

Teaching Methods: Building a Learning Community in the Upper Level Courses

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Upper Level Courses

- What is an upper level course?
- What are some of the challenges of teaching students in the Upper level courses?



- **The First Year you scare them to death;**
- **The Second year, you work them to death;**
- **The Third year, you bore them to death.**



The Learning Community (the LC)

- **Key objective** – shared responsibility for learning.
- **Key ingredients** – relationship between faculty member and individual student/group of students.



The LC is a learner centered environment!



Core principles for building the LC

See outline at pg. 1.



At the end of class



- What do I want the students to have as a take away?
- What do I want the students to say about my primary goals/focus in the course?



Teaching Methods

- You can use techniques adopted in the first year program but expect & demand more sophisticated analysis of cases and materials.
- **Problem method** highly recommended because can allow for discussion of issues across the curriculum – e.g., ethics, trial advocacy, civil procedure, evidence, ADR.



The Problem Method



- Problem method allows students to identify legal principles and discuss how to apply in a particular context.



More on Problem method

- Allows students to learn the law;
- Resembles practice so high interest among students;
- Expose students to professionalism issues; and
- Examine problems as a complex set of issues.



Oldie but goodie

- Myron Moskovitz,
*Beyond the Case
Method: It's Time To
Teach With
Problems*, 42 *J. Legal
Educ.* 241 (1992).



Organized & Purposeful Discussion

- Ask clear and specific questions, not vague like “what do you think?”
- Spread discussion around.
- Cultivate tolerance for silence.
- Ask students to identify evidence used to supports statements or conclusions.



Stephen Brookfield & Stephen Preskill

DISCUSSION AS A WAY OF
TEACHING (Jossey-Bass Publishing,
1999).



The Socratic Method

Teaching with Humanity



More on Socratic

- “ Criticism, as it was first instituted by Aristotle, was meant as a standard of judging well.”

– Samuel Johnson



Buzz Groups

Creating small discussion groups in large classes.



Instructions for Buzz Groups

- Select your "Reporter."
- Go to document with questions on Products Liability chapter.
- Develop responses to Questions 2, 3, 4 and 5.



Lecture



- Use mini-lectures as bridgers; confirm material or points in class or introduce related but tangential material.



Other Teaching Methods

- Debate or Legislative Session with a proposed bill or course of action.
- Games based on familiar games like "tick tack toe", "Family Feud" or even "Jeopardy."
- Role play.



Music, poetry, rap . . . Its all about learning

- Multiple intelligence research reveals that there are many ways to learn and understand
- Don't forget the use of visuals – like cartoons!



- *“Creativity lifts the monotony of the classroom into the exhilarating atmosphere of discovery and search.”*
 - Author Unknown



Incorporating Writing in the Classroom

- Writing to learn can encourage students to think critically and talk thoughtfully about the subject matter.
- Helps the student and teacher to monitor the student's learning.
- Increases opportunities for collaboration and peer teaching/critique



Variety

- Helps to maintain student interest.
- Helps to improve learning across different learning styles in your classroom.
- Helps you to stay interested, excited, engaged and maybe makes you a little crazy!



Technology in the classroom

- Use it to advance learning objectives!



Insert Assessment Exercises

(You will get their attention!)



Continuous Evaluation – Very Important

- Debrief each class.
- Seek input from students whenever you try a new technique or an approach.
- Use one-minute feedback activity.



LC extends beyond the classroom (the perpetual classroom)

- Convene class at all times.
- Use guest lecturers.
- Use TWEN or some electronic classroom.
- group projects outside of class.



Plan the end like you plan the beginning of a semester.

