Go Big or Go Home:
Activities for Large Classrooms

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Objective

- To share active learning techniques that will work in large classroom settings
Instructors typically teach large classes in lecture halls, but active learning requires students to do more than passively listen to an instructor lecture.
Concerns?
Worst Case Scenario?

- 70 + students
- Minimal mobility
- Limited visibility
- Limited time
“One Minute Paper”

- Students are asked to 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
What is one concept/learning objective that you regard as essential knowledge for students in the discipline that you teach? Have you tried (or can you think of) a classroom activity to reinforce student learning of it?
“Affective Response”

Similar to the one minute essay, 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 simple thumbs up/thumbs down (or stand up/sit down)
“Teams”

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

- Students share lecture notes with a partner
- Use discrepancies in each other’s notes to identify learning gaps, review course material, or come up with follow-up questions
Time for a BREAK
“Role Play”

- Prepare a script or prompt for students designed to highlight a course concept or objective.
- Have students volunteer to act out the script/prompt (e.g., 3 D’s of bystander intervention training).
“Reader’s Theatre”

- Instructor selects text relevant to the day’s topic and assigns students in the class to read the text out loud.
- The text may be a short story, a passage, or a collection of statements.
- If appropriate, the student readers may be encouraged to add drama, flair, or humor to their reading (e.g. “the trolley problem”.)
“The trolley problem is a famous thought experiment in philosophy. The general form of the problem is this: There is a runaway trolley train barreling down the railway tracks. Ahead, on the tracks, there are five 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 side track. You have two options: (1) Do nothing, and the trolley kills the five people on the main track OR (2) Pull the lever, diverting the trolley onto the side track where it will kill one person. Which is the correct choice?”
Prepare a demonstration that requires student volunteers in order to introduce/reinforce a course concept/learning objective (e.g. “the trolley problem”)
Think-Pair-Share

Think: Which activity could you see yourself tying in your classroom?
Pair: Turn to your neighbor...(invite a third wheel!)
Share: Take turns discussing your choice and sharing your reasoning (you have two minutes)
Tips

- Thoughtful and clear questions, prompts, and activities require advanced planning (strategic questioning is a very effective tool to optimize student engagement)
- Consider props (e.g. fish bowl, beach ball, class mascot)
- Consider daily/weekly “activity reports”
- Track success and failures
- Don’t be afraid to take risks!
Resources

- “Active Learning in the College Classroom”
- “Active Learning for the College Classroom”
  http://www.crlt.umich.edu/node/772
- “Using Active Learning Instructional Strategies to Create Excitement and Enhance Learning”
- “Using Active Learning in the Classroom”
  http://cet.usc.edu/resources/teaching_leaming/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
- “Ten Ideas for Interactive Teaching”
  http://www.escchoolnews.com/2011/06/06/ten-ideas-for-interactive-teaching/