Lectures: Why and How

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Resources

Useful Web Sites:

University of Virginia Teaching Handbook
http://trc.virginia.edu/Publications/Teaching_UVA/TOC_PDF.htm
http://trc.virginia.edu/Resources/Teaching_Handbooks.htm

University of Indiana Bloomington handbook
http://teaching.iub.edu/handbook_toc.php

University of Texas Classroom Instruction
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/tips/ic/ic_time.html

University of Miami instructional Advancement Center
http://www6.miami.edu/iac/

Overcoming Speaking Anxiety:
http://www.all-biz.com/articles/anxiety.html
Resources

Books: Often Authored by Humanities, Social Sciences
Teaching Assistantships and Lectures:

A. What is the role of lectures in learning?

B. ‘How to’ of lecturing.

C. *The Ten Commandments*
A. Role of Lectures

1. Why not just read the textbook?
   a. Text allows self-paced learning
   b. Comprehensive material
   c. Accessible for retrieval (review)
Role of Lectures

2. Discussion/Recitation sections:
   a. Students evaluate & interpret
   b. Develop motivation
   c. Opportunity for questions
Role of Lectures

3. Lectures: oldest teaching method
   a. Organization of diverse sources of information
   b. Include recent material
   c. Adapt material to particular class
   d. Rapid relay of ideas to large audience
B. How do I do this?

• A common misimpression:

“The lecture material speaks for itself”

• Intra-personal communication:

55% facial and body language
38% voice quality
7% content

(source: UCLA Professor Albert Marabian)
But, one of the most common fears is public speaking

“There are two types of public speakers: those that are nervous and those that are liars”
Mark Twain

“The human brain begins working the moment you are born and never stops until you stand up to speak in public”
George Jessel

“Studies show that fear of public speaking ranks higher than the fear of dying. I guess this means that most people at a funeral would rather be in the coffin than delivering the eulogy.”
Jerry Seinfeld
"Before I speak, I have something important to say" - Groucho Marx

Combating nerves:

Proper preparation and rehearsal can help to reduce fear by about 75%.

Breathing techniques can further reduce this fear by another 15%.

Your mental state accounts for the remaining 10%.
Toastmaster’s 10 tips for delivery:

1. Know the material
2. Practice your lecture
3. Know the audience (student capability)
4. Know the room (lecture hall)
5. Relax (breathing, talk to students before class)
6. Visualize yourself giving the lecture
7. Students want you to succeed!
8. Don’t apologize for any nervousness
9. Concentrate on the material & audience
10. Experience helps

http://www.toastmasters.org/tips.asp
Your delivery - Pointers from Professionals

Eye contact: Your slides don’t care what you have to say.

Voice: Volume – “Please speak up!”

Posture: Stand up! (your Mom was right)
            Gestures (pointing, crossed arms)

Pauses: Emphasis and time for students to absorb material.
Powerpoint Slides:

- Avoid reading slide - paraphrase.
- Schematics, diagrams = summary
- Explain figures
- Don’t open or close with complicated figures
- Lettering size (24 point)
- AVOID TOO MUCH COLOR
- Font: Arial, Tahoma, Verdana
Slides 101:

Don’t talk to your slides—they don’t care what you have to say.

Let the slides speak for themselves. Don’t read the slides word-for-word. It will bore the students and is redundant.

Limit the amount of information on any slide. You can PowerPoint to death.

Pause after highlighting points on a slide. Give students time to absorb the information.

http://learnercenteredteaching.wordpress.com/teaching-resources/eight-steps-to-active-lecturing/
This is not recommended

- text on a structured background
- may look fancy and attractive at first sight
- but is hard to read in a large lecture theater
- even if you use large, black lettering

This is quite clear

- In fact, there is nothing wrong with using black letters on a white background

This is acceptable

- bright yellow or white on the darkest possible blue
- be careful with other colours grey, green, orange, brown, blue
- are much less clear
Main Problem in Lectures: The Attention Curve

*Self-hypnosis: “You are getting very sleepy”
UVA student evaluations of lectures

Or, how to address the attention curve:

“The style is not as important as the ability to ‘break the trance’ with demonstrations, examples, changes in tone.”

“Students appreciated soliciting their input.”

“Schematic outlines, lists of main points”

“Pause to ask if clarification needed.”

“Repeat major concepts, recap the lecture major points”

“Interactive; solicit responses from students”
The Change up: Middendorf et al. 1996

a. Denote section ‘end’ with activity (evaluation)

b. Schematic outline: major topics, key terms

but, detailed notes result in complacency
Change ups: One-minute essay questions:

Answers require few words or a couple paragraphs.

Short, clear questions that can be answered quickly with knowledge or opinions the students expect to have.

Determine if students understand the most confusing part of the lesson.

Used to indicate if lesson’s concepts are understood (e.g., list the three most important concepts in today’s lesson).
Additional change ups:

**iclickers:**
http://www6.miami.edu/UMH/CDA/UMH_Main/0,1770,2666-1;63985-3,00.html

Have students prepare questions to be answered at mid-point of lecture or a Blackboard question drop box (tie together consecutive lectures)

Simple demonstrations, e.g.,
2 layer salt/temperature gradient.
100 g carbon on 1 square meter
Videos
Summary: Three Cardinal* Rules for Lectures

1. Be knowledgeable
2. Be clear
3. Be interesting

*(Three Cardinals →)

http://www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/handbook/lecture/delivery.htm
Summary: Ten Commandments from R. Weir*

I. Thou shall connect thy lectures.

II. Thou shall move beyond chalk and talk.

III. Thou shalt not lecture like a caffeinated hummingbird or a tree sloth.

IV. Thou shalt not assume too much.

V. Thou shall link known to unknown.

*http://www.insidehighered.com/advice/instant_mentor/weir3
Ten Commandments (continued):

VI. Thou shall be enthusiastic.

VII. Thou shall not be a pompous jerk.

VIII. Thou shall not tolerate disrespectful or disruptive students.

IX. Thou shall not lecture outdoors (unless thee is a botanist).

X. Thou shall seize ‘learning moments’.
Thank you

“Now Go Forth and Speak!”