TEACHING AT STERN...GETTING STARTED

⇒ Your syllabus should include at a minimum:

- Your name, phone number, email address, office location and office hours
- The required course materials
- Course requirements, assignments and their grading weights, i.e., how much each assignment is “worth”
- Your policies on late papers, attendance, participation, behavior in the classroom, academic integrity and anything else that is important to you. Don’t list a policy you are not prepared to follow.
- An outline of each class session and what students are expected to have prepared for that class

⇒ Your grading system should be:

- Communicated clearly
- Be fair
- Be perceived as fair
  - Your department probably has norms and standards for grading. Check with the administrator in your department, the chair, or an experienced professor in your area.
  - Make sure your criteria for qualitative student performance is explicit and clear. You want your grading system to be reliable as well as valid.

⇒ Your goals for students are what drives the course:

What do you want students to be able to do once they have completed the course? What specific things will they learn to do in each individual class? Explicitly articulating your learning objectives for students will help you define how to approach the material to make it most accessible and to reach those objectives. Such articulation should also help you distinguish what is crucial that students learn and what is less important that students learn. Such articulation will also inform how to assess students’ mastery of the material.

⇒ Your first meeting of the class is an opportunity to:

- Set norms for the course
- Define explicitly your expectations of students
- Decrease anonymity
- Seek feedback from students
- Start to create a community within the classroom
- Connect some of your course material to what students already know
- Describe the course and why students should care about this material.
  - The first session of class should meet for the entire class period and should give students a flavor of both the content and the process by which the course will progress.

(over)
Lecturing is not the only teaching method:

Use lots of different ways to help students learn the material: exercises, case studies, small and large group discussions, paired activities, mock quizzes, video snippets, competitions, debates, role plays, short student presentations. (See CITL’s Web site for ideas – address below.)

Make sure students and you have opportunities to assess how well they are doing BEFORE they are graded.

If you want to make use of Blackboard:

- Visit the CITL Web site (address below) for tutorials, best practices, FAQs, etc.
- Inform your class on your syllabus as well as during the first class how you intend to use Blackboard and how often you expect them to log in to the course site.
- Use announcements to communicate information between class sessions – this will encourage students to log in more often and minimize the use of e-mail.
- Post at least your syllabus in your course site.
- Consider using the discussion board to complement your in-class discussion.
  - Using Blackboard efficiently can help you save in-class time, organize your materials, even reduce paper copies of handouts. Browse the notes/handouts from recent Faculty Forum workshops (located on the CITL Web site) for ideas.

Organization is key:

- In classes of any size, but especially in large classes, one needs to be very prepared and very organized.
- That preparedness and organization should be transparent (very clear to the students).
- Have a written agenda and follow it. Use your agenda to keep the class on track. Get to class early enough to set up and start on time.
- Start and end on time.

Classroom Management is a central part of your job:

Students will expect you to move the class process along and to manage the group dynamics. Don’t abdicate this role. Find a way within your own personal style to make students confident that you are in charge and they are in good hands.

Developing good tests is hard:

When you give assignments, make sure you assess students on your learning goals and what you have been teaching, not what is easy to test.

Check CITL’s website for help on all of these teaching issues

Also, for a copy of this document with links to further information, please visit http://w4.stern.nyu.edu/faculty/citl/programs.cfm?doc_id=4465