

Workshop: Introduction to Teaching

Dr. Barbi Honeycutt
North Carolina State University

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2 hours

This workshop focused on the characteristics of effective learning environments, how to create a basic lesson plan (including learning outcomes, learning strategies and assessment) and the process of self-reflection about teaching.

SUMMARY

Creating an effective learning environment is an essential step when teaching a class and there are several things an instructor can do to facilitate that. In this workshop I learned that although some variables might be out of the instructor's hand to change (like day and time of class, weather conditions and physical space), there are several techniques that can be applied to create an environment conducive to teaching (like knowing student names, being approachable, encouraging participation, creating a relaxed atmosphere in class or altering the physical layout of the space).

The definition of learning outcomes for the course is another important element of a syllabus. We thoroughly practiced how to state learning outcomes correctly in this workshop (Can you measure the learning outcome? Can you see it? Can your students show it to you?). Although I was familiar with the concept of learning outcomes, I had not been aware of the fine tuning that is necessary to create good learning outcomes for students. We also learned about Bloom's taxonomy which states different levels of competence, what skills are associated with each and what verbs should be used with each competence level when formulating learning outcomes which I found very helpful.

After learning outcomes are well-defined, evaluation and feedback are important to complete the process. The workshop facilitator introduced the term Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) which are quick tasks to assess comprehension in the classroom. These can be used at the end of an exercise or an entire class and include one minute papers, clearest/muddiest point, tweeting on Twitter and review games, to name a few popular ones that were mentioned. Some of these CATs were completely new to me and after the workshop I felt confident to use some of them in my class.

APPLICATION

Learning outcomes

I formulated learning outcomes according to the formula we were given in this workshop (Can you measure the learning outcome? Can you see it? Can your students show it to you?) and used vocabulary that is appropriate for the respective competence level used in each learning outcome (see on right).

CATs: Minute papers

Of all the CATs that we learned about I particularly liked the minute papers and decided to incorporate it in my course as recurring graded assignments at the end of each class period (see on right).

DETAILS

Course objectives
After this course students will be able to...

- To explain the diversity and complexity of nature, how it has evolved, and how it works as a system.
- To describe the driving forces of evolution and how they relate to islands and island-like situations.
- To discuss a variety of examples of evolution.
- To identify and explain the components of a scientific article.

Minute papers
At the end of each class period, I will give everyone a few minutes to reflect and write down what you learned in class. I will then ask 2-3 students to share their notes with the class. Minute papers are designed to give YOU the opportunity to summarize in your words (and to your class mates) what you learned and will give ME the opportunity to see how well you understood the material we covered in class. Minute papers will earn **full credit if they are formulated thoughtfully and relate to topics covered in class.**

*My philosophy on grades:
It is my goal to create a positive and supportive learning environment. I use grades to help you*