The First Day of Class

SEPTEMBER 2018

- 3 things that make the first day ineffective
- 3 things that make the first day effective
- 4 suggested first day activities
- If you like ice-breaking activities, we have something for you.
3 THINGS THAT MAKE THE FIRST DAY EFFECTIVE

1. Setting the tone of the class climate for the rest of the semester.

⇒ Address your students’ curiosity about who you are as the instructor.
⇒ Come to class early to chat with early arrivals.
⇒ Give positive verbal and nonverbal messages that communicate enthusiasm.
⇒ Talk about important classroom policies.

2. Communicating the content and the format of the course to prepare students for an informed add-drop period.

⇒ Explain to your students what they will be able to do by the middle of the semester and by the end of the semester.
⇒ Explain why those are important skills and important things to learn.
⇒ Explain clearly and specifically what they will need to do to meet your expectations.

3. Start teaching and design activities that make students participative from the first day.

⇒ Plan an activity to develop curiosity for the content and motivation to learn it.
⇒ If you expect active participation, critical thinking, collaboration and problem solving in class, make your students experience this by designing your first day accordingly.
3 THINGS THAT MAKE THE FIRST DAY INEFFECTIVE

1. **Trying to give all the information about the course.** Students cannot concentrate on so many details at one time.

2. **Keeping the class short.** If you send students away after introducing the course in the first ten or twenty minutes of your class time, students may perceive you as “reluctant” or “unenthusiastic”.

3. **Reading the syllabus aloud.** Instead of it, you can design an activity that require students to read your syllabus. Please see “Suggested First Day Activity 1” below to get an idea about how to design such a syllabus activity.

“Opening the semester by introducing the students to the course topic or material in a substantive way sends the message that you are excited and eager to help the students learn in this course, and that the time they invest in coming to class matters.” Lang, 2010, p.25.

**SUGGESTED FIRST DAY ACTIVITY 1**

**TIME: 15-20 minutes**

**PROCEDURE**

1. Split students into groups of 3 or 4.

2. Give a copy of your syllabus to each group.

3. Ask each group these questions and allow them to discuss their answers for about 5-10 minutes.
   
   - “What is interesting about the learning outcomes?”
   - “What learning outcomes do you wish to see on the syllabus?”

4. Each group can share their answers with the whole class.

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**KOLT FACULTY SERVICES**

- Effective Teaching Workshop for New Faculty.


- Lecture Capturing via Panopto: Record live lectures in ENG Z27 (Active Learning Classroom) & SOS Bo8 and produce online course videos in your office and stream it in Blackboard (Bb).

- Help with the integration of Supplementary Course Materials into Bb course pages.

- Demo Day for Educational Technologies: Come and learn more about the new Technologies that are available at KU.

- Assist in producing KU-MOOCs for Coursera.
SUGGESTED FIRST DAY ACTIVITY 2

TIME: 30 minutes

PROCEDURE
1. Ask one **general question** about the content of your course.
2. For instance, if you are teaching an introductory economics course, ask your students: *What are some of the terms you heard about economics on the news?*
3. Ask them to **write** a paragraph.
4. **Collect** the papers.
5. **Give the papers back** to your students at the end of the semester.

SUGGESTED FIRST DAY ACTIVITY 3

TIME: 40 minutes

PROCEDURE
1. Ask students to **form groups** of 3 or 4 (more than 4 depending on your class size).
2. Ask each group to find **4 or 5 keywords** about the course.
3. Give each group the course **syllabus** and a **flipchart**.
4. Ask each group to write some keywords on the flipchart and explain how they are related to the course topics.
5. Give each group five minutes to elaborate on how their keywords are connected to the course topics in general.
IF YOU LIKE ICEBREAKING ACTIVITIES...

PROCEDURE

1. **Come to class early** and ask each student to write his/her name on the board.
2. **Chat** with early comers.
3. Ask **why** they enrolled in the course and let them write their responses on the board.
   
   ⇒ If you are teaching a core course, you can ask: *How does the course help students from different majors?*
4. Get a picture of the board and put it on your course page.

“Begin to learn students’ names. Learning students’ names signals your interest in their performance and encourages student motivation and class participation.” *(Davis, 2009, p.41)*

SUGGESTED FIRST DAY ACTIVITY 4

**TIME: 20 minutes**

PROCEDURE

1. Ask students a **puzzling question** about the course content.
   
   ⇒ Depending on your course content, the question may be about a recent news or statistical information regarding one of the course topics.
2. Ask students to discuss the questions in pairs or in small groups of 3 or 4.
3. Let them share their groups discussions.
REFERENCES


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