



# A Practical Guide to Help You

## Convert Your Courses to Semesters



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# A Practical Guide to Help You

## Convert Your Courses to Semesters



### Tips from the Teaching and Learning Center

One of the primary disadvantages of the conventional quarter system is that both students and faculty members have little time for preparation outside of class. The transition to the semester calendar gives many new opportunities to incorporate innovative teaching methods into our curriculum. To utilize this opportunity, faculty members may want to investigate methods to encourage individual learning

[Tips for planning your semester syllabus](#)

[Making semesters work for you and your students](#)

[101 Tips for Semester Conversion](#)

[In the Trenches: Lessons learned by teachers converting their courses to semesters](#)

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW AS YOU TEACH**

#### **If the Course You Are Teaching Will Also Be Under Semesters**

See what assignments, readings, and activities will translate to semesters but with a difference—they may have more planning time, more time for students to create them, and more time for evaluation and even re-submission.

#### **If the Course You Are Teaching Will Not Be Taught Next Year**

See what activities and assignments that worked well in this course can be adapted to semesters.

#### **Things to Remember as You Plan for Semesters**

Be sure to tailor your course to its semester credits--

- If it was 4 and is now 3 credits, the workload is the same, but over a longer period of time so some assignments would have a longer time to mature.
- If it was 4 and still is 4 credits, the workload would be greater - probably one-third more material but over five more weeks of class. So, you might need to consider how the course can incorporate more information about the discipline or the major since some majors will take significantly fewer courses.

# Tips for planning your semester syllabus

## Some General Questions you need to think about:

- Will you add more content because the course is longer?
- Will you go into more depth on some topics which were neglected?
- Will you add topics?
- Will you concentrate more on skill development?
- Will you add technology?
  
- You can add multimedia and web-based technologies. By fall semester, Lotus Notes and Learning Space will be available to enhance your ability to build chat rooms, bulletin boards, etc. into class

## A cautionary note:

Student efforts can be worse under semesters unless you provide milestones throughout the course which are evaluated in some way. If they are not asked to perform regularly, they are apt to ignore your course for a long period and then try to sprint in all their courses at the end. Ideally, you would collect progress reports, etc. along the way and avoid on big project due in the last week or so.

## Specific Issues:

- What new readings or other assignments should be added because the students have a longer time to digest and use the material? Try not to overwhelm them at the beginning of the semester.
- In advanced classes where extended research and writing projects are part of course requirements, how will the extra length of the semester be used? Students could have longer to decide on a topic after they understand the course content more. They could turn in progress
- You probably need to change the exam schedule and writing assignments. Many semester schools use two or more exams placed every four to five weeks to keep students on target rather than one mid-term examination. Is this appropriate for you?
- More time means more opportunity for improved writing projects which can include designs which guide the student in a clear process for instance, a bibliography, a topic and outline, and the final project. Better quality and more input will result.

activities.

reports as the semester unfolds and hopefully turn in a better final project.

[> More Tips!](#)

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[Making Semesters work for you and your students](#)



Since you have more time, you may want to consider incorporating the **Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education** into your decisions.

**Good Practice:**

1. Encourages student/faculty contact
2. Encourages cooperation among students
3. Encourages active learning
4. Gives prompt feedback
5. Emphasizes time on task
6. Communicates high expectations
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning

**Increased use of in-class activities can insure more student learning:**

- Perhaps more active learning
- More group learning activities
- More group work with clearly defined goals
- Laboratory courses may have more complex and carefully crafted lab assignments

**New changes for the semester conversion:**

- Altered lecture material
- Additional texts
- Increased writing and/or labs
- Learning activities
- Field experience
- Guest speakers
- Technology

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# Making semesters work for you and your students

While some of this information is good advice for any schedule, the following items are especially important as we convert to semesters.

## The First Weeks

- **Establishing a learning community in semesters.** You need to set aside time to create this atmosphere; 15 weeks can be a very long time.

- **First Days.** Some of the exercises and ideas from the Center's first [Newsletter](#) might help begin the process. Research has found that when students know each other, they share information more readily and learn more effectively.

### First Weeks Continued...

## The Final Weeks

**the crucial conclusion** A few cautionary notes:

The Great Conflict: Learning versus

## The Interim: Weeks 5 - 10

### Keeping the momentum going

In this period, much energy and creativity are needed to keep the momentum going since now the reality of exams, papers, and projects descends on students. Homework assignments fall off and attendance declines.



Two key questions:

Interim Weeks

## **Coverage**

As the semester comes to a close many teachers feel pressured to make sure the material is covered and they often forget to ensure that students are learning it. Be aware that even if you complete the course content, if the students do not or cannot understand the material, the course will not be successful.

## **What to do...**

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**[Continued...](#)**



## The First Weeks (continued...)

**First graded assignments make a forceful impact.** A clear assignment and grading criteria are important. Before you hand back the papers, offer suggestions and strategies to improve the weak areas if many in the class had trouble with them. Soliciting anonymous student comments on the quiz and discussing them in the next class could help as well.

### How do you know what students think about the class:

**What they will risk in class** You could list typical situations in your class and ask students to rate their comfort levels on a scale of one to five. If many are uncomfortable in one setting, then you can either change it or make certain they are well-prepared to complete it with as little discomfort as possible.

**Journals may be helpful** At the beginning students write about their experiences with the course topic, then talk about them in small groups, and save the comments to compare with their impressions at the end of the course.

**Early Student questions.** Research shows students contribute more if the teacher tells them how problems are solved in the particular course and what latitude there is for error. For instance, in mathematics there may be several ways to arrive at only one answer, whereas in biology a particular anatomical feature may have only one name and therefore, the student is either right or wrong. Moreover, a student examining a poem could find a number of possible interpretations, all of which may be acceptable as long as the student's reasoning and examples are germane. So a student who knows how to ask the question, how to frame the answer, and the relative risks involved will be more likely to participate. You could explain how you once reached a particular conclusion which subsequent research, perhaps your own, has proven incorrect. This will allow them to understand how knowledge changes and that you are fallible.

### How do you know what they understand:

**Minute Paper** Summarize in a sentence what they learned so far and in a second sentence what confused them.

**To assess how it is going during the first few weeks** Have an anonymous suggestion folder available or use a member of the class on a rotating basis to collect suggestions and report them to you.

**Background Knowledge Probe** As you begin a topic, have them list what they know and then share it in groups. Knowing they understand something about the topic already will build a shared-class knowledge base.

**Pro and Con** Students start to list negative and positive aspects of a topic then discuss them in increasingly larger groups so the results are distilled. Can be used before the topic is discussed, in the middle, or at the end to review the results.

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## The Interim Weeks (continued...)



### Two key questions:

- What will continuously stimulate them to learn?

- How is the atmosphere of the class positive for learners?

Perhaps using music (after student consultation and focused on course material), increased physical activity, or maybe a debate will break the routine and enhance learning.

Another useful model (this works best if you explain what you are doing to students) is the one introduced by Kolb who suggested that the learning cycle contains four processes:

- concrete experience (experiencing)
- reflective observation (examining)
- abstract conceptualization (explaining)
- active experimentation (applying)

If you follow this structure, you would **provide a concrete learning experience** so students could understand first hand maybe read a poem, observe an experiment, etc. Then students would **analyze** the information gathered using guidelines provided by the teacher or ones they created.

Third, they should **link the first two** by creating analogies, models, hypotheses, or apply other theoretical viewpoints.

Finally, students would **apply the results** to course material. For instance, to teach students about drag in mechanical engineering, the teacher could begin by having them use a wind tunnel to test various objects, then examine the collected data and discuss the results in groups, then have them look for and discover the relationship between drag and airspeed, and finally work to design an object which has the least amount of drag.

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## The Final Weeks (continued...)



### A few (more) cautionary notes:

You can guard against this feeling (of pressure) and perhaps the reality by making certain the course builds as students gradually accomplish and learn during the semester. Culminating activities like papers and projects lead students to higher learning so that by the end of the course they should be using analysis to synthesize and evaluate the subject of the course. One example of how to show both the teacher and the student of the progress achieved is to have students create portfolios of their work. These may be adopted to any discipline and they show how the student's learning has developed over time, how important rethinking and revising is, and allow students to begin as apprentices and end as experts in the course material. Of course, student responsibility increases when portfolios are used.

### Guided Design can show students what they have learned:

- Identify the situation
- Set a goal
- Choose a solution
- Analyze factors
- Synthesize a

### How to deal with end of semester stress.

Convince students it is manageable, that some is important but too much is counterproductive, and that if the student can determine the sources (lack of studying for instance), they can remedy it. You can confront the issue with students, and together suggest ways of coping which might help other class members or even the teacher. To reduce the anxiety, distribute a list of what is due and when. Over the last weeks, schedule review sessions.

**The Final.** Make it challenging (take it yourself just to see). Include open-ended questions which require synthesis and having students approach the material from several different perspectives. If you have clear course objectives outlined in the syllabus, you can have students look at the list again each time they accomplish another one. This builds a sense of success and a clear target. Maybe the students should think about what they have learned and how the course will benefit them in their careers.

### Designing the Final

Be careful of the amount of time and your expectations of the results. Word the questions carefully (this is the most carefully scrutinized prose you ever

- Gather relevant information
- Generate possible solutions
- List constraints

- detailed solution
- Evaluate the solution
  - Recommend a course of action

write). Typical pitfalls include unclear key word or phrase, unclear sequence, and asking for too much. Some words to consider are: limited ones like categorize, compare, contrast, list, and divide, and open ones like define, explain, arrange, illustrate, agree, analyze, discuss, or summarize. Make sure you choose the words which reflect the level of learning you want the students to demonstrate.

Ask students to submit their own questions for the final. Or, distribute essay questions in advance and let students help you clarify them.

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## Teaching Tips I: the First Day of Class

# Introductions

## Introduce Yourself

- ["The First Day of Class"](#)
- [Get to Know your Students](#)
- [Get to Know your Students' Attitudes and Abilities](#)
- [Bibliography](#)

As you want to learn as much as you can about your students, they appreciate knowing more about you than is printed on the course syllabus (name, office location, office hours, and telephone number). Your willingness to reveal something about yourself helps overcome the hierarchy of the classroom that inhibits communication between you and your students. The first day of class is an excellent time to tell students something about your personal and/or professional life. Each teacher must decide what self-revelations are acceptable and relevant in the context of teacher-student relationship, but some subjects are relatively safe and easy to talk about - for example, your educational background, how you became interested in your field and your current research interests.

If you don't feel comfortable talking about yourself in class, there are other ways to convey the same information. You might distribute an abbreviated personal resume or CV. For those who prefer to be more creative, you could construct a personal profile along the lines of commercial advertisements.

*In a political science class, ask students to compare their parent's political preferences with their own.*

## Introduce the Subject Matter

One way you can show students what to expect in the course is to give them a sample of course content. A professor in the natural sciences shows them a fifteen-minute film which

introduces the subject. The film is colorful, exciting, and motivational and he reports that students come to the second class eager to begin learning more. A teacher in the social sciences asks students to think about questions they want answered in the course. He writes these items on the blackboard and discusses each of them in turn, pointing out when in the course the questions will be addressed - but he only hints at the possible answers in order to whet their curiosity.

Providing samples of course content can be accomplished in many ways, but the more successful methods are creative approaches, that both introduce course concepts and stimulate student interest in course content.

*In literature classes, ask students to think about whom they would most like to be if they could be any writer or fictional character in a book they have read.*

[Bibliography]



TEACHING TIPS -  
suggestions and ideas on teaching

## The First Day of Class - Setting the Right Tone

- [Get to Know Your Students](#)
- [Get to Know your Students' Attitudes and Abilities](#)
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### End of First Class exercise

Ask students to take the last two minutes of the first class and write down unsigned their impressions of what went well and what questions they still have about the course. This exercise shows students you are willing to learn from them and lets you review them to see if some unasked questions need to be addressed during the next class.

How you spend the first day of class will set the tone for the entire course. Many teachers devote the first class meeting to giving a general description of the course and its requirements and after answering questions, either begin to lecture or dismiss the class early. But there are many important things you can do on the first day that will help establish rapport with the students, prepare them for the course's work, and generate excitement about the subject matter.

Research shows undergraduates want to know two kinds of information on the first day of class. First, they want to learn as much as possible so they can decide whether to stay in the course and so they can estimate the work requirements for the entire course. Second, they are curious about the teacher as a person. They want to know if you will be reasonable and fair, if you care about them as individuals, and if you care about the course itself.

A well written syllabus, distributed during the first class, promotes a positive attitude in students, because it shows the teacher cares about the course and has made an effort to plan it carefully. A syllabus should contain

course goals, topics, texts, grading and examination procedures, reading assignments, attendance policy, and your office location and appointment hours. Comments you give in class about the textbook are important since students are judging if they need to buy it and how closely they will have to read it. Stressing your availability during office hours and lingering after class to answer questions and deal with problems both suggest your accessibility.

The first day of class affords a variety of opportunities to establish rapport with your students and to provide the kinds of information you and they want in that initial class. By meeting these needs, you can increase their motivation and achievement and enhance your own effectiveness.

In this first number of Teaching Tips we have offered a few suggestions but there are many others. If you have ideas you would like to share, or if you have any questions about any of the techniques please call us (3334), visit us in Teaching & Learning Center, Massie 019 A-C, or [email](mailto:bkunkle@shawnee.edu) Dr Kunkle at [bkunkle@shawnee.edu](mailto:bkunkle@shawnee.edu)

**Teaching Tips II:**  
**101 Things You Can Do The First**  
**Four Weeks of Class**



## Teaching Tips I: the First Day of Class

# Get to Know Your Students

### The classroom itself

Classrooms differ so it is best to check the room, its acoustics and any equipment you may need a day or two before the first meeting.

- ["The First Day of Class"](#)
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Before class that first day arrive early, write the course name and number on the board along with your name and talk informally with the students as they arrive. It will help quell their concerns about you and make you feel more connected with them.

### The Importance of Learning Names

Undergraduates, particularly in large classes, want to feel that they are human beings and not simply names and ID numbers on class rosters. Course evaluation research shows a strong correlation between positive evaluation of the instructor and student perceptions that the instructor cares about them as individuals. The same research shows this perception also motivates students to work harder and achieve more. Therefore, show students from the very beginning that you view them as individuals and care about them as people. The first and one of the easiest ways to accomplish this is to learn their names as quickly as possible.

*Pair students and ask them to interview each other. After five minutes have each student introduce the person he or she interviewed to the class.*

Aside from these benefits, there are other reasons to learn students' names. Calling on them by name helps create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in the classroom and

enables you to stimulate class discussion by asking students personally to express their points of view. Also, it may transform a group of isolated and anonymous individuals into a community of people who cooperatively engage in the exploration of ideas and knowledge. Moreover, it tells students that attendance is important and that you will know if they are not there.

### **Methods for small classes**

1. If you teach a class of less than twenty students, you might ask them to identify themselves one row at a time and repeat what each one has told you, remembering how they pronounce their name. As you move to subsequent rows, try to repeat all the names previously mentioned. This exercise can be repeated at the beginning of each class period until you feel confident that you can connect a name with every face.
2. Using the class roster, call the role at the start of each class. You can also ask students to say their names before they make comments or ask questions.
3. Distribute index cards on the first day and ask students to write down who they are and where they come from. Collect the cards and spend time on the first day and subsequent days reading the names, looking at each person and trying to form an association between names and high schools, facial expressions, hair color, or any other memorable feature. To reinforce these associations, call the roll every day during the first week of classes to fix the names in your mind.
4. Distribute index cards and have students write their name on the card with magic marker and tape it to the front of their desk if the seating arrangement allows or

make it into a place card.

All these methods work with small enrollments but have a disadvantage - they use class time. Some faculty have other ways to learn names especially in large classes

### **Methods for large classes**

1. On the first day ask students to provide you with photos (labeled with their names) by the beginning of the second week of class. Review these until you have learned the names. Soon you will be able to identify your students. If you return them at the end of the course they can be used by other teachers using this same technique. Alternatively, take Polaroid pictures of small groups of students and have them write their names under their picture.
2. Tell students to select a seat for the course. Once class enrollment is stable, make a seating chart. If you tell them the purpose is to learn their names they will likely comply.
3. Combine procedures one and two - have a seating chart with photos. It will allow you also to monitor attendance and check to see if there is a problem. By reaching out in this way you show that you care about the students as an individual.
4. In the first few minutes of class record your students on videotape giving their name, and any other information you wish to know about them. View the tape until you learn the names. The CTE (*Now the UCTL*) will provide the camera and operator on a first-come- first served basis.

*Have each student write a personal obituary, including what they would want remembered about them.*



## Teaching Tips I: the First Day of Class

### Get to Know your Students' Attitudes and Abilities

The more you know about your students the more you can direct your teaching to their capabilities, preconceptions, and interests. Here are some ideas for collecting this information.

- ["The First Day of Class"](#)
- [Get to Know your Students](#)
- [Introductions](#)
- [Bibliography](#)

#### Student Biographies

On the first day of class, give each student an index card and ask them to write their names, local addresses, phone numbers, high schools, majors, etc. Then ask them to write about their interest in this course and other sources or life experiences they have had which relate to the subject matter of the course. You might also ask them who their heroes or heroines are, what hobbies they enjoy, and skills and talents of which they are especially proud. In asking for personal information, emphasize that the students are not required to reveal anything they do not feel comfortable sharing.

Once you have collected these index cards, they can be used in different ways. First, they can give you some idea of the interests and prior knowledge which students bring to the course. Using this information, you can improve your presentation of material so that you neither bore the more knowledgeable students nor completely confuse or lose the less knowledgeable students in the class. Second, you can enhance the quality of student-teacher interactions if you review a student's card just prior to a scheduled appointment. Third, the names, the local addresses, and local phone numbers can be copied and distributed to all members of the class to help students locate

each other if they need to miss class, need help with the course, or want to study together. Remember to ask students if they want to be included on the list before compiling it.

*Give a research assignment on the first day of class. Have your students go to the library and find out what happened locally, state-wide, and nationally on the day they were born.*

### **Short Essays**

Another method which can be beneficial to you and your students is an ungraded short essay written on the first day of class. If well conceived, short essays can reveal several important student characteristics, including perception, knowledge, attitudes about the subject, analytical and conceptual skills and general writing ability. For example, if you are teaching a course in the sciences, ask students to write about the questions and problems that science seeks to answer. If you are teaching a course on art history, show a slide of a lesser known work and ask students to identify and describe the style, symbolism and period of the work. If you are teaching about a foreign country, ask students to write about their perceptions and beliefs about that country. Reading their essays will help you understand what preconceptions, attitudes and prior knowledge students have about the subject matter and will help you identify themes that you may want to emphasize as you teach the course.

On the last day of class, repeat the essay exactly. When they have finished return the first essay and ask them to compare their answers. This will give them concrete evidence of how their thinking may or may not have changed as a result of the course. You can collect the papers and compare them yourself, to discover how much your course contributed to your

students' intellectual development.

### **Group Learning Activities**

Ask students to break into small groups, introduce themselves to each other and then have the group members do a short activity. A literature teacher may give each member of a group a different line of a short poem and ask them to assemble the poem or a history teacher may ask each small group to come up with 10 most important events covered by the course material. Groups can report back to the class and the results placed on the board and discussed.

### **Diagnostic Tests**

Designing and administering a non-graded diagnostic test is another method you can use to gauge student's knowledge, perceptions, and ideas about the course. The questions might cover the major themes you will address during the source. You should explain to the students that the purpose of the test is to help you present course materials effectively. The more you know about your students' knowledge or understanding of the subject matter, the easier it will be to focus on what you need to teach them. Many of the questions asked in the diagnostic exam may be used as questions on the mid-term and final exams. This enables you and the students to compare their knowledge at various points in the course. You will have a basis for judging how much each student gained by participating in the course (even though you may not wish to use this criterion in assigning grades).

### **Introductions**



Teaching Tips I: the First Day of Class

## Bibliography

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- [Get to Know your Students](#)
- [Get to Know your Students' Attitudes and Abilities](#)
- [Introductions](#)

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## Teaching Tips II: 101 Things You Can Do The First Four Weeks of Class

- [1-21: Helping Students Know they are Back in School](#)
- [22-29: Directing Students' Attention](#)
- [30-49: Challenging Students](#)
- [50-68: Providing Support](#)
- [69-91: Encouraging Active Learning](#)
- [92-100: Building Community](#)
- [101: Feedback on Teaching](#)

Adapted from an article by Joyce Povlacs Lunde

Teaching and Learning Center, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

UCTL Number 2 August 1998

### Introduction

Beginnings are important. Whether you are teaching a large introductory course for freshmen or an advanced course for majors, it makes good sense to start the semester off well. Students decide very early whether they like the course, its contents, the teacher, and their fellow students.

Here are some ideas to help you create the best possible environment for learning early in the course. The first four weeks of a course are especially important, studies say, in retaining capable students. Remember, even after the syllabus is fixed you can usually make adjustments.

These ideas may:

- help students make the transition from high school or summer activities to college;
- direct students' attention to the immediate situation for learning;
- spark intellectual curiosity;
- help students learn the unique aspects of your discipline;
- encourage the students' active involvement in learning;
- build a sense of community in the classroom.



## Helping Students Know they are Back in School

- ["101 Things"](#)
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1. Hit the ground running on the first day of class with substantial content.
  2. Take attendance: role call, sign in, seating chart.
  3. Introduce teaching assistants by a short presentation or self-introduction.
  4. Hand out syllabus - informative and user-friendly.
  5. Give an assignment on the first day to be collected at the next class.
  6. Start experiments in the first lab.
  7. Identify good lab practice: procedures, equipment, clean up, maintenance, safety, etc.
  8. Give a learning style inventory to help students find out about themselves.
  9. Direct students to the appropriate services if they need help on basic skills.
  10. Have a student who has taken the course explain how to succeed in the course
  11. Tell students how much time they will need to study for this course.
  12. Hand out supplemental study aids: library use, study tips, readings, or exercises.
  13. Explain how to study for the kind of tests you give.
  14. Hand out your ground rules regarding absence, late work, testing procedures, grading, and general decorum, and maintain these.
  15. Announce office hours (in person and electronic) frequently and hold them without fail.
  16. Show students how to take notes and learn effectively in large classes
  17. Give sample test questions and

answers.

18. Explain the difference between collaboration and academic dishonesty; be clear when collaboration is wanted and when it is forbidden.
19. Seek out a different student each day and get to know something about her or him.
20. Ask students to write about what important things are currently going on in their lives.
21. Find out about students' jobs; if they are working, how many hours a week, and what kind of jobs they hold.

[22-29: Directing Students' Attention](#)



## Directing Students' Attention

- ["101 Things"](#)
  - [1-21: Helping Students Know they are Back in School](#)
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22. Greet students at the door when they enter the classroom.
  23. Start the class on time.
  24. Make a grand stage entrance to hush a large class and gain attention.
  25. Give a pre-test on the day's topic.
  26. Start with a puzzle, question, paradox, picture, or cartoon to focus on the day's topic.
  27. List questions students have at the beginning of the class on the board and see if they are answered by the end of class.
  28. Have students list what they think the important issues or key points of the day's lecture will be.
  29. Ask the person who is reading the newspaper what is in the news today.

[30-49: Challenging Students](#)



## Challenging Students

- ["101 Things"](#)
  - [1-21: Helping Students Know they are Back in School](#)
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30. Have students write out their expectations and their learning goals for the course.
  31. Use variety in methods of presentation every class meeting.
  32. Stage a figurative "coffee break" about twenty minutes into the hour; tell an anecdote, invite students to put down pens and pencils, refer to a current event, shift media.
  33. Incorporate community resources: plays, concerts, etc.
  34. Show a film in a novel way: stop it for discussion, show a few frames only, anticipate ending, hand out a viewing or critique sheet, play and replay parts.
  35. Share your philosophy of teaching with your students.
  36. Form a student panel to present alternative views of the same concept.
  37. Stage a change-your-mind debate, with students moving to different parts of the classroom to signal change in opinion during the discussion.
  38. Conduct a "living" demographic survey by having students move to different parts of the classroom: size of high school, rural vs. urban, consumer preferences.
  39. Tell about your current research interests and how you got there from your own beginnings in the discipline.
  40. Conduct a role-play to make a point or to lay out issues.
  41. Let your students assume the role of a professional in your discipline: philosopher, literary critic, biologist, agronomist, political scientist, or engineer.
  42. Conduct idea-generating, brainstorming sessions to expand horizons.

43. Give students two alternative views and ask them to compare and contrast.
44. Distribute a list of the unsolved problems, dilemmas, or great questions in your discipline and invite students to claim one as their own to investigate.
45. Ask students what books they read over summer.
46. Ask students what current event on this subject may affect their future.
47. Let your students see the enthusiasm you have for your subject and your love of learning.
48. Take students with you to hear guest speakers or special programs on campus.
49. Plan a "scholar-gypsy" lesson or unit which shows students the excitement of discovery in your discipline.

[50-91: Providing Support](#)



## Providing Support

- ["101 Things"](#)
  - [1-21: Helping Students Know they are Back in School](#)
  - [22-29: Directing Students' Attention](#)
  - [30-49: Challenging Students](#)
  - [69-91: Encouraging Active Learning](#)
  - [92-100: Building Community](#)
  - [101: Feedback on Teaching](#)
50. Collect students' current phone numbers because you may need to reach them.
  51. Check out absentees. Call or write a personal note.
  52. Diagnose pre-requisite learning using a pre-test and give them quick feedback.
  53. Hand out study questions or study guides.
  54. Be redundant. Students should hear, read, or see key material at least three times.
  55. Allow students to demonstrate progress in learning: summary quiz over the day's work, a written reaction to the day's material.
  56. Use non-graded feedback to let students know how they are doing: post answers to ungraded quizzes and problem sets, exercises in class, oral feedback.
  57. Reward behavior you want: praise, stars, honor roll, personal note.
  58. Use a light touch: smile, tell a good joke, and break test anxiety with a sympathetic comment.
  59. Organize. Give visible structure by posting the day's "menu" on chalkboard or overhead.
  60. Use multiple media: multimedia, overhead, slides, film, videotape, audiotape, models, etc.
  61. Use multiple examples, in multiple media, to illustrate key points and important concepts.
  62. Make appointments with all students (individually or in small groups).
  63. Hand out wallet-sized telephone cards important telephone numbers listed: office, department, resource centers, teaching assistant, lab.

64. Print all important course dates on a card that can be handed out and taped to a mirror.
65. Eavesdrop on students before or after class and join their conversation about course topics.
66. Maintain an open updated lab grade book so students can check their progress.
67. Tell students what they need to do to receive an "A" in your course.
68. Stop the world to find out what your students are thinking, feeling, and doing in their everyday lives.



## Encouraging Active Learning

- ["101 Things"](#)
  - [1-21: Helping Students Know they are Back in School](#)
  - [22-29: Directing Students' Attention](#)
  - [30-49: Challenging Students](#)
  - [50-68: Providing Support](#)
  - [92-100: Building Community](#)
  - [101: Feedback on Teaching](#)
69. Have students write something.
  70. Have students write what they learned in class and turn it in.
  71. Have students keep three-week three-times-a-week journals in which they comment, ask questions, and answer questions about course topics.
  72. Invite students to critique each other's essays or short answers for readability or content.
  73. Invite students to ask questions and wait for the response.
  74. Probe students' responses to questions and their comments.
  75. Put students into pairs or "learning cells" to quiz each other over material for the day.
  76. Give students an opportunity to voice opinions about the subject matter.
  77. Have students apply subject matter to solve real problems.
  78. Give students red, yellow, and green cards (made of poster board) and periodically call for a vote on an issue by asking for a simultaneous show of cards.
  79. Roam the aisles of a large classroom and carry on running conversations with students as they work on course problems (a portable microphone helps).
  80. Ask a question directed to one student and wait for an answer.
  81. Place a suggestion box in the rear of the room and encourage students to make written comments every time the class meets.
  82. Do oral, show-of-hands, multiple choice tests for summary, review, and instant feedback.
  83. Use task groups to accomplish specific objectives.

84. Grade quizzes and exercises in class as a learning tool.
85. Give students plenty of opportunity for practice before a major test.
86. Give a test early in the semester and return it graded in the next class meeting.
87. Have students write questions on index cards to be collected and answered the next class.
88. Make collaborative assignments for several students to work on together.
89. Assign written paraphrases and summaries of difficult reading.
90. Give students a take-home problem relating to the day's lecture.
91. Encourage students to bring relevant news items to class and post these on a bulletin board

[92-100: Building Community](#)



## Building Community

- ["101 Things"](#)
  - [1-21: Helping Students Know they are Back in School](#)
  - [22-29: Directing Students' Attention](#)
  - [30-49: Challenging Students](#)
  - [50-68: Providing Support](#)
  - [69-91: Encouraging Active Learning](#)
  - [101: Feedback on Teaching](#)
92. Learn names.
  93. Set up a buddy system so students can contact each other about coursework.
  94. Find out about your students via questions on an index card.
  95. Take pictures of students (snapshots in small groups) and post in classroom, office or lab.
  96. Arrange helping trios of students to assist each other in learning.
  97. Form small groups for getting acquainted; mix and form new groups several times.
  98. Assign a team project early in the semester and provide time to assemble the team.
  99. Help students form study groups to operate outside the classroom.
  100. Solicit suggestions from students for outside resources and guest speakers.

### [The 101st Thing](#)



## Feedback on Teaching

101. Gather student feedback in the first four weeks of the semester to improve teaching and learning.

- ["101 Things"](#)
- [1-21: Helping Students Know they are Back in School](#)
- [22-29: Directing Students' Attention](#)
- [30-49: Challenging Students](#)
- [50-68: Providing Support](#)
- [69-91: Encouraging Active Learning](#)
- [92-100: Building Community](#)

## In the Trenches:

### Lessons learned by teachers converting their courses to semesters

- ["How I Spent My Summer Vacation"](#)
- [HIS 101 - Western Civilization](#)
- [Semester Course Revision and Creation](#)
- [MKT 452/552 Sales Management, MBA 501 Environment of Business, and MBA 660 Integrated capstone](#)



#### Semester Conversion: "How I Spent My Summer Vacation"

Much of my time this past two months has been given to the transfer of a series of five scripted slide lectures to digital format for individual student use beginning in the Fall as part of my reorganized course in Japanese history. Countless hours have been devoted to image preparation, script revision and format design issues as I work feverishly towards a mid-August deadline so that the final product can be transferred to CD-ROM before the start of the semester. I am very much aware of the effort involved in the semester conversion process as a result, believe me!

Actually my planning for the conversion of my courses on Chinese and Japanese history began at least eighteen months ago when I submitted a set of revamped syllabi for consideration by the Curriculum Committee within the Department of History. This 1996 rethinking of my approach to teaching, however, arose as much from a growing realization that my CSU students were finding the centuries-long pageant of the Chinese and Japanese past increasingly irrelevant to what they felt they might need to know about these two major international powers -- an observation just as true, I might add, for Chinese and Japanese students exploring their own national histories! I thereupon decided to jettison my two courses exploring the traditional histories of these two cultures and concentrate more on the "modern" chronology of events since 1600. I elected to do so under the assumption that the first offerings of these reconstituted courses would take place under the semester system; hence my early concern with our semester conversion process.

The Department had already determined by that time that we would adhere to a four semester credit course model which I knew would allow me -- at least theoretically -- to add fifty percent more content to each course offering. This consideration was built into each of the new proposed course syllabi. I also realized I would have very little trouble adding topics to the list of material to cover -- skimming along at the rate of six hundred years per lecture hour had long plagued my approach to Chinese history, for example, and I looked forward to a slower pace and more in-depth content coverage.

However, I had another set of goals in mind, more strictly pedagogical in nature. The additional five weeks of instruction provided under semesters would not be given over entirely to expanding content (student surveys had already indicated a greater desire for coverage as opposed to depth -- in fact, they

expressed the desire to know "less about more" quite vociferously!) I have always emphasized "process" over "goals" in my classroom experience, attempting to inculcate in students an appreciation for "how to learn" over content mastery per se. Only a few would ever make direct use of their knowledge of Chinese and / or Japanese history; but most, I hoped, might continue to learn after completing their degree programs, and so I chose to stress how one might go about that in a conscious and constructive manner. The extra time afforded by the conversion to semesters would allow me to make this process orientation even more explicit. Each course redesign, then, incorporated an expanded consideration of "the basics" -- everything from a review of basic reading, research and writing skills to a more in-depth exploration of essential terms, concepts and terms of analysis. I look forward to spending more time establishing "the context of instruction" on these terms under semesters.

I realized that the longer academic term poses unexpected dangers as well, as I had learned while teaching under semesters in Japan during a sabbatical leave in 1996. Then I had relished the notion that my students would have so much more time to do the required research before beginning to write up their discoveries that I had failed to take into account the inevitable procrastination induced by the thought of a far-off submission deadline. The final essays that term were disastrous, both because I had expected so much more from the added five weeks and because, once the students finally began their projects, so many other courses were clamoring for (last minute) attention that the actual time devoted to my assignments actually decreased from the norm under the quarter system! I have built into my new courses a sequence of deadlines as a result of this experience which I hope will motivate students to engage the course material early and often. In addition, while they will begin the development process later in the term, they will be asked to finish earlier so that time for revisions (if needed) is available, thereby allowing me as well to avoid the inevitable end-of-semester time crunch I had experienced earlier.

One final adjustment was to shift more independent responsibility onto student shoulders for determining how, where and on what they would spend their time pursuing in terms of content possibilities and assignment responsibilities. Student options have increased as a result along with submission possibilities geared to a variety of time schedules and learning styles. Deadlines will become more strictly enforced, but alternatives will be provided for those whom circumstances prevent from meeting them. Students will have the opportunity to determine areas of interest early in the semester, then pursue those interests on a schedule of their own choosing (among available options as set in the course of study). They will have the chance to recover from an unfortunate beginning or to plan against an unforeseen end-of-semester disaster. Effort will be rewarded along with accomplishment within established perimeters. The students themselves will be put in charge of the learning process, provided both the means and the opportunities for achievement demanded by the material.

My four new semester courses -- The History of Japan, Early Modern Japan, Contemporary Japan in Historical Perspective, and Revolutionary Movements in Modern China -- approach the instructional context provided by five added weeks of instruction by adding content, exploring the context of instruction more thoroughly, making explicit attempts to engage students early on in the educational process and expanding student control of the entire educational enterprise. I look forward to implementing this new curriculum beginning this coming academic year -- and to making lots of midcourse corrections along the way as we sail on towards December!

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## Semester Conversion: HIS 101 - Western Civilization

The principle I adopted was that I did not want to increase historical content in a significant way (if I did not talk about it in 10 weeks why it is crucial now?) but do more with what I have done in the past. One recurring criticism I have had from students on the qualitative survey, is that I do not incorporate enough discussion in class. So, I intend to begin to remedy that by scheduling eight class sessions during which the students and I will work as historians and assess historical sources (documents, photographs, maps) that provide information about a particular topic, and try to answer questions about that topic. I have found a great textbook that gives all the information that we need to do this. The different sections in each chapter introduce the problem, discuss methods and sources, provide different kinds of sources, and suggest questions to consider. No answers are provided in the book and the various materials only guide the students in how to approach the topic. I have picked eight of these topics to deal with in class and they all tie in with the lectures. For instance, in the first discussion we will evaluate "the ideal and reality of classical Athens".

Obviously, it will be important for the students to prepare beforehand (or at least some of them), and to achieve that I have tied the writing assignment to these topics as well. All students must do four of them in writing (due before class) with an optional fifth that will allow them to drop one writing grade.

Right now, I imagine dividing the class into groups and giving them questions to answer based on the sources. Then everyone gets together again and the groups present their answers. With any luck we will get arguments about interpretation. If not, I should be prepared to present the controversial view. I also hope to make links between these specific historical topics and more general issues that can relate to the present.

In order to set the tone, I intend to conduct a short, limited version of this exercise during the first day of class. Give the students one document source and one map or photo and a couple of questions and show them how this works.

I have scheduled the discussion sessions after the weekend or after a holiday to increase the chances that students have studied the material. Of course, this is a whole new experience for me as well, and undoubtedly I will have to rethink parts of it, but I am looking forward to experimenting.

On aspect that this approach does not remedy is lack of discussion during regular lectures, but I am going to try to change my style somewhat by incorporating more questions so that students will feel more involved.

Finally I have scheduled two slide shows though I don't call them that in the syllabus (I want everyone to turn up). In the past, I have thrown in a slide show when I have had some extra time (very infrequently in other words!), and students have always enjoyed it beyond not having to take lecture notes for a day. Showing slides also allows me to elaborate in a more informal way about various aspects of society and students spontaneously participate too by making comments and asking questions. Of course, seeing pictures also helps them learn.

With regard to my upper division course, I will add some new material. This course is the Social and Economic History of the 19th century, and as you may imagine, I have not been able to cover everything adequately. However, there is not much brand new material, more an expansion of existing sections. For instance, I will expand my treatment of the industrial revolution (different perspectives), and greatly expand the section on women and work, a topic on which much material has been published lately. This course has always incorporated class discussion because I assign many articles that I expect students to talk about. I have not yet written the syllabus for this course so my response is less detailed here. I do know I also intend to show a film, probably *Germinal*, which will be a wonderful illustration of many of the issues discussed in the course. I have also assigned the book.

*-Anonymous*

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### **Semester Conversion: Semester Course Revision and Creation**

When I returned from my sabbatical in June I decided I would overhaul one of my fall courses - Instructional Design & Development. This course mirrors a course that I taught during the quarter system but the extra weeks mean that I can now cover material that I either never had time to include before or covered in a cursory fashion. I started to systematically examine all of my course materials. At the same time, I began developing two new courses. Needless to say the new courses were much more interesting and the systematic review of Instructional Design & Development became increasingly haphazard and infrequent. As such, I can say little reservation that the first eleven weeks of the semester version of this course will appear very much like the quarter version. I am still evaluating what to include or exclude from the balance of this course.

The two new graduate courses have been fun to develop. One is a computer programming course for teachers. This course required that I refresh my programming skills. As such, a good portion of the summer was spent in front of a computer. If I had a problem with preparing this course it was that I added more and more material that realistically I doubt I have time to cover. Since this course is taught out at LCCC and meets once a week for four hours, I felt it was important to provide adequate variety to maintain student interest. I have organized this class around a established set of 4 activities, reading discussion, lecture, class/group programming project, and programming competency (this last portion is "hands on" programming. The content for this class was reviewed and organized systematically but I plan on mid-course revisions and formative evaluations from the students to insure that I am meeting their needs.

The third course Design & Technology in Education will not be taught until the Spring semester. For this class I have read and organized a substantial reference database. I will use the database to develop my lecture materials and will share the database with the students. I have collected and continue to collect curricular materials developed by previous NSF funded research projects. Some of these materials will be adapted for use with an adult population. In addition, this class will undertake a design / engineering project that could be implemented in a secondary school setting. Since I am not an engineer, I have been in contact with local, regional and national experts on "doable" engineering projects. Some of these engineers have offered their services as content experts and mentors. A decision on which project is most feasible and educational will be made before October. At that time I will begin to collect materials and equipment. This third course is still a work in progress.

*-Anonymous*



### **Semester Conversion: MKT 452/552 Sales Management, MBA 501 Environment of Business, and MBA 660 Integrated capstone**

#### **MKT 452/552 Sales Management**

Under the quarter system we offered two separate classes: 4cr Personal Selling and 4cr Sales Management. In semester conversion we decided to combine these two courses into a single 4cr semester Sales Management course. In the new course I am using the sales management text book originally used in the Sales Management course, but have also added an applied handbook of salesmanship which is published by the American Marketing Assn. My approach will be to have students read the applied handbook first, give a sales presentation in class, and then move into the traditional sales management text.

#### **MBA 501 Environment of Business**

Under the quarter system this was a 4cr required course for all MBA students. Under the semester conversion this is a 3cr course. The only change I am planning is in regards to the number of cases that students must read and discuss.

#### **MBA 660 Integrated capstone**

Under quarter system we had 2 courses, both 4cr (650 & 660) for capstones. In converting to semesters we combined these 2 courses into a single 4cr semester course. I was previously using a number of courses which dealt with team building, and these are now being shifted primarily to the 1cr team dynamics course. I will probably use several small team-building cases in this course as a double check

against the team dynamics course. (Team dynamics offered at beginning of MBA program, while capstone is at the end.) I will also continue to use the company simulation program that we previously used in 660, but it will be reduced to 25% of the new course. Another 25% of the course will be based upon material used by the other instructor in 660, and the remaining 50% of the course will be drawn from the original 650 class. This is a major restructuring of the course, but I think it will improve the outcomes.

*-Anonymous*