

The First Day of Class Activity

“The first class meeting of any course is more important than many faculty realize. It sets the tone for what is to follow and can greatly influence students’ opinions about the course and the instructor for the remainder of the semester” (Perlman & McCann, 1999, p. 277).

Here’s an interesting activity for the first day of class that Dr. Mary Ellen Weimer has tried and recommends. I would not include the second section that addresses the worst class the students have ever had. Instead, I would focus on the positive experiences. The activity can be used in both face-to-face and online classes.

Here’s what Dr. Weimer wrote:

“Best and Worst Classes – I love this quick and easy activity. On one section of the blackboard I write: “The best class I’ve ever had” and underneath it “What the teacher did” and below that “What the students did.” On another section I write “The worst class I’ve ever had” (well, actually I write, “The class from hell”) and then the same two items beneath. I ask students to share their experiences, without naming the course, department or teacher, and I begin filling in the grid based on what they call out. If there’s a lull or not many comments about what the students did in these classes, I add some descriptors based on my experience with some of my best and worst classes. In 10 minutes or less, two very different class portraits emerge. I move to the best class section of the board and tell students that this is the class I want to teach, but I can’t do it alone. Together we have the power to make this one of those “best class” experiences.”

I would also share my teaching and learning philosophy and how I am absolutely committed to their success. I also would emphasize that every student must be responsible for their learning, that they have to do their part. Then, I would ask students to share what they plan to do to achieve their learning goals and to feel like they succeeded in this class.

References:

Perlman, B., & McCann, L. I. (1999). Student perspectives on the first day of class. *Teaching of Psychology*, 26(4), 277-79.

Weimer, M. (2013). *First day of class activities that create a climate for learning*.

<http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/first-day-of-class-activities-that-create-a-climate-for-learning/>

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