

Teaching Learning Center

CONDUCTING CLASS

A study was conducted to settle the debate over whether the lecture is the most effective way to deliver material to students. Ken Bain, author of "What the Best College Teachers Do," uncovered seven fairly common principles among the teachers studied.

1. **Create a Natural Critical learning Environment:** "Natural" because students encounter the skills, habits, attitudes, and information they are trying to learn embedded in questions and tasks they find fascinating." "Critical" because students learn to think critically, to reason from evidence, to examine the quality of their reasoning using a variety of intellectual standards, to make improvements while thinking, and to ask probing and insightful questions about the thinking of other people." Some teachers are able to create this environment with their lectures while others use discussions, role playing, field work, or a variety of other techniques to achieve this environment.
2. **Get Students' Attention and Keep It:** Teachers are most successful when beginning a class with "a provocative question or problem that raises issues in ways that students had never thought about before, or by using stimulating case studies or goal-based scenarios."
3. **Start with the Students Rather Than the Discipline:** Socrates used this method as explained by Michael Sandel, a Harvard political theorist, "by attending to what people thought they knew, and then he tried to gradually and systematically to wrench them from their familiar place." This forces the students to grapple with an issue from their own perspective, prior to them knowing much about it, getting them to articulate a position.
4. **Seek Commitments:** This is often carried out on the first class day. Teachers lay out the plans, promises, and commit to making the course worthwhile, and then invite the students to make a commitment to the learning objectives and to attend class.
5. **Help Students Learn Outside of Class:** Teaching students material that will best help and encourage them to learn outside of class is much more beneficial than teaching material simply because it's traditional or because it covers a subject.
6. **Engage Students in Disciplinary Thinking:** Ken Bain notes "the most effective teachers use class time to help students think about information and ideas the way scholars in the discipline do." They don't concentrate on only teaching their discipline; they focus on "teaching students to understand, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate evidence and conclusions."
7. **Create Diverse Learning Experiences:** "The brain loves diversity," as stated by Jeanette Norden. The best teachers seemed to offer a nice balance between the systematic approach and the creative, non-traditional approach.

From "What the Best College Teachers Do," Ken Bain



QUICK TIPS FOR IMPROVING YOUR ECAMPUS SITE:

- ◆ Add a simple banner
- ◆ Remove any unnecessary buttons
- ◆ Make sure all links work properly
- ◆ Make sure it takes no more than 3 clicks to get where you need to go
- ◆ Try to avoid using dates when possible, fewer revisions will be necessary next semester
- ◆ Make sure it is clear where students should begin
- ◆ Stop by the TLC for more tips and let us show you how to incorporate Articulate into your site!



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“The brain loves diversity.”

- Jeanette Norden, “What the Best College Teachers Do”

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TOP 10 PLACES TO VIST IN 2009:

- ◆ Beirut
- ◆ Washington D.C.
- ◆ Galapagos
- ◆ Berlin
- ◆ Las Vegas
- ◆ Fjallnas, Sweden
- ◆ Hawaii
- ◆ Vienna
- ◆ Doha, Qatar
- ◆ Dakar, Sengal

New York Times

NOTES ON CRITICAL THINKING:

As a student I spent much of my time memorizing facts for tests. I made flash cards, would write and rewrite information, anything to cement those precious required tidbits into my brain. Now I find that many of those details are all but gone. Or I can recall a specific date but none of the important information connected to it. Like many of us, our students are also wasting a lot of time and energy with straight memorization. Getting them to fully understand and question a specific concept will help them remember all the details connected to it. Understanding what was going on in the world during World War II and why things happened the way they did will naturally help us remember when things occurred and who was involved. The details are much easier to recall when we see the bigger picture. By memorizing disconnected facts we don't fully understand the given concept and are not thinking critically. It works well to determine the key fundamental and powerful concepts associated with your given field. Then use these concepts throughout the semester to create a bigger picture for the students. They will be able to relate the information to their own lives and remember it in a much more effective way.