Teaching Large Classes

Teaching a large class can be a blast. It's extremely exhilarating. The high energy level created by the number of students demands a high energy level on the part of the instructor. It’s like a small class on steroids. Whatever preparation one does for a small class needs to be exaggerated for a large class in terms of both verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as careful advance planning. What is key is to get the students engaged, and it will take more energy from the instructor to initiate and maintain that level of engagement throughout the semester.

Become familiar with the classroom. Set up the classroom efficiently; consider the following:

- Technology—Try everything out
- Microphone—Get a key if necessary; bring batteries
- Whiteboard—Bring erasable markers
- Lighting—Try different settings

Predetermine policies specific to your large class. Consider the following:

- Technology abuse—Don’t threaten if you cannot police, which is hard to do in a large class
- Academic misconduct, which is more likely to happen in large class
- Emergencies—Getting students out in an orderly fashion, especially if during an exam

In class, deliberately create the desired environment.

- Inform students what they should not do that bothers you (e.g., sleep, talk, eat, pack up belongs before you dismiss class).
- Inform students how to address you. It may be best to err on the formal side (Dr. ______).
- Walk around and talk with students before class to psychologically “shrink” the large class.
- Keep in mind that effective large-classroom teaching is similar to acting:
  - Be automated and exaggerate verbal and nonverbal communication
  - Make eye contact with students
  - Speak loudly (or use a microphone), clearly, and slowly
  - Avoid distracting mannerisms
- Do not stand behind physical objects (table, podium) because they are barriers to effective communication.
- Acknowledge superior performance (e.g., send congratulatory emails to students who have earned A’s on your exams prior to finals.

Plan lectures carefully. You may find that you need to lecture often in a large class. If lectures are done well, students are engaged and are learning; it’s good pedagogy:
- Do not read from prepared notes or from text on the screen (which is boring and disengaging).
- Use PowerPoint/Keynote screens that support what you say with multimedia rather than bulleted text.
- Use a remote mouse so you can move about the room.
- Invite discussion and questions: Ask, “What questions do you have?” instead of “Are there any questions?” The former assumes questions exist and is more likely to encourage students to speak.

**Determine the logistics of administering and grading exams.**

- Prepare clear instructions for your Grading/Course Assistant. See these Sample Grading Instructions (http://icube.uconn.edu/1100GA.mov).
- Prepare clear instructions describing passing out and collecting exams for your Proctors. See these Sample Proctoring Instructions (http://icube.uconn.edu/PSYC1100ProctorInstructions.mov).
- Do not copy/paste from the spreadsheet provided by UITS’s Test Score Scanning Services, because if one student fills out identification information incorrectly (e.g., first name first, instead of last name first; wrong section number; etc.) all the scores below that person’s name will be incorrect.
- Upload grades from the UITS Test Score Scanning Services directly to the HuskyCT Grade Center

**Links:**

- Faculty Focus Special Report: Strategies for Teaching Large Classes (http://www.facultyfocus.com/free-reports/strategies-for-teaching-large-classes/)
- Advice to Instructors (http://icube.uconn.edu/InstructorAdvice.mp4)
- UConnTeachLearn: Large Classroom: David Miller (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toO6s7QaMqk)
- UConnTeachLearn: Large Classroom: Linda Strausbaugh (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcCQH8P4H30)
- UConnTeachLearn: Large Classroom: Ronald Sabatelli (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiOJ7l4ve64)
- Sample Grading Instructions (http://icube.uconn.edu/1100GA.mov).
- Sample Proctoring Instructions (http://icube.uconn.edu/PSYC1100ProctorInstructions.mov).