

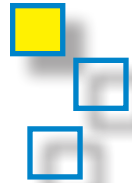
Volume 5
Issue 2
February
2013

Lander University's



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Become An Effective Teacher & Save Your Valuable Teaching Time and Energy

Center for Effective Undergraduate Teaching (864) 388-8426

When the Semester Ends, It Isn't Really Over

FIGURING OUT FINAL GRADES feels like closure. It's the last time we think carefully about each student we've had in this set of classes. Some of them have done so well, and if they are students we've had in multiple courses, we feel such satisfaction as we watch what they are becoming. They make teaching worth the work. But then there are other students—the ones who failed because it just wasn't the time in their lives to learn this content, the ones who didn't have the skills they needed to make it, and the ones who passed the course but never connected with the content, the teacher, and sometimes, not even with their classmates. These are the students who some days make us wonder why we even bother.

With courses ending so definitively, it's easy to think that whatever impact you or the course might have on students is over. But learning doesn't always end when the course does. Some insights and understandings are iterative and cumulative. Students arrive at them after repeated exposure, as the evidence mounts and their skills and experiences deepen. Other intellectual development happens when students are finally ready to learn. Most of us can recall one of those serendipitous student encounters in the mall. "Dr. Weimer, Dr. Weimer, do you remember me?" Sometimes I want to say, "How could I forget? You have a prominent place on my failures list." Occasionally, one of those students hands me a gift. "I didn't learn much in your course, but I didn't sell the book back and just recently I read it. And as I

was reading it, I remembered all sorts of things you said in class." Perhaps I can cross that student off my failures list.

Some students can be very hard to read. It isn't always easy to determine what effect the course is having, or will have. Recently, while out shopping, I ran into a former student whom I didn't recognize at all. "You don't remember me, do you?" she asked. I looked more closely. "No, I don't." "I was in your speech class at Berks," she explained. "Oh, that could be," I said. "What's your name?" She told me and that didn't trigger any recollection. Then she said, "I learned three things in your course that I use pretty much every day." She listed them off and I started smiling. She had a solid grasp of what I hoped every student would take from the course. When I got home and looked in my grade book, I discovered that what she'd learned was worth far more than the grade she'd earned in the class.

Because course endings give us a false sense of closure, we can end up feeling more discouraged about our teaching than we should. There really is no way to know how our content, our teaching and or the experiences in our classes have affected students or may affect them in the future. Students can be profoundly changed by a course and the teacher may never find out. I have a colleague who loves classical music. It's not his academic area, but his knowledge is expansive. I once asked how he got interested in music. "Oh, I had a music teacher—that's how it started. You know, I'd always intended to thank him, to tell

him how his introduction to music has resulted in a lifetime of pleasure. But I got there too late. I had to say my thanks at his grave."

Teaching is an act of faith, not something we always readily acknowledge. I like the Biblical definition: "faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not yet seen." (Hebrews 11:1) Sometimes we do see the evidence; students excel and we share their success. But many times there is no evidence. A student passes through the course without appearing to have been touched. But faith is a substance, it's something tangible to hold onto in the absence of evidence. As the current courses end and the year concludes, the influence of both continues. In this season of peace, hope, joy and love, may your faith be renewed and strengthened. What you do for and with students does matter. It makes a difference and that makes it so worth doing.

Maryellen Weimer, PhD, Teaching Professor Blog:
When the Semester Ends, It Isn't Really Over; Faculty Focus; December 10, 2013; [<http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/when-the-semester-ends-it-isnt-really-over/>] January 28, 2013.

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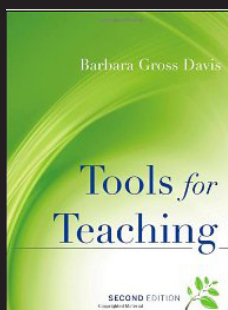
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Center for Effective
Undergraduate Teaching
Carnel Learning Center, Suite 106.
Phone: 388-8426

BOOK



TOOLS for TEACHING

Author: Barbara Gross Davis
Publisher: Jossey-Bass; 2nd edition
(February 3, 2009)
ISBN-10: 0787965677
ISBN-13: 978-0787965679

Adapting PowerPoint Lectures for Online Delivery: Best Practices

IF YOU USE PowerPoint lectures in your face-to-face classes, you can use those same lectures as jumping-off points for creating narrated animations for your online students to watch. That's the good news.

However, chances are you'll need to make extensive changes—both to your existing PowerPoint slides, and to how you deliver them. Typically, this means scripting the lecture before narrating and recording it so that all information presented online is:

As concise as possible

- Organized logically (no skipping around)
- Relevant to the important concepts you're trying to convey (as opposed to spending equal time on minor points or details)
- Rich with stories, personal examples, and/or examples that clarify and amplify the important concepts
- Primarily visual (very little text presented on any screen)
- Broken down into separate 2-7 minute recordings, each based around a single concept

Unfortunately, there's no quick and easy way to adapt face-to-face lectures for effective online presentation. Simply recording yourself narrating your PowerPoints as you would in a face-to-face classroom is ineffective because the online environment differs from the classroom in several ways:

- The time and attention students are willing to spend watching a screen is much less than the time and attention they're willing to spend watching a live human being lecturing.
- The online environment is poor at conveying information in text form (but excels at conveying information visually).
- Online students can't ask questions in real-time—and you won't be able to see when they're "getting it" so that you can diverge from your standard lecture and supplement their understanding. Therefore, your presentation has to be extremely clear and explicit.
- Online students are typically much less tolerant of extraneous or confusing information presented in a recorded

lecture than they are of an in-person lecture.

- Students will be accessing lecture recordings differently—and for different reasons—than they "access" face-to-face lectures. Face-to-face students come to class, listen to lecture, and leave. Online students may use lecture recordings for previewing material, as their main source of course content, or for review. They may access recordings never, once, or multiple times for any of all of these reasons.

All of this means that you'll need to rethink the way your existing lectures are organized, what information they contain, and how that information is conveyed.

Below are best practices for converting a PowerPoint presentation for online delivery:

- Break long lectures into five minute (or so) chunks. Studies show that online students won't sit through hour-long lectures—so don't create them. Instead, create a handful of smaller lecture "chunks," each of which defines and elaborates a main concept. Chunking lectures in this way also makes it possible for online students to customize their learning by reviewing—and re-reviewing—only those concepts they're having trouble grasping.
- Write a script for each concept. Speaking off-the-cuff may work in a classroom, but it doesn't online. Scripting forces you to organize the presentation of your material—to make sure you don't leave anything out or throw in anything extra. It also gives you time to think about the most effective approach to convey material in the highly visual online environment. If you decide not to write a script beforehand, be prepared to spend the same amount of time you would have spent on the script in the recording studio instead, recording and re-recording your lecture chunks (in effect, scripting your recordings during the recording process instead of beforehand). There really is no way around the scripting step in the production of effective content

optimized for online delivery; it's "pay me now or pay me later."

- Rework your PowerPoint slides to act as a storyboard for your script. Your PowerPoint slides should contain mostly visuals; you'll need to reduce text to a few words per screen at most. Animations (recorded PowerPoints) are good at conveying visual information; they aren't good at conveying text information. Any text that appears on the screen should be the "take aways" or critical notes you would expect students to take, not simply explanations or nice-to-have details.
- Time any text or images that appear on your PowerPoint slides to display at the same time that you, the narrator, speak the text or discuss the image. Studies show that presenting text causes students to try to read it—which means they're missing whatever the narrator happens to be saying at the same time. Learning theory also suggests that displaying images and talking about them later isn't as effective as introducing the images at the very time you begin speaking about them.

Emily A. Moore; Online Education; Faculty Focus; Adapting PowerPoint Lectures for Online Delivery: Best Practices; January 7, 2013; [<http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/adapting-powerpoint-lectures-for-online-delivery-best-practices/>]; January 7, 2013.

