficult in a large class
  – Keep them awake
    • Be in charge!
    • Walk around
    • Modulate your voice
    • Use students as examples
  – Avoid Distractions
    • Don’t allow behavior that distracts others
    • Be tolerant of those who are tired or multitasking
  – Sell students on why your subject is relevant
Three attributes of any good presenter:

I. Competence
II. Organization
III. Enthusiasm
I. Competence

- Teach what you know best
- Never speculate with acknowledging it
II. Organization

A. Class Structure
B. Technology
C. Examinations
A. Class Structure
You must be in charge!

• Establish rules of conduct for you and your students
  – I always come to class prepared and I expect the same of you
  – Do not allow conversations in class
  – Limit computers, texting, cell phones
  – Use a seating chart to keep students from being anonymous

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You have to provide an organization of the material

- A detailed course outline provided on the first day is essential
- Treat the course outline your contract with the class.
- Avoid changes in the schedule by organizing each lecture’s timing
You have to provide an organization of the material.

- The amount of information the students are supposed to learn seems overwhelming, so the students are looking to us to provide a structure and logic to tie the information together.
- The textbook provides a structure, but we can provide the broader perspective of how the topics relate to one another and fit within our discipline.
- Slides in an outline form help provide structure to the lecture and the class.
Don’t feel you have to cover everything

• I tell the students that I am going to focus on the areas where I can help them the most
• In some cases they can read the material as well as I can read it to them
Watch your watch!

• Be sure to cover all of the material in the plan you have given them and to finish on time

• Pace the material appropriately – planning is the key to success here
Use an example that crosses chapters and specific topics, if possible

- I use a set of simplified financial statements throughout the class.
- The use of a standard example provides a tie between the topics.
- It helps to provide organization and structure.
B. Technology

• Use BeachBoard to communicate to the students.
• Use publisher tools to facilitate homework assignments
• Be careful to respond to emails promptly and thoughtfully
III. Examinations
Before Exam Day

• Prepare an examination procedure policy that you include with the course outline including your policy on cheating

• Think carefully about how you will grade the exams as you prepare them

• Proofread the exams carefully

• Use three different exams with different color paper

• Number each exam sequentially

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On Exam Day

• You must be in charge on exam day and the students must be clearly aware of that
• Arrive early and have help, if possible
• Pass the exams out sequentially so you can correspond exam number with student
• Check student IDs with roster or seating chart
• Check exams in by number to be sure all are returned.
• Do not allow students to the leave their seats during the last five minutes of the exam.

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III. Enthusiasm

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You must convey to the audience that you are interested and enthusiastic about the material

• If you seem bored or tired, that comes across immediately
• If you seem interested and excited to be there, that comes across too
• If you are having fun teaching your class the students will be much happier to be there
Don’t get bogged down in details
- Use simple numerical examples

• When creating examples for class, try to use numbers that students can manipulate easily.

• Beginning with an example with simple numbers and following it with an example with more complicated numbers can give a student confidence and hold interest.
Write examples on the board.

• If all examples are on PowerPoint slides that the students have in advance, it is much easier for them to go to sleep.

• Write some examples on the board so they will have to copy them down and follow along.

• Always prepare the examples in advance!
Draw Pictures

• Pictures and graphs can help to communicate and reinforce relationships

• Pictures can also break the monotony of numerical examples
Tell stories

• Your experience can provide a context for the material

• I take students on “accounting field trips” by describing a trip away from the classroom

• Describing a real environment can keep the students interest
Use students in your examples

• Create examples involving one of more of your students as individuals or as the president of a company
• This is particularly effective if a student is not paying attention or is being disruptive
• Always treat them with respect be careful never to offend!
Keep it light

• We all teach technical topics, but there is no reason we can’t have some fun
• If you see that you are losing the interest of the students, take a break and talk about something else. It could be something related or something completely unrelated – maybe something funny.
Use humor to help people to remember

- Using humorous examples can help students remember a difficult concept
- I have had students tell me years later about a funny example I used in class.
Use humor to restore interest when students are losing interest

- Be aware of the interest-level of the audience
- When the interest level drops, break the pattern with humor or a story
Be careful with humor because it can get you into trouble

- Be careful never to offend anyone in the class
- Using yourself or your discipline as the butt of your jokes is usually safe

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Do a self-assessment

• After each lecture ask what you can do better
• Update your notes right away
• Read your student evaluations carefully and critically
• Have a colleague attend your class and give you feedback
Watch you own video

• Watch for distracting body movements
• Listen for distracting patterns in your speech
• See if your energy level slips and you lose your audience
• See if you would be interested in attending your class!
Was my presentation effective?

• Am I competent?
• Was my presentation organized?
• Was I enthusiastic?
• What can I do better?