Go Big or Go Home: Activities for Large Classrooms

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Concerns?
Objective

• To share active learning techniques that work for large classrooms
Activities (1-15 minute) do require advance planning.
Consider: student attention span at 15 minute intervals.
Plan activities for start/end of class, between intervals.
Consider: T.E.C. materials to optimize efficiency.
“One Minute Paper”

- Students take out a sheet of paper
- Instructor provides them with a clear prompt (e.g. specific or open-ended question)
- Students have a set amount of time to reflect/ write down their responses
“Affective Response”

Similar to the one minute paper, but instead you are asking students to report their reactions to some aspect of the course material (i.e. to provide an emotional or evaluative response).
“Simple Quiz”

- Instructor asks a yes/no (or agree/disagree) question
- Students respond with action (e.g. thumbs up/thumbs down, verbal yes/no)
“Think-Pair-Share”

- Students provided with a question, prompt, or problem
- Take a minute to reflect and jot down their response
- Turn to a neighbor to take turns and discuss/share your response/reasoning
“Teach-OK”

- Students pair up and one student is instructed to teach the other student a specific topic from class.
- Can be planned or on-the-spot.
“Note Check”

- Students share lecture notes with a partner.
- Identify differences in each other’s notes to identify learning gaps, review course material, or propose follow-up questions.
Students are given a check-off sheet for each exam's material.

Throughout the semester, students pair up with each other.

They have to explain a specific concept to the other student in order to get their sheet checked off.

The students turn in the sheet before the exam for a participation grade or bonus for the exam.

“Check-Off Sheet”
Time for a BREAK
“Demos”

Prepare a demonstration that requires student interaction in order to introduce a new concept or discuss some aspect of the course material.
“Role Play”

- Prepare a script or prompt for students designed to highlight a course objective or to fuel discussion.

- Have students volunteer to act out the script or prompt (e.g. “reader’s theatre”).
“The trolley problem” is a famous thought experiment in philosophy: There is a runaway trolley train barreling down the railway tracks. Ahead, on the tracks, there are three people tied up and unable to move. The trolley is headed straight for them. You are standing some distance off in the train yard, next to a lever. If you pull this lever, the trolley will switch to a different set of tracks. However, you notice that there is one person on the other set of tracks. You have two options: (1) Do nothing, and the trolley kills the three people on the main track OR (2) Pull the lever, diverting the trolley onto the side track where it will kill the one person. Which is the correct choice?
“Team games”

- Instead of a traditional quiz, prepare a set of close-ended questions (shoot for an odd number)
- Split the class into “teams” (based on room layout)
- Tally team responses as they compete to demonstrate mastery of the material
Closing Remarks

- Include activities in syllabus (e.g. participation grade)
- Consider: classroom props (e.g. class mascot, beach ball)
- Track successes & failures (take risks, have fun!)

Select an activity and jot down a brief description of how you might use to teach a learning objective relevant to your subject area.
Resources

- Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning, (Lang, 2016)
- What the Best College Teachers Do (Bain, 2004)
- Make it Stick: The Science of Successful Learning (Brown, Roedger & McDaniel, 2014)
- Engaging Ideas: The Professional’s Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom (Bean, 2011)
- Mindset: The New Psychology of Success (Dweck, 2006)
- Active & Activity-based learning: http://ableconnect.harvard.edu/
- Pedagogy Unbound: http://www.pedagogyunbound.com
- Chronicle of Higher Education: http://chronicle.com
- Podcast: Teaching in Higher Education: http://teachinginhighered.com/episodes/
- “Active Learning for the College Classroom” http://www.crit.umich.edu/node/772
- “Using Active Learning in the Classroom” http://cet.usc.edu/resources/teaching_learning/docs/Active_Learning_Florida.pdf
- “Active Learning in the Large Class” https://www.itap.purdue.edu/learning/cdm/supporting/Active%20Learning%20in%20the%20Large%20Class.pdf
- “Activities for Large Classes” https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/educational-technologies/all/activities-large-classes
- “Interactive Techniques” http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingAndLearningResources/CourseDesign/Assessment/content/101_Tips.pdf