




Best Practices: Descriptions of Class Time


Last updated: July 2007

Each description contains links (rtf and pdf, or internet) to the entire syllabus from which it was drawn.

Every syllabus in the Project Syllabus database as of Spring 2007 was reviewed by at least two reviewers. The reviewers chose portions from the following syllabi because they were both exceptional and represent a variety of ways to present the information. This document is by no means an exhaustive list of good examples of this component of the syllabus.


Lifespan Developmental Psychology, Janice H. Kennedy, Fall 2003, Georgia Southern University

 <http://www.apadiv2.org/otrp/syllabi/jk03lifespanf.rtf>

 <http://www.apadiv2.org/otrp/syllabi/jk03lifespanf.pdf>

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: The methods utilized in the class will be varied. For example, we will use *lectures* for clarification of text material or introducing new material. We will use *large- and small-group discussion* and *demonstrations* for practice in identifying and applying principles or theories. Occasionally, we will have *guest speakers* who have a unique perspective on some developmental milestone.


Cognitive Psychology, Margaret Matlin, Fall 2005, SUNY Geneseo


 <http://www.apadiv2.org/otrp/syllabi/mm05cognitivef.rtf>

 <http://www.apadiv2.org/otrp/syllabi/mm05cognitivef.pdf>

Because the textbook covers the background information, we will typically not review the same material in class. Instead, we will use class time for supplemental lectures, discussions, demonstrations, active-learning exercises, videos, and so forth. In previous semesters, we have had some lively discussions on topics such as memory-improvement techniques, bilingualism, creativity, and making decisions about important life events. I am hopeful that this semester's class will be equally committed to making this course an active-learning experience

Art, Psychology, and Visual Perception, J. Craig Clarke & Kent N. Kimmel, Spring 2002, Salisbury University

 <http://www.apadiv2.org/otrp/syllabi/jc02specialf.rtf>

 <http://www.apadiv2.org/otrp/syllabi/jc02specialf.pdf>

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction will be provided through a variety of methodologies, including lectures, demonstrations, experiments, discussions, readings and practical classroom problems, as well as a bi-weekly journal, a mid-semester written exam, and a course project. (See METHODS OF EVALUATION.)

Lectures. Formal lectures expand upon and emphasize readings and practical classroom problems, and establish the direction for the classroom activities.


Demonstrations. Demonstrations are given to emphasize the principles of art and psychology, and will focus on the use of concepts, theories, methodologies and techniques.


Experiments. Experiments are conducted to illustrate empirical approaches to understanding and responding to art.

Discussions. Informal discussions are used to emphasize specific topics from lectures, the practical exercises and the demonstrations.

Library Holdings. Required and suggested readings encompass information relevant to specific class topics, and help to establish a critical awareness of art and psychological principles. Readings are available prior to lectures.

Colloquium in Teaching Psychology, Erin E. Hardin, Summer 2004, Texas Tech University

 <http://www.apadiv2.org/otrp/syllabi/eh04practicumf.rtf>

 <http://www.apadiv2.org/otrp/syllabi/eh04practicumf.pdf>

Course Format


As some of you already know, teaching is an exciting and challenging endeavor that can be immensely rewarding. It is hoped that through this seminar, you will (re-)discover your own passion for and style of teaching. To facilitate this, you are expected to be an active participant in the seminar. Many of you already have significant teaching experience to share with your colleagues, and all of you have decades of experience with a variety of teachers from which to draw. Therefore, class sessions will generally consist of discussions and activities, often led by you or your colleagues. Your instructor has designed the course, chosen the weekly topics and readings, and thought carefully about the types of assignments and format that would be best suited to the course goals.

However, the primary responsibility for class discussions (and ultimately the “feel” of the course) rests with the students. The quality of the course will depend very much on the preparation and effort expended by all members of the seminar. Thus, you are expected to have completed all assigned readings prior to the class for which assigned and to come to

class ready to participate fully. In addition to these discussions, we will occasionally have guest lectures, specialized training in the use of teaching-related technology, and brief mini-lecture presentations by students who are not enrolled in the 3-credit version of the course. In addition to the assigned readings, additional resources will be available through the course WebCT site: <http://www.webct.ttu.edu>. Important announcements, supplemental resources, and assignments will be available through WebCT. **Thus, all students are expected to have an active E-Raider account and to access WebCT at least once before each class session.**

Issues in Psychology, Ruth Ault, Spring 2006, Davidson College

 <http://www.apadiv2.org/otrp/syllabi/ra06issuesf.rtf>

 <http://www.apadiv2.org/otrp/syllabi/ra06issuesf.pdf>

Format:

Readings will be assigned on two major topics: theoretical perspectives and ethics, and several, smaller “hot” topics such as memory in forensic contexts, nature-nurture, psychology in the media, sex and race as IVs. Prior to class, you are expected to read the assignments AND ANY OTHER pertinent material you find necessary to enhance your understanding of the topics. You will TYPE ¾-1 page (single-space) responses to discussion questions that should help you to think critically about the readings and to begin to integrate across readings. Written responses to the discussion questions are to be written alone and PLEDGED, but you are encouraged to have rousing conversations with your classmates prior to writing your responses. Spell-checker and grammar-checker are not only permitted, they are encouraged. These responses need to be literate and thoughtful. You will “pass” if I think you’ve made a good-faith effort to answer the question; you will not get credit if I think you’ve dashed off an answer in two minutes.

Two students will be designated discussion leaders for each day. All students, including that day's leaders, are to TYPE two copies of their responses: one for me and one for the discussion leaders. These will be turned into the “basket” on the second floor of Watson [across from Dr Palmer’s office] by noon of the day before class: Monday or Wed. noon. This serves two purposes: it ensures that you have thought about the material and it helps the discussion leaders prepare for their jobs as leader. Leaders will be able to organize class time more effectively if they know how people reacted to the questions. I will return the copy you gave me so you have something to refer to during class. Late papers will NOT be given credit; they will be considered “missed.”

Role of discussion leaders:

Prior to the class meeting, you and your co-leader will collect one copy of the students' response papers. From these, you will organize the day's discussion, deciding what to talk about and in what order. This might be based on what material caused the most diversity of opinion or difficulty, which seem more

likely to generate extended discussion, the order in which they were assigned, your personal favorites, or whatever. To actually begin discussion, you might ask particular class members to summarize their positions or ask them for clarification, elaboration, or evidence for a certain statement. If a particular topic was not handled well in anyone's discussion paper, you might start with asking why the topic was difficult. You are supposed to facilitate discussion, not "tell the right answer." You and your partner should make sure that all students have an opportunity to participate, and you should balance your leadership role with your partner. Do NOT split up the material with one leader solely in charge of one discussion question [Imagine that person might be ill that day.] Everyone is responsible for everything. If at any time you are confused about how to proceed, ask me.

Role of participants and Attendance Policy:

In addition to being prepared for class by reading the assignments and writing the discussion papers, you are obligated to participate in class discussion by offering your point of view, listening actively to the views of your classmates, and seeking clarification from them as needed. Class time will be supportive, not competitive. Obviously, in a class like this, attendance and active participation is critical; therefore, absences and nonparticipation will negatively impact your grade. I understand, however, that there are personal illnesses and family crises that can arise. Therefore, you may miss ONE class without penalty; the second missed class/no meaningful participation will lower your letter grade by 1/2 letter; each additional missed class, by an additional 1/2 letter grade up to the sixth, which will result in failing the class. If you show up for class with a highly contagious illness (e.g., flu, cold), I will ask you not to attend and it will count as an absence, so do NOT drag yourself out of a sick bed – it won't do you any good.