

A PROJECT OF THE UC BERKELEY GSI TEACHING & RESOURCE CENTER

How Students Learn

WITH SPONSORSHIP FROM THE TEAGLE FOUNDATION'S
GRADUATE STUDENT TEACHING IN THE ARTS & SCIENCES INITIATIVE

Designing Activities that Enhance Student Learning

Please use this form to describe a teaching activity that you have modified or developed (or will modify or develop) in response to the working group sessions.

Name: Diana Greenwold (GSI) and Margaretta Lovell (Faculty)

Role (*circle one*): Faculty Member and Graduate Student/GSI

Home Department(s): History of Art

Course(s) in which you would use this teaching activity: HA 185A “Art, Architecture, and Design in the United States”

Activity Title: Mid-term Exam Review Session

Description:

Please give a short synopsis of the activity and its learning goals, maximum 100 words.

This course is comprised of three hours of lecture each week (taught by M. Lovell), supplemented by one hour of section (taught in small groups by D. Greenwold). We decided that, as one section activity in this course designed to prepare students for the mid-term, the students in each section will be divided into two teams. Going back and forth between teams, the GSI showed each group images similar to the “unknowns” (images of objects they had not seen in class or reading) that would appear on the mid-term exam and ask them to identify the slide and explain its significance. Students conferred among their group members before answering it. If one team got a portion of the question wrong, the other team got a chance to “steal.” Each member of the winner team received a small prize. To prepare for the more complex high-value essay questions, these teams then brainstormed potential essay questions, and finally each section came together as a class to select one question and collectively formulate an outline that would answer the question.

If this is an activity you have used in the past but now will modify in response to the Working Group sessions, please describe the activity as you previously conducted it:

Previous exam prep sections I have conducted did not include the group competition element. I simply brought in images and called on individual students to answer sample questions I had prepared.

Describe the changes you made or will make to the activity and the reasoning behind these changes.

Professor Margaretta Lovell and I conferred and agreed to add the element of competition to the exam prep so students could work together to combine their knowledge to provide the best and most complete answers. Each student could learn from his or her peers' various strengths in answering these questions. The exercise also introduced an element of fun into the section to dispel some of the anxiety surrounding the test.

Which session(s) of the Working Group influenced the changes you made or will make to this activity? How so?

Daniella Kaufer's lecture on the positive effect of moderate stress and classroom variety as both helpful to students' learning guided our decision to use the game-show format for this exercise. Enlivened by the energy of competition, my students actively participated in the session and helped each other formulate answers to help their team win. Professor Kaufer's suggestion that we provide frequent breaks for students also prompted my decision to turn from the game to a group discussion for the last part of class, which gave the students the opportunity to get up, reorganize the classroom chairs, and reposition themselves.

How will you assess the effectiveness of this activity in enhancing student learning?

I can include a section on the students' evaluation asking students whether or not they felt they benefited from having the study session run as a game and how effectively they thought the activity combined with discussion of essay topics prepared them for the format and the content of the exam.

If this is a new activity developed in response to the Working Group sessions, please describe the activity:

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Which session(s) of the Working Group influenced your development of this activity? How so?

The activity employed aspects of Professor Rosemary Joyce's talk, which urged us to provide out students with real-world assignments that enhance real-world skills. The exam prep activity, while specifically designed to help students feel more comfortable taking the mid-term, also gave students experience listening to peers and synthesizing a variety of opinions in a group situation, which will prove very useful in nearly any field they elect to pursue. Moreover, by adding an element of cooperation and teamwork we mitigated the individual/competition element inherent in most exams and class exercises while providing them with a welcome opportunity to interact intellectually with one another, something she also recommended.

Have you used the activity in the classroom yet? If so, please describe its effectiveness. If not, how you will assess its enhancement of student learning.

Students seemed more relaxed about the mid-term after the lively competition that the game fostered and the camaraderie formed by working together to come up with complete answers with teammates. Breaking the section up into two types of activities also seemed to keep students engaged in the material and eager to participate.