

earn two bonus points on the course average (the currency of this realm) if she or he had perfect attendance on the days of in-class quizzes and exams. (An absence passed the mantle of authority to the alternate.) The group leader recorded assignments turned in, returned graded assignments, and let students in the group check all grades recorded. Any discrepancies in posted grades had to be reported within seven days with a note attached to the misreported assignment.

Any group that showed particular creativity in dealing with paperwork stood to earn one bonus point for each of its members. I delighted in calling class attention to especially effective ways in which students had organized themselves—how they sat, how the group leader handed out papers, and so on. By the end of the semester, I doubt that the extra credit inspired the students nearly as much as the joy of discovering better ways to get things done. They became artists of management. Within the security of the rules, they took creative initiative, a mark of maturity.

A large class is a management problem or a psychology problem, or a biology problem, or a political science problem, the possibilities are endless—and is therefore an opportunity to teach your students powerful, experiential lessons. Call attention to the situation and engage their curiosity about it. Set clear rules that increase accountability and pre-empt unproductive, opportunistic efforts. Give them a front-line assignment in the war against entropy and chaos. I believe that under the regrettable circumstances of the large class, this approach is the most effective way to change a student's life. Within a couple of semesters, I won another teaching award. This one was different, however, and better than any honor I had previously earned. The award was for effective teaching in large classes, and I knew that the students had given it to me, not because of showmanship or charisma, but because I had cared enough to create an environment that marshaled their energies for achievement.

Example 3

Eleven Very Basic Tips For Teaching Large Business Classes

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I have averaged between 500 and 550 students a semester for ten years. The largest classes are 350, or so, and the smallest around 80. In all, I have faced around 11,000 upper division undergraduate students and have developed some self-survival instincts. I believe if you try the following ideas, they will work for you. In my view, they are universal axioms for the large-class environment.

1) Hold Their Attention

When the student fails to learn, the teacher has failed to teach! Or the teacher has failed to put something out there that takes root in a mind. Sun Tzu, the great Chinese philosopher, taught that decadence in leadership was to assess others but not yourself. When students get up and leave the classroom in the midst of your lecture, it's you, not them. Get entertaining. Do something to hold their attention. You must hold their attention to plant the ideas you want them to remember.

2) Use Their Eye

I believe that most of what people learn is from what they see, much less from what they hear, and even less from touch, feel, taste, smell, and the other senses. Always have something on the screen that students can see. I use supplemental readings that the students purchase which are a copy of the teaching points projected on the screen, this gives students a copy of what is on the screen and then they can listen to the amplification/explanation of the particular idea. This strategy cuts the tension level which runs high when hundreds are trying to grasp an idea presented by one person way down at the front of the room.

3) Test What You Teach

Exams must come from the ideas you have tried to plant in class. If they don't, you will be perceived as unfair or worse: You may lose their trust. In my experience, there is nothing more loathsome to a student than teachers who disguise or veil what they expect a student to know. Teachers must be readable to the student, and what is important must be readily recognized.

4) Become a Storyteller

Every bone dry management function that I teach has accompanying stories, cases, and examples. People find it easier to remember and think in the context of stories and examples. I frame exam questions from those stories and examples I use in class.

5) Move

An auditorium classroom has multiple distractions. Never let yourself be imprisoned by a podium. Always move across the front, up the aisles, down a row of seats. This makes students concentrate by following you and watching the screen. A wireless portable microphone is a necessity. If you have specific points to make, be sure they are on your transparencies projected on the screen, and use that as your cue card. If you are unaccustomed to this style of teaching, reserve a classroom and rehearse.

6) Use Yourself Sparingly

Your personal experiences, research, moments of triumph, etc. should be used very carefully. I use "myself" examples of when I fell flat on my face, lost a sure thing, was victimized by fate, or let down by others. It creates a remarkable atmosphere of empathy with struggling students.

7) Utility of the Subject

The subjects of management and leadership have somewhat more pizzazz than, say, vector calculus. You cannot hold students' attention in a large class with irrelevant and unproven theories; the subject must have some real world application.

8) Earn Their Trust

Trust is not a given; it is earned. If you go against the values of the students, they will not trust you. The ultimate value to a student is a grade, so never mess with grades: keep them straightforward and objective. Never use a curve which ensures that half the grades are above or below some arbitrary line. If you do, you have violated idea number eight. You will be perceived as narrow and your effectiveness will plummet.

9) Get Face Time

Every time a student comes to you, take the time to talk to the individual. Get some face time! Sometimes that will be your only contact during a semester, so view it as an opportunity. I take care of all student contact, complaints, and excuses. I accept reasonable excuses for absences. Flexibility and positive personal contact can clear the air and help students see you as someone who is really interested in teaching something rather than hard-nosing students by enforcing iron-clad bureaucratic rules.

10) Avoid Change

Never change anything that you have said you will do. Exams go on the days scheduled, unless the classroom has been consumed by a tornado.

11) K.I.S.S.

Keep it simple stupid! Trying to use complex grading systems based on class participation, group work, written or oral reports, etc. will only cause confusion in large classes and bring the tent down around your ears. I use a simple formula to assign grades: four evenly spaced exams worth 23% each and 8% for attendance. Attendance is computed on completing 17 ungraded attendance quizzes administered over the semester. All exams are ten true/false and 40 multiple-choice questions. Exams are graded and posted by the next class period. It is simple. It is straight forward. It is always accepted by students. They understand where they are in the class, and the incredible tension of a midterm worth 40% and a final worth 60% of a grade is avoided. Tension and fear teach little in a large classroom. KISS!