THE AMERICAN CLASSROOM

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OVERVIEW

- Different types of classroom
- Students’ college learning experiences
- Student culture and academic culture
- Communicating in classroom
WHAT IS THE AMERICAN CLASSROOM LIKE?

• Lecture

A diverse student body (i.e. PSY105)

University education consists of four years of study in the U.S.

  Freshman: First year students
  Sophomore: Second year
  Junior: Third year
  Senior: Forth year

Whitman School of Management
WHAT IS THE AMERICAN CLASSROOM LIKE?

- Recitations/Discussions
- A supplement to lectures
- "Safe space"
- Mathematics, the Sciences (Chemistry, Physics, ...), Engineering, Psychology...
- Small in size (< 30)

School of Information Studies
WHAT IS THE AMERICAN CLASSROOM LIKE?

- Labs
- An add-on to lectures
- Hands-on experience
- Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Engineering, Earth Sciences, Visual and Performing Arts...
- Small in size (<30)

Earth Sciences, Paleoclimate/Stable Isotope Clean Chemistry Lab
WHAT IS THE AMERICAN CLASSROOM LIKE?

• Online courses

Online Courses
- Online delivery of course materials
- Communicating with the instructor, classmates or students online in a polite, clear and helpful way
STUDENTS’ COLLEGE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The "learning pyramid"

Source: https://youtu.be/qdKzSq_t8k8
STUDENT CULTURE

Subcultural types (Clark & Trow, 1966)

- **Academic** – drawn to ideas and knowledge—pursue knowledge
- **Vocational** – main purpose is gain skills to get job—pursue degree
- **Collegiate** – main purpose is fellowship and partying—pursue fun
- **Rebel** – engaged with ideas but critically detached—pursue an identity

Most students blend the four subcultural types
ABOUT ACADEMIC CULTURE

Different interpretation on students’ behaviors in class

• Chewing gum
• Eating lunch
• Leaving the classroom to use restroom
• Wearing hats
• Using first name

Work Cited:
ABOUT EMAILING

• Students may not necessarily be familiar with the genre of email in a formal context
  • you may receive emails that read like texts, without a subject line, a salutation or a signature.

• It would be helpful to call attention to this in the first weeks of the semester
  • explain your expectations from an email, and provide students with some resources they can consult

• Students also expect quick responses to their emails
ABOUT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

It would be helpful for you as an ITA to share with students that you come from a different culture, and that English is not your native language, and

- Instead of saying idioms, more formal language works better for ITAs.
- Let them know that you may also ask them for clarifications too.
- Make clear and detailed PowerPoints

Work Cited:
THE UNSPOKEN CUES IN THE CLASSROOM

• Teachers express enthusiasm, warmth, assertiveness, confidence and displeasure through facial expressions, vocal intonation, gestures and use of space.

• Students use smiles, frowns, nodding heads and other cues to tell teachers to slow down, speed up or in some other way modify the delivery of instructional material.

## ASKING QUESTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

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<tr>
<th>Ask</th>
<th>Respond</th>
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<tr>
<td>• To start with a yes/no question</td>
<td>• Wait for students to think and formulate responses;</td>
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<td>• Follow with questions that are direct, clear, and specific.</td>
<td>• Do not interrupt students’ answers;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Do not ask more than one question at once</td>
<td>• Show that you are interested in students’ answers, whether right or wrong;</td>
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<td>• Develop responses that keep students thinking.</td>
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GIVING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS IN CLASSROOM

• Positive Feedback for a Question:

• **Scenario**: TA introduces the definition of postpartum depression, and a student asks, “what makes postpartum depression different from major depression?”

• **Option 1**: "Thanks for bringing that up. The question was, how we can distinguish postpartum depression from major depression. Would anybody like to answer this question?"

Work cited: *Suggestions for Verbal Feedback*. Western University, teaching.uwo.ca/resources/resources_graduate_students/ta_handbook/giving_effective_feedback/index.html.
GIVING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS IN CLASSROOM

• Positive Feedback for an Incorrect Response or Comment:

• **Scenario**: In a Biology class the TA asks: "Who can tell me what distinguishes an animal cell from a plant cell?" A student responds, "Well, I don't think a plant cell has a cell wall" (an incorrect response).

• **Option 1**: "OK, let's back track. Who remembers the characteristics of a plant cell from last week?"

Work cited: *Suggestions for Verbal Feedback*. Western University, teaching.uwo.ca/resources/resources_graduate_students/ta_handbook/giving_effective_feedback/index.html.
ALWAYS REMEMBER: THEY CHOSE *YOU*.

- *You* made it here for a reason!
- Although our jobs as TAs is all about the students, *YOU* are here primarily to get your degree.
- Put your work first, but don’t let your students down.
- *You* will do great!
ANY COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?

We’re here for you!

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