



How to Make Your Lecture More Engaging and Interactive for Your Students

SPEAKERS

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Tierney King 00:01

This is the Faculty Focus Live podcast sponsored by the Teaching Professor Online Conference where you can join us from the comfort of your own home and transform how you teach and how your students learn. I'm your host, Tierney King. And I'm here to bring you inspiration, energy, and creative strategies that you can utilize in your everyday teaching. Lectures can be boring, without a doubt, but they don't have to be. There are a variety of creative approaches for making your lecture more interactive and interesting for your students, so that they stay tuned in and remember the content you want them to remember. In this episode, we'll talk about how you can start and end your lecture with bookends, how to incorporate lecture wrappers, and different engagement techniques you can try. We'll also cover what a microlecture is and the process of creating one, and then we'll go over effective Q&As to help engage students, buzz groups, and a snowball group activity. To start, Claire Major explains the research behind engaging presentations and how she makes her 8 am to 5 pm course interactive, despite being so long, in her program, How to Use Interactive Lecture as Pedagogy of Engagement.

Claire Howell Major 01:18

Engaging presentations plus active learning methods that help support learning during lectures is what leads to interactive lecturing. But how do you do it? Well, different people do it different ways. But I just wanted to share with you just the kind of idea of what I think about when I do interactive lecturing. And this is overly structured, and the times aren't exactly like they would play out in real time. But it's just to kind of give you an idea. So I think about whenever I start, for example, a 50 minute class, and let me say right off the bat that when I teach in person, they tend to be long classes. So like eight to five on a Saturday, that's 8 am to 5 pm. So I really have to mix it up and keep it moving to keep folks engaged. But I tried to think about it as just a 50 minute class. And I do tend to think in 50 minute sections. So I would start a segment with a bookend and I would end it with a bookend. And the bookend at the start kind of draws people back in. And it asks them to think about what we learned last time, so it activates their schema, so that they are ready for the new information. And then I end it. So an update for your classmate would be something like, "Okay, Sarah, didn't attend class last month. Please write for one minute what Sarah missed, and tell us why that information is important today." And then I would end it with something like a lecture wrapper, where I would ask students to tell me what's the most important thing they'd learned today? Or tell me what was still the most confusing to them. When I give lecture

segments and presentations, I usually do something like guided notes with them, which is incomplete notes. And usually these days, I'm teaching masters or doctoral students. So it's more like a series of questions that help students follow along with what I'm saying. But some people do them much more comprehensive, where they're just blanks to fill in. So I call those overlays because they overlay the presentation, so that it helps students stay focused, and attentive to the information. And then between lecture presentations, I do interleaves, which are moments to give them an opportunity to apply what we've just talked about. So for example, I might ask him to do a one sentence summary, or I might ask them to do an applications card. Okay, so I'm going to take a few minutes and talk about what some of the research tells us about engaging presentations. And hopefully this information will help you structure your own presentations. So before a lecture, the research says very clearly that organizing content helps students learn more. This is probably not a huge surprise to most of you, but there are research findings that support it. So don't go at it simply like this. I had a colleague one time, he was a lovely person. So smart, genuinely well meaning. He would say, however, "My job is to go into class, and to hose them down with knowledge." And he was really so smart, and he had this knowledge that he could share with them. However, you may not be surprised to know, students found that they were just so confused and frustrated and didn't know what was important and what wasn't important and felt like they were just drowning in information. So something you can do instead, one thing I like to do to help me organize my information is sticky note diagrams. And so what I'll do for this, when I think about a lecture, I will take out a pack of sticky notes. And I will write one idea, per note. And I will go until I have exhausted all the ideas that I have with one idea per note. And then I sort these into things. And if there are a few stray notes, I just let them go. And I try to concentrate on what are the main three or five things the big things I want students to take away. Another tip to help you organize information is logical patterns. Students like logical patterns that help them follow the information and helps them understand what you're trying to say. The studies on this show that narrative, or stories are really useful for students, they understand that structure, they know what they're looking for. Some other ones that are pretty common and useful are most important to least important. Chronological if you have something that lends itself to that, or comparison in contrast of different ideas.

Tierney King 07:09

In addition to interactive lecture techniques, Jean Mandernach explains how you can create and implement microlectures. These are narrow and focus lectures that hone in on a topic and help students and yourself stay on target.

Jean Mandernach 07:23

So the first thing that you're going to need to do is list your key concepts. And this is the one that people always laugh, they're like, "Well, I'm going to make the lecture. Don't I know what I'm talking about?" But it's really important that you very clearly list out exactly what you want to talk about. If you don't, you're going to have a tendency to put in too much. Remember, a microlecture needs to be focused, it needs to be narrow, you're trying to stay under three minutes focusing on a single concept. The reality for us faculty, we typically know too much about any given concept. And because we have so much information available to us, once the camera starts rolling, we just start talking. So you want to list those key concepts to make sure you stay on target, that you stay within that one key focus range. The next thing that you really want to focus on is writing your introduction. Students will click and go. Even if it's a microlecture, that's only three minutes. If you haven't caught their attention in the first 15 to

30 seconds, you're going to lose them. And they're going to click out of that video. And even if you had amazing things to say later, they're never going to see them. So you want to take some time and think about what is the introduction going to say? Chances are you don't want to start with "Hi, I'm Dr. Mandernach and today we're going to talk about..." because I'm not even going to have a chance to tell them what I'm going to talk about before they click away and leave. You need to catch their attention. You need to make it interesting engaging. Think about are there prompts you can integrate in that first few seconds? You can hold up a photo, catch their attention, do something that makes them willing to continue watching. Then you also want to think about how am I going to conclude this? Because you need to have them have some active reason to leave that and continue thinking about or interacting with the topic that you're working on. Once you've clearly thought through what am I focusing on? How am I going to catch their attention? And how am I going to send them forward with an active learning strategy? Then you're ready to start thinking about well, how what am I going to do? How am I going to record this information. And I'll talk in a minute about some options that you can do. But keep in mind this isn't about the technology. We don't start with the technology. You have to start with the pedagogy and start with the topic. Once you then know what you're going to record it in, then you have to think about "How am I going to engage them and make them active learners?" This shouldn't be a matter of them becoming a passive recipient of a three minute video. The video should inspire them, it should intrigue them. It should pique their attention so that they're aware; they might leave and interact with an assignment; they might go to a discussion thread; they might go out to the internet to get more information. But you need to very clearly tell them what you expect them to do with that information. And then finally, you have to think about, well, how am I going to share this with them and upload it either to your Learning Management System or to some other external site so the students have a really easy way to interact. Notice here the emphasis is not on the technology. The microlecture utilizes the technology as a means to get your personality, your content, your active engagement out to the students. So what technologies that are available to do that? There are a lot of them. The last list I saw listed over 350, educationally relevant Web 2.0 tools, that's a lot. Here are the ones that I tend to like and that I use a lot in my own teaching, these may or may not meet your needs. But really, you just need to think about what is my goal? What am I trying to do? There are a lot of ways you can interact with your students. VoiceThread offers one easy opportunity that a lot of different schools have access to. But that's not a limitation that you have to go with that particular technology. If you go online and just Google interactive Web 2.0 tools, you're going to see a host of options, and you can look through those to see which meets your need. Screen capture technology is really helpful if you're wanting to demonstrate something on your computer to students. So perhaps you want to show them how to utilize a program or how to utilize a database, you can go ahead and capture your own screen and use that as the means of conveying that information. If I'm going to create a video, the go to for me is YouTube. It's easy. It's a convenient, and it's free. YouTube itself offers a host of different tutorials showing you how to use their software. And perhaps all you want to do is an audio recording. This is a great way to make podcasts, things students can download and listen to on the go. And audacity offers a really easy to use free audio recorder.

Tierney King 12:04

In addition to microlectures, you might use group activities to make lectures more active and engaging. In this program, Meixun Zheng explains how to make your Q&A sessions more engaging, and how to implement buzz groups and a snowball activity for a more meaningful lecture.

Meixun Zheng 12:22

So I would like to spend some time talking about questioning and how you can do q&a effectively in the class to engage students in questioning. It is a very common type of engagement activity that many faculty do in the classroom, but it doesn't always produce the intended or expected outcome. And one of the reasons being that we don't give questions that attention and the time it deserves. So today I would like to share a few tips, practical tips, for questioning for you to consider. First, it really matters a lot. What type of opening questions will you ask? When you ask students questions, we can ask factual recall questions, yes or no questions, true or false questions and that is okay. But remember, it's also important to ask higher level questions like those on Bloom's Taxonomy on a higher level, open-ended questions, they might have more than one correct answer. And the reason being that these types of open-ended questions, it push students to engage in critical thinking, think critically about the content. These types of questions are also more likely to lead to more interactive discussion among the students than questions that only have yes or no answers, right. So think about Bloom's Taxonomy and how you can ask a combination of low-level and high-level thinking questions. Okay, the second tip about questioning, no matter what type of question you ask, always wait a few extra seconds. Before we ask for volunteers, for example, you ask them a question, and you count five seconds 1,2,3,4,5 or even six, seven, before you ask someone in the class to answer your question. And you might have also noticed about in the class, sometimes we ask the question, and if no one volunteers to answer the question immediately, we tend to answer our own questions, right? We tell them the answer. And I think one of the reasons being that we might feel uncomfortable with with moments of silence in the class that follows our question. So I encourage you to practice and get used to these brief moments of silence in the classroom via a few extra seconds for the students before you ask them to answer a question. And this could be very helpful for again, someone asked about how we engage and help students who are second language speakers. So if you give them a few more seconds to process their answer and pause, they have thoughts before you have them answer the question. And those students who are not confident in talking or not confident in the language will have better answers that they can share, because they already process the talking points in their mind. And so they might feel more comfortable answering your question. So they might also be more willing to participate in the class. Okay, buzz groups. So for those of you who might not be familiar with this concept, buzz groups are usually like a small group of four or five students in this small group, and how you can form best groups in the classroom? You have students that are in rows in the class in the lecture right? Now when it's time to form a buzz group, you can ask the two students who sit on the second row to turn around to face the peers who sit behind them, so that four of them will fall in the buzz group, so that they have small group discussion in the best group format. Okay, they don't really need to move around. Although that's great, they don't need to. And you don't have to have your building operations department to rearrange your chairs and tables, in small group format, they can just turn around to face their peers who sit behind them. So this is best group five, basically how it works. And then you can reflect and refine the next time. It can be economic problems, math problems, physical problems, any problem in any subject area. Okay, the last group activity I would like to share is called snowball group. Now, if you think about the word and about what it means, from a language perspective, what does snowball mean? Yes, it grows, right? Yeah, so in the snowball group activities, you can first have students pair up with the knowledge students. So for example, in the think pair share or pair share activity, you have students with each other to form a pair right? Then, after they discuss the topic, or the problem of a case, you

have nearby peers come together with a new perspective about the topic, about the problem that is shared, so that hopefully they will deepen their understanding. When one person has come to a conclusion, then you talk with another peer, then you might have some new insights or new perspective that you developed after you talked in the bigger group. So this is how snowball group works. Okay, think about how you can do that.

Tierney King 17:33

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