

THOUGHTS FOR REVIEWERS OF FACULTY TEACHING:

There are three aspects of a course that teachers and reviewers should be aware of: content, process, and people (see Kasulis, 1984). Content is the most obvious facet of the course, probably the most important, and the first to consider. This includes what topics should be covered in the course, in what detail. It also includes the order of the material, how to balance the big picture with examples and details, and how current are the examples.

Good content is not enough to produce a good course. The process of presenting the material is very important. One difficulty for the first-time teacher is how to pace the course; how much can be covered in the time allotted. Other considerations are: how to explain things so that all students understand them, how formal or informal the presentations should be, how to deal with large vs. small classes, whether students are encouraged to study together or alone, how to get feedback from students about whether they understand the material, etc. Process includes lecture style: enthusiasm, confidence, clear enunciation, humor, etc.

The people element of the course involves an awareness of the specific students taking the course, how they interact with each other, and how they interact with you. What are the learning styles of particular students in the class? Is the instructor providing optimal learning opportunities for most or all of them? What are the expectations of the students with regard to the role of the teacher in disseminating knowledge, and is the instructor meeting their expectation? Which students are fast thinkers and which more deliberate? Which demand attention from you or their classmates? Whose comments are ignored? Which students need extra help and which can provide help? Do some students have particular interests that you can cater to in the course? If so, they may learn the material better than if you stick entirely to examples that you originally had in mind.

I have found that the first time I teach a course I struggle most to determine appropriate content. The second time I become more aware of the process. Not until the third time teaching a course am I sufficiently comfortable with the content and process that I can really focus on the people and their interactions in the course. For other teachers, that time line may vary. I suggest that the review take into consideration that the instructor may be more focused at different levels of teaching depending on how many times s/he has taught the course before.

In discussing lectures, Dubrow and Wilkinson (1984) provide a number of guidelines and thoughts that can help both instructor and reviewer. Here are some questions, gleaned from their essay:

1. Is there sufficient intellectual content to challenge the students? Is there too much?
2. Is there clarity of exposition, or is the listener disoriented and confused?
3. Is the delivery enthusiastic and expressive, capturing attention, or is it monotonal and boring? Is the instructor condescending? Disorganized? Or open and organized? Are gestures and body movements effective, or do they get in the way of the instruction?
4. Is the relationship between disparate ideas made clear? Is there a balance between general principles and examples?
5. Is the instructor trying to cover too much in one lecture, or spending too much time explaining ideas that should be easy to grasp?
6. Are assigned or optional readings, labs, and/or sections integrated with the lectures?
7. Are opportunities provided to review material prior to exams?
8. Is the instructor aware of the mood of the audience, maintaining attention throughout the lecture, or are there slow points and fidgeting that are not remedied? (A useful point from Dubrow and Wilkinson 1984: "as in writing the first rule is: start well and end well. The initial ten minutes and the final five minutes deserve special attention, since that is when students will be most receptive to your message. One of the best ways to put this time to good effect is to begin with a problem and end with a solution.)
9. Does the instructor make good use of the blackboard?
10. Are slides and overheads, or other audio-visual materials effective?

11. Does the instructor talk at a pace that students can comfortably take notes and follow the material?
12. Are questions encouraged? Are they answered adequately? If a question is disruptive or off the subject, is the question deferred until after class?
13. Is the instructor available for questions after class and/or during office hours?

Research on college teaching has indicated (Light, 1990) that students particularly appreciate immediate and detailed feedback on work, opportunities to revise and improve work before it receives a grade, and frequent checkpoints such as quizzes, tests, brief papers or oral exams. Does the instructor provide opportunities for feedback and revision?

Similarly, it helps instructors to get frequent feedback from students about how well the students understand the material, and particularly, do the students understand "the big picture." A valuable tool to provide this feedback is a one-minute paper (Light 1990). "The idea is to conclude a regular class lecture or discussion a minute or two before the end of class time. Then ask each student to take out a sheet of paper and write down brief answers to two questions:

1. What is the big point you learned in class today?
2. What is the main, unanswered question you leave class with today?

A box is placed on a table near the classroom door, and students simply drop their papers in the box as they leave. The papers are written anonymously for the professor to read after class."

Does the instructor have an appropriate method of getting feedback about the effectiveness of his/her teaching?

Any instructor who has taught a course often enough that content and process are reasonably well worked out may want to better understand more about learning styles and intellectual development of the students. The following books should be helpful:

Sheila Tobias. 1990 *They're not dumb, they're different*. Research Corporation, Tucson AZ.

William G. Perry, Jr. 1970. *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years*. Holt, Rinehart and Winson, Inc. NY. (especially Chapter 3)

Belenky, M.F., B.M. Clinchy, N.R. Goldberger and J.M. Tarule. 1986. *Women's Ways of Knowing*. Basic Books, Inc., NY. (The ideas in here were based on studies of women, but apply to everyone to some extent).

REFERENCES CITED:

Dubrow, H. and J. Wilkinson. 1984. The theory and practice of lectures. In: Gullette, M.M, ed. *The Art and Craft of Teaching*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA. pp. 25-37.

Kasulis, T.P. 1984. Questioning. In: Gullette, M.M., ed. *The Art and Craft of Teaching*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA. pp. 38-48.

Light, R.J. 1990. *The Harvard Assessment Seminars, First Report*. Harvard University Graduate School of Education and Kennedy School of Government, Cambridge MA.