



Teaching Large Classes

Teaching a large class is an opportunity to leverage (more) students as key stakeholders in the learning process, to adapt or innovate your instructional practices, and to enrich and build robust community.

Continue reading for large class teaching tips related to different aspects of your teaching.

*To have a successful large class, all you need to do is **ACT**:*

*Focus on the large class **Advantage**, Recognize the **Challenges**, and Identify **Teaching Tips** that will work best in your context.*

SYLLABUS AND COURSE POLICIES

Advantage: Opportunity to create clear policies that answer most student questions and address potential issues before the course begins.

Challenge: Creating policies that make sense for a wide variety of students.

Teaching Tips:

- Ask a TA or past student for advice on how to make your syllabus easier to read and understand.
- Use a personal tone (e.g., use "you" and "I") to break down barriers and increase belonging.
- Share your (and your TA's) availability and the best methods of communication with you.
- Create a FAQ page in eLC to answer common course policy and syllabus questions.
- Include a link in your syllabus to survey students about their interests, motivations, and goals for learning. Use the results to inform your course policies.

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

Advantage: Diverse perspectives in the classroom can expand and enrich student learning.

Challenge: Difficult to engage all students during class time, often due to low motivation to attend, increased ease of distraction, lack of comfort talking in a large group, etc.

Teaching Tips:

- Provide multiple means for student engagement with the material (videos, discussion, etc.).
 - Incorporate [active learning](#) to engage all students and deepen connections with content.
 - Use tools like [Perusal](#) and [Top Hat](#) for technology-mediated interaction.
 - Direct student focus by sharing learning outcomes at the beginning of class.
 - Invite students to raise questions anonymously (e.g., parking lot, discussion board in eLC). Be encouraging with student contributions during class to increase comfort level to participate.
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ASSESSMENTS & GRADING

Advantage: More data about student learning, areas of confusion, etc.

Challenge: Difficult to effectively grade student work efficiently.

Teaching Tips:

- Determine where students need to receive timely, nuanced feedback from you vs. discrete, corrective feedback from automated sources.
- Use auto-graded eLC quizzes for low-stakes, formative assessment.
- Use a student response system to gauge student comprehension across the class.
- Use [group assignments](#) and [peer review](#).
- Design and use [rubrics](#).

CREATING COMMUNITY

Advantage: More students means more peers in social and learning networks.

Challenge: Difficult for students to be known as individuals.

Teaching Tips:

- Ask students to make paper name tents or share their name each time they participate. Use their names.
- [Co-create community norms](#) with your students and amend your syllabus so that students have a written record of what was established.
- Tell your students about yourself.
- Create student neighborhoods, interest groups, or zones to make the classroom feel smaller and friendlier. Bonus: allow students to create their group name!
- Move around the classroom so that you can engage and interact with different students to help build relationships and connections.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- ✓ [Build community in large classes](#) (Cornell University)
- ✓ [Comprehensive resource for teaching large enrollment courses](#) (The Ohio State University)
- ✓ [Incorporating active learning in large classes](#) (UT Austin)
- ✓ [Large class teaching resources including working with TAs](#) (Vanderbilt University)
- ✓ [Make a larger class feel small](#) (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)
- ✓ [Research on why to make large classes feel small](#) (Cooper & Robinson, 2000)
- ✓ [STEM-focused teaching strategies in large classes](#) (Allen & Tanner, 2017)
- ✓ [Student perspectives on large classes](#) (UNC Charlotte)