Active Learning in Large Classes: Behind the scenes

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In six words, describe a large class. Share with your neighbor. If you like, share with the group.

How would you define a large class?
PLAN FOR THE SESSION

• Briefly introduce active learning
• Share design elements to consider
• Review Waterloo examples
• Reflect on transfer to your course
WHY THE SIX-WORD MEMOIR?
WHAT IS ACTIVE LEARNING?

• Students actively engage in the instruction
  » Interaction with the instructor, peers and/or the content (Moore, 1989)
• Supports the social side of learning (Silberman, 1996)
• Encourages active experimentation (Kolb, 1984)
EXAMPLES FOR LARGE CLASSES

- Team-based learning
- Team debates
- Flipped classrooms
- Clickers/Twitter/Other Technologies
- Think-Pair-Share
Planning a large class activity

Alignment, Context, Roles, Support
ALIGNMENT

Relate the activity to course outcomes

Source: Ellis (2007)
ALIGNMENT EXAMPLE

- Optometry Course (Case Analysis)
  - Focus on developing critical thinking and teamwork skills – essential in health education

- Team-based learning
  (http://www.teambasedlearning.org/)
  - Accountability
  - Preparedness
  - Feedback

Source: Hrynchak (2012)
Factors that influence activity’s design

- Class size
- Required? Elective?
- Classroom design
- Online elements
- Students' expectations
- Other key stakeholders
- Students' background
- Students' discipline (e.g., all majors? majors and non-majors?)
CONTEXT EXAMPLE

• WatPD Program
• Context
  » Required and elective courses for co-op students
  » Students on work terms all over the world
    • Some with unreliable internet access
  » Some courses 1000+ students
    • 1,677 students in PD 2 Winter 2015
  » Various level of engagement
  » Students from all six faculties

Source: Personal discussions with WatPD staff
ROLES

Tasks of the various people involved

- Debate
- Prepare Materials
- Create Marking Scheme
- Laugh
- Start Conversation
- Learn
- Have Fun
- Develop Handouts
- Generate Rubric
- Discuss
- Monitor Discussion
- Question
- Debrief Activity
- Listen
- Talk
- Buy Supplies
- Create Teams
ROLES EXAMPLE

• Team Projects in STAT 231
  » 2 Instructors
  » 461 Students
  » 14.5 Teaching Assistants, 1 Head Teaching Assistant

• TA Role
  » Each TA assigned ~8 teams
  » Met 4 times with each time during term
  » Head TA responsible for scheduling teams and TAs

SUPPORT
Resources needed and their availability

Image Source:
http://independence.cherrycreekschools.org/PublishingImages/Staff%20Pages%20Clip%20Art/Support%20Staff.jpg
SUPPORT EXAMPLE

• Members of the course team
  » Instructors
  » Teaching Assistants
  » Instructional Apprentices
  » Instructional Support Coordinators
  » Co-op students
  » Undergraduate part-time markers
  » Undergraduate TAs
  » WEEF TAs
  » Grad student TA coordinator

Source: Really Large Classes Learning Community discussion in March 2013
LET’S TRY IT!

Applying the framework to your course

What would you need to consider to add a group project to your course?
What did you consider?
BEFORE YOU GO

• What is one insight you gained from the session?
• What one idea could you apply to your teaching?

• *These questions will be asked throughout the day at the conference!*
QUESTIONS?

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SUGGESTED RESOURCES

All are available through TUG library system


• Centre for Teaching Excellence Tip Sheets on Learning Activities [https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/learning-activities](https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/learning-activities)

• *Active Learning in Higher Education*
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REFERENCES


