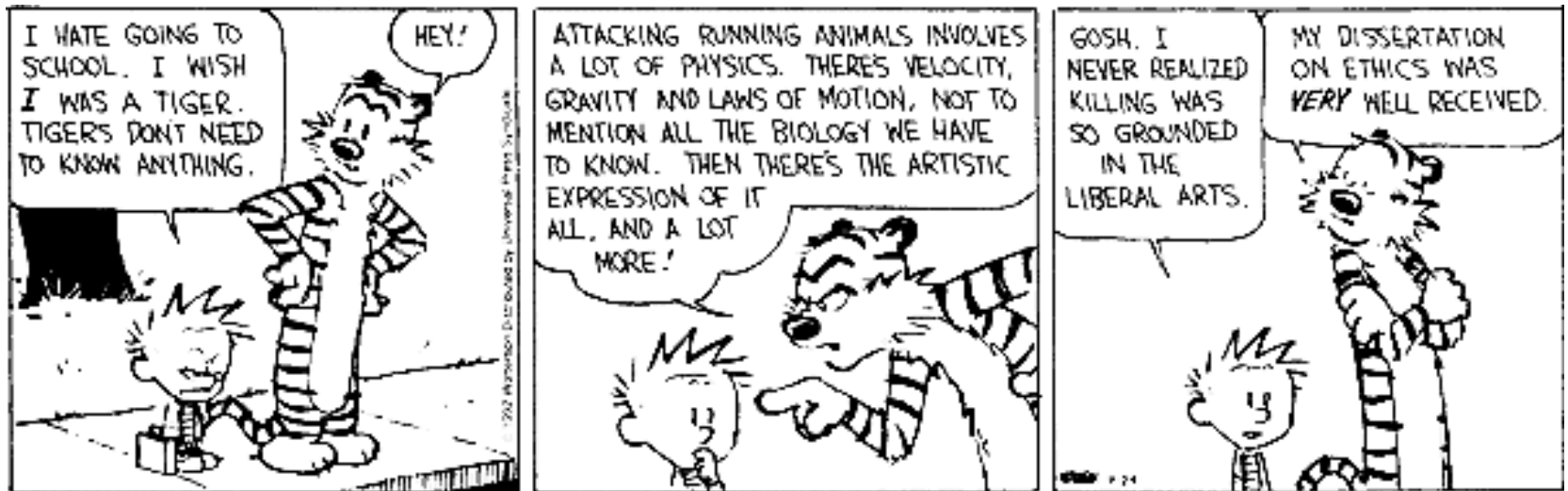


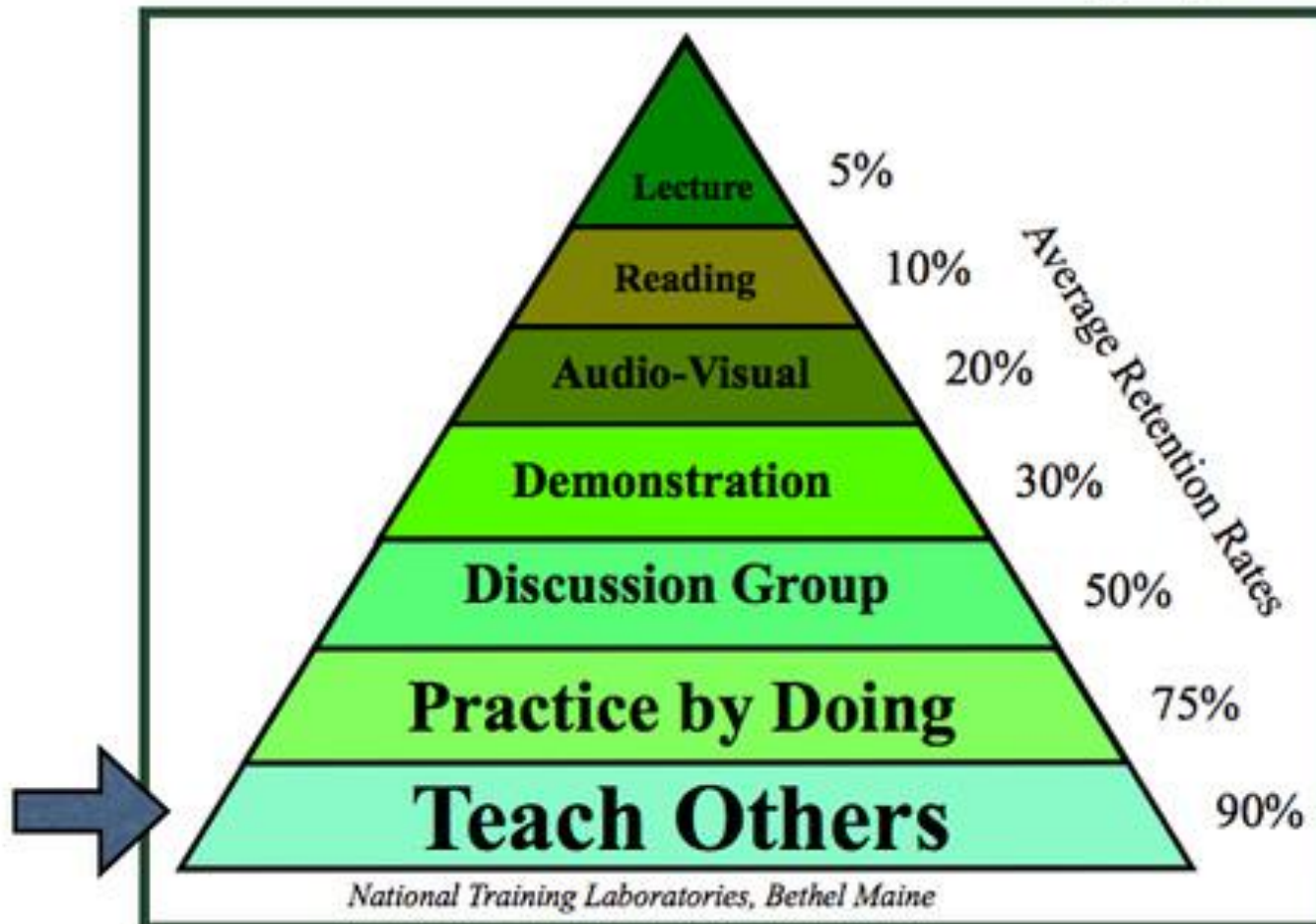
The Learning-Centered Syllabus

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The Learning Pyramid



Fashionable Terms to Deal With:

Intentional Learning

Student-empowered Learning

Active Learning

Reflective Learning

How do these aspects of learning show up in our courses and syllabi?

What is a Learning-Centered Syllabus?

“A learning-centered syllabus requires that you shift from what you, the instructor, are going to cover in your course to a concern for what information and tools you can provide for your students to promote learning and intellectual development”

R. M. Diamond, “Forward” in
J. Grunert, *The Course Syllabus*

An effective learning-centered syllabus should accomplish certain basic goals:

- Acquaint students with course logistics
(Nuts and Bolts)
- Establish standards and procedures for evaluation
(Tests, homework, papers, grading policies, etc.)
- Establish pattern of communication between student and instructor
(Office hours, email, website information, etc.)

This is a standard old-fashioned syllabus!

An effective learning-centered syllabus should also:

- Provide a clear statement of intended goals and student outcomes
(What is your vision for what your students will know and be able to do by the end of the semester?)
- Outline of the instructor's teaching philosophy
(Why do you do what you do in class? What can the students expect from you both in and out of the classroom?)
- Define student responsibilities
(How will the students take responsibility for their own learning?)
- Define instructor's role and responsibility to students
(How will you support your students in their learning?)

This is the first opportunity your students have to get to know you and get off on a good foot in your course.

UNBW 101
Introduction to Underwater Basket Weaving I
Fall 2011

Instructor: Dr. Esther Williams

Office: Elf Parlor 114

Office Hours: Wednesdays 8 a.m. – 8:15 a.m., or by appointment

Phone: x6666

Textbook: S. Smith, *Underwater Basket Weaving for Scientists and Engineers*, 8th Ed., Pearson.

Course description: Introduces science students to making baskets in fresh water lakes, public pools, and coastal waters.

Homework: Will be collected weekly.

Tests: There will be three tests, dates to be announced.

Paper: Students will write a final research paper.

Final Exam: There will be a final exam as scheduled by the Registrar.

Grading:

3 Tests: 15% each

Homework: 20%

Final paper: 15%

Final exam: 20%

Important Components

- Course Information
- Instructor information
- Readings
- Course goals and student learning outcomes
- Instructional methods, teaching philosophy
- Course calendar
- Course policies
- Grading criteria and standards
- A listing of all course assignments
- Support services

Important Components

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Course goals and student learning outcomes

- This is where you let the students know what your vision for them is.
- You then enable them to own that vision and thus take the course seriously as something that will have long-term benefits.

Writing effective outcomes is no small task, and worthy of its own workshop!

If you are new to outcomes and are teaching a Core course, start with listing the Core outcomes in your syllabus and how you plan to assess those outcomes.

Instructional methods

- If you are going to try some innovative activities that the students may not be familiar with, an explanation of what you plan to do and why will get your students working with you to make the activities work.

Important Components

- Course Information
- Instructor information
- Readings
- Course goals and student learning outcomes
- Instructional methods, teaching philosophy
- **Course policies**
- **Grading criteria and standards**
- Course calendar
- A listing of all course assignments
- Support services

*Students who understand well what you expect from them
are more likely to live up to those expectations*

Important Components

- Course Information
- Instructor information
- Readings
- Course goals and student learning outcomes
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- Course policies
- Grading criteria and standards
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Students who know where you're going in the course participate more!

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What does Dr. Williams need to put in?

Bottom Line:

- Dr. Williams needs to give her students vision.
- They want to see where this subject will fit in their lives.
- They want to know that she respects them enough to trust them to take on their own learning.
- They want to know what she expects from them and how they will know if they have met her expectations.

What Dr. Williams will get:

- Structure! Because she did the hard work before the semester started, she does not have to fly by the seat of her pants during the busy semester.
- Students will be mentally prepared if she assigns something out of the ordinary. She will have less explaining to do.
- She will get a higher level of protection from grade complaints.
- Love. Students who feel respected and part of a learning team return the favor.

Tips for Implementation

- Start crafting a course syllabus early (2-3 months before classes begin).
- View the activity as a process:
 - make time to explore ideas
 - take time to draft statements
 - engage in big- and small-picture revision
 - get peer feedback
 - edit carefully
 - publish in advance of final due date
- Revise the document whenever needed to support students and address their concerns.
- View the document as a “living,” “dynamic” entity; therefore revisit it fully before you use it again.
- Spend time (throughout the semester) focusing your students’ attention on the course syllabus.
- Make the syllabus available to students in multiple formats (handouts, course packets, websites, etc.)

Further Information

- MCLA Syllabus Template
<http://campus.mcla.edu/uploads/textWidget/2389.00035/documents/MCLASyllabusTemplate.pdf>
- Learning-Centered Syllabi Workshop
<http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/syllabi.html>
- Reviewing a Syllabus
<http://sunconference.utep.edu/CETaL/resources/portfolios/syllabus.htm>
- A self-guided tour of designing a syllabus
<http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/cet/lcs/>
- One professor's experiences with syllabus development
<http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2006/04/21/wilson>
- Example of online learning-centered syllabus:
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/syllabi/Johnson/johnson.html>