

Content and Lecturing

Purpose: Effective content delivery supports student learning and engagement. This resource provides guidance for choosing, organizing, and delivering course content through interactive lectures. Thoughtful use of essential questions, structured organization, and active learning helps students connect with course material, think critically, and apply knowledge.

Steps for Implementation

1. Choose Aligned and Actionable Content

Focus on content that directly supports students' success in assessments and real-world application. Avoid the "bloated content effect" and don't overwhelm with tangents or too much detail.

a. Use Four Learning Types to Guide Content Selection

- i. **Learning to Know** (knowledge acquisition and skill development)
- ii. **Learning to Do** (practical application of knowledge and skills)
- iii. **Learning to Live Together** (teamwork and collaboration)
- iv. **Learning to Be** (self-reflection)

2. Spark Inquiry with Essential Questions

Opening activity for summative assessment of cumulative course learning goals

- a. Essential questions act as the "hook" that shows why content matters to students and makes it relevant and engaging.
- b. Your essential question should:
 - i. Align with course learning objectives
 - ii. Stimulate big-picture thinking
 - iii. Raise further questions
 - iv. Spark discussion and debate
 - v. Demand evidence and reasoning
- c. **Examples of Essential Questions**
 - i. Is there ever a "just" war?
 - ii. How do the arts shape, as well as reflect, a culture?
 - iii. How strong is the scientific evidence?
 - iv. What do effective problem solvers do when they get stuck?

d. NOT Essential Questions

- i. What key event sparked WWI?
- ii. What common artistic symbols were used by the Mayans?
- iii. 3. What is a variable in scientific investigations?
- iv. 4. What steps did you follow to get your answer?

3. Engage Students via Active Learning Throughout Your Class

Group work activities for formative & summative assessment

i. Formative Assessment: Evaluates learning throughout the course.

1. Simple Activities (low to medium stakes)

- a. **Polls via Zoom:** FlashFeedback
- b. **Small Group Breakouts:** Write-Solve-Share

ii. Summative Assessment: Evaluates cumulative learning from the entire course.

1. Bigger Activities (high stakes)

- a. **Debate via In-Class Discussion and Canvas Discussion Board:** Ideas on Trial
- b. **Projects & Presentations with Peer Feedback:** Current Events: Show and Tell

4. Reflect Upon Learning at the End/Outside of Your Class

Feedback activities for formative assessment

a. Minute Reflections

- i. What are 1 or 2 of your most significant learnings from this session?
- ii. What questions do you have?
- iii. Please share any other feedback you have.

b. Takeaways via Exit Slips and/or Discussion

- i. Write down the top 1, 2, or 3 most important points or concepts for a given lecture, unit, reading, or assignment

5. Organize Content for Your Class

Content should be organized in a manner that highlights important information or helps students draw connections. Consider cognitive load.

a. Organization in Course Design

- i. Chunk text on the screen with headers
- ii. S P A C E, color, and other visual cues / keep videos short
- iii. Visually distinguish what's important and what's optional
- iv. Give alternate mediums or organization for important content ○
Offer "job aides" if students need it for reference

b. Sample 2-Hour Schedule (Class Topic: Learning Taxonomies)

i. Hour 1

- 1. **5 min:** Introduction, learning goals, review, and acknowledge student contributions
- 2. **20 min:** Lecture about taxonomies
- 3. **15 min:** Taxonomy quiz for students answer via Zoom chat
- 4. **10 min:** Break

ii. Hour 2

- 1. **20 min:** Small groups: design a class based on a taxonomy
- 2. **10 min:** Group share-out
- 3. **10 min:** Lecture tying everything together
- 4. **20 min:** Create a new taxonomy together
- 5. **10 min:** Share out: tying together lessons learned

6. Choose Your Pre-Class Work

- a. Start with anything essential to seed your in-class discussion or work.
- b. Collect anything that might be relevant or interesting to the class' topic.
- c. Select 2 – 3 readings that align with your class.
- d. Differentiate between essential and optional readings.
- e. Be transparent about what to focus on or how to interact with the pre-class work.

7. Get Students to Do Readings

- a. Assign small discussion posts or minute papers if you want your students to think critically about the readings.
- b. Use check for your understanding quizzes to highlight important concepts if you want students to read a textbook chapter or review a concept.

Instructor Planning Guide

1. Before Class

- a. Align content with course learning goals and essential questions.

- i. Choose content that supports your learning goals.
 - ii. Create one essential question for the course and sub-questions for each class session and/or unit.
- b. Select 2–3 key readings and label what is essential vs. optional.
 - i. Plan how students should engage with the readings.
- c. Organize your lecture into clear sections with visuals and interaction.

2. During Class

- a. Use an essential question to frame the session and prompt curiosity.
- b. Deliver content in segments, integrating active learning techniques (i.e. flash feedback and write-solve-share).
- c. Facilitate discussion through Zoom polls, chat prompts and breakouts.
- d. Pause for reflection activities (minute reflections or quick takeaways).
- e. Make space for feedback and adjust pacing as needed.

3. After Class

- a. Review student reflections and discussion posts for understanding and feedback.
- b. Note common misunderstandings or gaps to address in the next session.
- c. Adjust materials, timing, or content for future sessions.
- d. Reflect on which essential question outcomes were achieved.

Instructor Checklist

- ☐ I identified essential questions aligned with course goals.
- ☐ I selected concise, aligned content and avoided the “bloated content effect.”
- ☐ I clearly organized content using headings, visuals, and cues.
- ☐ I incorporated at least one active learning activity during the lecture.
- ☐ I differentiated pre-class readings and explained how to engage with them.
- ☐ I included reflection or takeaway activities to assess understanding.
- ☐ I reviewed and responded to student reflections or discussion threads.
- ☐ I adjusted upcoming class content based on student input and learning evidence.

Resources:

1. [Incorporating Active Learning into Your Class](#) (self-paced training)
2. [Active Learning Challenges Old Education Models](#) (Harvard DCE)