Strategy: First Day of Class: Engaging students in course content

The first day of class is a great chance to engage students in course material, discover prior knowledge and ideas about course topics, and have students identify topics relevant to them that relate to the course.

Origin


Application

Whet students’ appetite for course content (Carnegie Mellon, 2011)

- Collect data from the students about issues related to course content (look for relevant surveys, etc.).
- Have the students generate hypotheses about typical problems in the course.
- Connect course content to current events (use media to demonstrate relevance of course concepts to student interests).
- Have the students use technology (smartphones, laptops, etc.) to do an internet search related to the course and discuss this in groups.

Autobiography (Barkley, 2010)

- Have students describe aspects of their life related to the course (past experiences that have shaped their attitude toward the discipline, learning experiences in similar courses, involvement in related activities, etc.).
- Consider establishing parameters regarding chronological periods and personal areas (academic, family, work, etc.).
- Consider giving students options for their reflection (essay, other text, drawing pictures/cartoons, symbols, etc.).
Motivating interest (Felder, 1995)

- Share advice from previous students collected at the end of the last course.
- Show a graphic organizer (concept map, flow chart, etc.) for the course.
- Have students write goals for themselves in the course.
- Present real-world problems that students will be able to better understand/have tools to solve at the end of the course.

Directed reading-thinking activity (Lyons et. al., 2003)

- On your own, list everything that you can think of that may be in your course/textbook/course packet, etc.
- Get with a partner, share your ideas, and then put the ideas into categories.
- Give each category a name.
- Get with another pair and combine ideas. Then arrange the categories as a table of contents, syllabus, etc.

Common sense inventory (Nilson, 2003)

- Students determine if 15 statements related to the course are true or false. These can be based on theory, statistics, evidence, etc., that relate to the discipline/content.

Reflection

- How does this compare to what you are already doing?

- Choose one activity to adapt to your course and develop the application below.