Center for Teaching Excellence
Teaching Assistant Training

The First Weeks of Classes

Elisabeth Steele Hutchison
August 15, 2017
Elisabeth Steele Hutchison

*Lecturer*
Women’s Studies Program
University of Hawai’i at Mānoa

*Director of Admissions*
William S. Richardson School of Law

esteele@hawaii.edu
WS 320 Women and Madness

(3 credits)
Interdisciplinary critical examination of the relationship between gender and mental health. Psychological research, feminist theory, autobiography, literature, and cinema. Pre: one of 202, 245, PSY 202, or consent. DS
WS 436 Gender, Justice & Law
(3 credits)
Past and present roles of women in American political and legal institutions; common law, judicial decisions, and federal and state legislation affecting women of various socioeconomic groups. Pre: junior standing or consent. A-F only. (Cross-listed as AMST 436 and POLS 436) DS
Video Clip: “The Simpsons”

The Simpsons
“Secrets of a Successful Marriage”
Season 5
Episode 103
Original Airdate: May 19, 1994
“Homer thinks he can get away with anything as a teacher. When he stands before his class, he has absolutely no lesson plan. Class members tell him about their problems, hoping for advice, but Homer has none to offer.”


VideoZer: 3:13-6:45
Don’t be a Homer.
Be prepared. It's infectious.

I’ve found that the first lecture is smoothest when I’ve already prepared the second.

http://www.conelrad.com/images/puppet_prepared.jpg
Prepare answers to frequently asked questions.

• What should I call you?
• Has your book arrived in the bookstore? How much does it cost? Is it available at any other bookstores?
• Is there a copy of the book on reserve at the library? What’s the call number?
• When is the midterm?
• When is the final?
Prepare answers to frequently asked questions.

- Is there extra credit?
- Are we graded on class participation?
- Are there any prerequisites for this class?
- Can I get an A in this class?
- Is this an easy class?
- I can’t get into Laulima. What should I do?
The First Day of Teaching
by Barbara Gross Davis

“Visit the classroom before the first meeting. Locate and figure out how to work the lights, the blinds, and the ventilation. Check any audiovisual equipment (microphone, slide or overhead projector) you will be using. Find out how to obtain help if a bulb burns out or a piece of equipment malfunctions. Get comfortable speaking in the room and see how well your voice carries. Make sure your handwriting on the chalkboard is legible from the back row.”

http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/firstday.html
Dress for success.

The First Day of Class
from the Columbia University
Graduate School of Arts and
Sciences

“When deciding how to dress for
the first day of class, consider
both your comfort and the
message that your style of
dress will communicate to
your students.”

http://www.columbia.edu/cu/tat/
manual/7_performance/firstday.html

http://blogs.catster.com/the-cats-meow-a-cat-and-
kitten-blog/tabby-tuesday-dress-for-
success/2011/01/04/
Get to class early and set the mood.

http://www.pimpcostumes.com/images/products/BlingWatchMoneyMd.jpg
Play music before class begins.

I play upbeat and energetic music while I set up.

Websites

www.pandora.com
www.youtube.com

http://www.sixtiescity.com/Culture/boogaloo.gif
Mark your territory.

Use masking tape to tape off the back rows.

Use portable white and black boards to divide a large lecture hall.

http://www.charlesevansart.com/eshop/images/tape.jpg
Greet students as they enter the classroom.

http://www.manuelbieh.de/kram/blog_highfive.jpg
Don’t forget to smile.

http://www.jimgentil.com/images/store/smile_lg.jpg
Start and end the class on time without fail.

Discourage late arrivals by leading by example.

My students know class is about to begin when I turn off the music.

http://www.timebooth.com/images/daylight-savings-time.jpg
Introduce yourself.

- Share yourself with your students.
- You will want to decide what you want to reveal about yourself before the first day of class.

http://img363.imageshack.us/img363/809/05th eofficeglm2.jpg
Know what kind of impression you want to make.

Please take a moment to think about the impression you would like to make on your students on the first day of class.

Write down three adjectives that you would like your students to describe you.

Share these adjectives with the two people seated closest to you.
THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS: ADVICE AND IDEAS

From the Community
College of Rhode Island

“[C]onsider the approach of one faculty member we know: he feels uncomfortable talking about himself, so he distributes a handout (complete with photo) profiling himself using the same format as the famous ... ads.”

http://www.ccri.edu/pers/Adjunct_HB/first%20day.shtml
Master the name game.

I pass out index cards and ask students to turn them in with a photo, their name, contact info, and a little about themselves. (This helps me semesters later when students ask for letters of recommendations.)

Elisabeth Steele Hutchison
estele@hawaii.edu
Law School 225-7
I am from College Park, MD.
I went to Carleton College and the Yale Law School before moving to Hawai‘i a few years back. This semester, I am teaching PSY/WS 202 Psychology of Gender and co-teaching Cross-Cultural Perspectives of Love and Sex with my mentor, Elaine Hatfield. My cat, Mr. Buford, and I live in Hawaii Kai.
Engage your students.

Quick Before it Dries: Setting The Pattern For Active Participation From Day One
by Steve Adams, University of Minnesota, Duluth

“If you want student participation, involvement, active responses and questions, you must show, model, and exemplify that in the very first part of your very first class meeting.”

Give each student an opportunity to speak.

Ideas for the First Day of Class
from the American Sociological Association

“I asked each person to take 5 minutes to write a sentence or 2 about: (a) their worst nightmare of what this course would be like, (b) their most idealistic hope of what it could be like... I asked them not to sign their work. When the 5 minutes was up, I took the papers, shuffled them, and handed them out randomly. During the rest of the first class, each person read aloud the paper he or she had been given.”

http://www.asanet.org/cs/root/topnav/sociology_depts/ideas_for_the_first_day_of_class
Design your own questionnaire.

Take a moment to think of six things you would most want to know about the students in your class.

Examples

• Why are you taking this class?
• What other classes in this discipline have you taken?

http://www.librarian.net/talks/hla2/questions.jpg
Be clear about your expectations.
Spell out your ground rules in your syllabus.

Here are mine.

We will discuss important, interesting, difficult and sensitive topics. **Respectful disagreement and debate are welcome.** Personal attacks, however, will not be tolerated. Please abide by the following guidelines.

- **Be on time.** Our class time is limited.
- **Be yourself.** The opinions and experiences you share in class will not affect your grade.
- **Listen to each other.** Silence your cell phones.

If at any time you realize that you will not be able to follow these guidelines, please leave the classroom.
Share past student success stories.

Getting Started
by Richard Felder and Rebecca Brent

“Share advice from previous students collected at the end of the last course offering.”

Take a very short break before diving into substantive material.

This will allow students who choose not to stay to sneak out and allow you to catch your breath.

Give a substantive lecture.

- Distribute your syllabus.
- Screen a short film or play an audio clip.
- Give a lecture.
- Lead students in an ice-breaker or in-class exercise.
- Distribute a handout (Most students will not have purchased the textbook yet.).
- Give a homework assignment.
Put these rules into immediate effect.

I don’t accept late work or give make-up exams. I assign homework on the first day of class, grade and return it on the second day of class, and make no exceptions.

http://teachers.misd.k12.wa.us/ims/alarkin/documents/homework_no-excuses.gif
Address and discourage disruptive behaviors.

I talk with students (in private when I can) about sleeping, giggling, ringing cell phones, texting.

http://www.lazysupper.com/images/posts/nophones.jpg
Make yourself available to your students.

1. Be ferocious about reading and responding to students’ e-mail and phone calls.
2. Office hours are sacred.
3. Stick around after class.

http://www.centerline-tech.com/images/illus/home.jpg
Be clear about when you are not available.

- I post my cell phone number, but I only accept student calls between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM on weekdays.
- I use “Out of Office” messages on my e-mail and cell phone when I am unavailable.
Put your students in touch with one another.

On the first day of class, I ask students to exchange contact information with two of their classmates. This facilitates the formulation of study groups and cuts down on the number of “What did I miss?” e-mails and phone calls I receive.

http://www.sizes.com/media/telephone_numbers.htm
Solicit and respond to student input.
Ask for reactions to the first class.

Creating a Positive Learning Environment
From Dr. Pam Benoit, Assistant Dean, University of Missouri Graduate School

“Ask students to write reactions to the first day. This request also sets the tone that you are interested in receiving feedback. This anonymous feedback solicits questions students still need to get answered and what they think went well.”

http://teachandlearn.missouri.edu/guide/chapters/firstday.htm