



Teaching Concerns

Newsletter of the Teaching Resource Center for Faculty and Teaching Assistants

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Teaching Strategies: Lecturing

The 200 students in the room are clattering about greeting the friends they haven't seen since last semester, trying to find their favorite pens at the bottoms of backpacks, trying to remember whether they've bought a spiral notebook for this class or whether to use the one they just used for their last class, wondering if their significant others really meant what they said last night. You are at the front of the room, about to introduce them to the subject that has held your interest through a decade of graduate school, poverty, travel, intellectual separation from loved ones. You are, in fact, about to introduce them to something you've been loving, planning for, grappling with, despising, rejecting, re-embracing for years. It is your field, your spouse, your child. They are still wondering about the location of their favorite pens, the movie they saw two nights ago.

By all means, organize your lecture carefully. Have the thing make sense. Be concise. But, perhaps most important, communicate the passion you have. If you REALLY want to be an inspirational teacher, show your students your passion.

Richard L. Weaver, who has taught at the University of Michigan and Indiana University, suggests using the A.I.D.A. formula for putting passion in your lectures: **Attention, Interest, Desire, Action.**

To grasp students' **attention**:

- Allow a few minutes of adjustment time; don't put your key sentence right at the beginning when students are still looking for their pens.
- Give students a forecast of what the major points will be.
- Review how today's lecture fits into the course.
- Begin with a story, an example, a startling statistic, a personal experience.

To maintain students' **interest**:

- Share information that is particularly relevant to students. Relate topics of your field to University issues.
- Cover fewer points or topics, but cover them in depth. Superficial treatments of armies of topics is boring.
- Vary the kind of information you give: statistics, historical anecdotes, simple facts, illustrations...
- Vary presentation format: incorporate students' questions; move around; use the blackboard, charts, graphs, maps, pictures, books, magazines; use films, slides, the overhead projector, television.
- Your lecture is a speech. Prepare for it as carefully and thoughtfully as you would a persuasive speech.

To communicate your **desire** for students to be as committed to their education as you are:

- _ Show students what you have done in your field, your current and planned future involvement.
- _ Demonstrate your emotional commitment. You've done everything but bleed for your intellectual interests, and maybe you've even done that--communicate it.
- _ Eliminate speech hesitations such as "uh," "er," "you know,"--be intellectually and physically powerful.

To inspire students to be as filled with **action** as you are:

- _ Be prompt, efficient, prepared, and alert.
- _ Maintain eye contact with students.
- _ Maintain an alert and erect posture.
- _ Move about with certainty and surety. Eliminate random, casual, or distracting movements.
- _ Gesture comfortably and naturally. Do not plan your gestures, but plan to gesture.

Putting these suggestions into action does not guarantee that students will sit wide-eyed and breathless on the edges of their chairs, using all their restraint to raise their hands before asking questions, but it will help communicate your passion. And if your students understand your passion, they may just become impassioned themselves--keeping up with the reading, asking relevant and significant questions, visiting at your office hours to ask how to research a related issue, and maybe learning how to make the love of learning into the most helpful life tool they have.

Adapted from "Effective Lecturing Techniques: Alternatives to Classroom Boredom" by Richard L. Weaver in *Teaching College: Collected Readings for the New Instructor*. Ed. by Rose Ann Neff and Maryellen Weimer. Madison, WI: Magna Publications, 1990.