

Teaching Circle 2007-2008
UN 101
White Paper

Members:

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Our teaching circle focused on best practices regarding teaching UN 101. The camaraderie and trust that our group built in our meetings fostered a creative learning environment, and we strongly advocate that UN 101 instructors from throughout the university continue to engage in dialogues to help us learn how to become more effective teachers. Our mix of well-seasoned UN 101 instructors with newer or even first-time instructors gave us a wonderful diversity as we approached different topics. We hope that our ideas will foster others to challenge themselves in their best teaching practices.

Classroom Management Effectiveness:

We discussed various ways that students can be motivated to perform well in this course:

- Calling on students by name if they seem disinterested in the class provided that the instructor has indicated, either in writing or on the syllabus, that this technique will be used.
- Counting as absent any student who arrives late to class in order to foster individual responsibility provided that the instructor has indicated, in writing on the syllabus, that this rule will be followed.
- Consistently e-mailing or contacting the students in writing to offer help and encouragement

Common Book Initiative:

We discussed ways to incorporate the CBI into the class since this component was in its first year. We each had different approaches that were effective:

- Create the entire semester based on topics from within the book
- Use the author discussion as the only topic for the class
- Assign discussion questions for class
- Use the required Journal component for discussion of book
- Use the optional essay based on the book reading for class

Each member felt that the CBI was a worthwhile project and should be continued.

Journals:

We discussed various ways that we implemented the required journal component including e-mail delivery rather than hard copy delivery:

- Use directed questions for response based on topics covered on the syllabus or in large group sessions
- Use discussion questions from the CBI
- Individualize questions based on student need and interest
- Use the personality test that Dr. Bean discusses in large group as a topic for reflection

Delivery System:

- E-mail seemed to be the accepted method by most of us.
- Some advocated a discussion site set-up in WebCT for the journals so that other students could respond.

Topics for UN 101

While all follow a common syllabus, we also included various other topics for our students. In this discussion we learned how instructors viewed their classes outside of the prescribed requirements:

- Classroom Etiquette
- Professional Writing Skills
- Time Management Skills

- Stress Management Skills
- Advisor Etiquette
- Academic Misconduct/Honor Code
- University Rules
- Student Handbook
- Academic Vocabulary
- Location of key offices, administrators and faculty
- Introduction of administrators and faculty within the major or college

After reviewing our semester's work, a major recurring theme became creating or fostering a sense of agency within the student. We, as UN 101 instructors, value students who are confident in their abilities, understand their need for growth and are willing to actively seek help to succeed.