



MRFA PD Lunch and Learn Series 2024 - 2025

Session Topic: How do you Prep?

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Key Takeaways from the Session:

1. **Advance Planning:** Being a week or two ahead of students can help maintain control over content, but full semester planning may offer more predictability and the ability to address contingencies should you be unable to deliver a specific lecture due to illness.
2. **Starting a Class:** Opening with personal introductions and conversations with students fosters a more open, generative, and inclusive learning environment.
3. **Flexible Structure:** Balancing a well-planned structure with flexibility allows for addressing student needs as the semester progresses.
4. **D2L:** Consider updating D2L content as you go, hiding unfinished materials. Use reminders and lists to track updates.
5. **Time Management:** Use tools like timeanddate.com to manage course planning, marking schedules, and assignment deadlines.
6. **Accommodations:** Plan flexible grading and accessible materials (like slides), and keep track of common accommodations for future planning.
7. **Clear Communication:** Include email etiquette in your syllabus, guide students to communicate clearly, and ensure expectations for assignments and participation are well-defined.
8. **Grading and Flexibility:** Provide clear grading policies and consider leniency with late submissions, group work setup, and “late passes” to help students manage their time.

Detailed Notes from the Session:

Introduction

- There are many different ways that individuals choose to prep. Some are doing it all right up to the day before a class whereas others prep everything, class materials for each class, slides, deadlines etc. well in advance.
 - Is there benefit for being a week or two ahead of students?
 - Is it better to have the full semester planned out in advance?
 - How does prep on the fly work for people?
 - What do you need to do to address gaps in the moment- how do you prep for other topics to teach on if you end up with time in class to fill?

Beginning a Class

- It is helpful to have open conversations with students at the outset to ground everyone in the learning space and to give time to have a personal approach and see everyone in the class as individuals.
 - Sharing who you are at the beginning of a class is important as it can create an open and welcome space for students to bring their authentic selves into the classroom.
 - You can send out an email to your students in advance of the first class to let them know what the format will be, what some of the questions will be, and provide time for them to be prepared and fully engage in the conversation when the first class begins

- Regardless of how long you have been teaching, we can still be hesitant about the beginning of a new semester. Being more prepared can assist with this.
- Providing structure to students at the outset can be ideal but having flexibility throughout the course is helpful to ensure that you can respond to student needs.

It's a brand new semester and classes just started: When did you start prepping for now?

- Some attendees “spent all summer working on prep for the year,” some began in May and planned lectures in August, some began planning in August, and some began on “Monday of this [first] week [of classes].”
- There is a big range of approaches to prep. Even a lot of different approaches to developing the D2L site. It can take a lot of work to review and prepare a whole course on D2L if your aim is to have it all done at the outset. It can be more manageable to update D2L as you go throughout the course. If you are prepping on the go, make sure that you hide the unfinished content on D2L that you do not want students to see yet.

One approach:

- First step, consider using timeanddate.com to plan out your courses individually and to have a calendar to schedule out your marking to stack your marking for when it fits for you. This can help you to ensure your workload is manageable throughout the semester.
 - You can use this to schedule your time
 - Mark off the dates where you are not teaching
 - Coordinate assignment due dates
 - Ensure that you have the required percentage of assessments completed at the appropriate times of the year
 - Consider spacing things out away from the peak stress times for students
 - Note periods of heaving marking and block off times in your calendar.
- Comments and discussion of how others start to prep:
 - Identify key dates, count the number of classes you have left to cover the content, consider how you will cover the content in the time you have
 - Use the course outline with a lot of hyperlinks to ensure they are comprehensive
- Ongoing - Make an ongoing list of things you want to change for next time
 - Keep this as a “Next Time” document for each course.
 - This could be minute details - change slide 3 on the deck for class 7
 - This could be a larger thing - add more time for students to complete this assignment / start this assignment later
 - Schedule email yourself reminders when you don't have time to update things on the fly.
- Updating your D2L site:
 - Do your work in hard copy first before putting it into D2L
 - Pin the courses you are teaching to your D2L homepage (to unpin it you need to click on the pin to unpin it)
 - If you are teaching two sections of the same course it is good to start with the one that is offered in split sections (2 classes at 1.5)
 - If you are doing two sections of the same course - do it all once then copy over for the second one
 - As you are updating components of your course, make sure you go week by week and then *keep track of where you left off at.*

- Make lists to ensure that all your documents are posted for the assignments, ensure that the links are available for the discussion boards, check your grades etc.
 - Change the banner image for the courses to make them easier to identify (you can also upload your own image if you cannot find an appropriate image)
 - In “Course Information” you can edit the title of your course (e.g. remove “credit” or add the word “night” if you want to flag it is a night course)
 - Always upload a copy of your final course outline to D2L (you have some time between the start of classes and when your final course outline needs to be available).
 - Give yourself flexibility by noting that some of the items in the course outline are “subject to change”
 - Add a welcome message on your D2L site and provide the reminders to students (reiterate the room #, time, days, and special considerations)
 - Remember to make your course available when you are done the site
 - Submit your course outline to your Department Chair
- Planning for Accommodations
 - Consider flexible approaches to learning and grading.
 - Give lots of time for assignments and testing.
 - Post your slides online so they are accessible to students outside of class
 - Note areas where accommodations have been requested in the past on your “net time” document to consider how amendments can be addressed in advance.
- Discussion:
 - Planning for contingencies: planning well enough in advance to know what is happening in any class to find someone to fill in for you if you are not there.
 - You can have everything on D2L and students can access the content as needed to get through the class
 - It is helpful to provide topics for each lecture you have planned for the year - the content can change every year.
 - It is helpful to have an email etiquette policy for classes - this should be mentioned in your course outline
 - Read your syllabus
 - Indicate the course name and section that you are emailing about
 - Direct the email appropriately (with appropriate deference - Dear ** or Hello **....)
 - If you are emailing with your own problem, suggest your own solution
 - Read your email before sending it out
 - Re-read your syllabus
 - If sending an email to the professor about a group project, you need to cc. all the other students.
 - Ensure you have clear grade breakdown in the course outline
 - A pie chart works well for showing grade breakdowns
 - It is useful to have two course outlines: the one that covers everything and another document that is at-a-glance which the students can refer to regularly
 - Student and instructor responsibilities:
 - Instructors are responsible to make sure that the information is available to the students
 - Students have a lot of responsibilities in this relationship

- Students need to be checking their grades throughout the term to ensure they are where they need to be for the grades they want/need. Students get the grade they earn.
- Addressing student tardiness / late submissions:
 - Consider using 1 late pass per student. This gives students more control for when they need a break / some extra time.
 - Give a 2 day grace period (after which the late submission penalties come in place)
 - Make things submitted online due at midnight - this gives them a little bit of extra time to get something done.
 - Give time early in the class to have 10 minutes to put deadlines in their calendars
 - Give time early in class to meet your group members for group assignments.
- Addressing requests for doovers:
 - Zero tolerance was seen to be the best approach if you ensure that you provided the tools at the outset.
 - Giving extra assignments and allowing the lowest marks to drop off of small assignments and discussion boards and the possible incentivisation to come to class to allow for bonus grades.
 - Have practice assignments or practice tests that prepare students for the real assessment.