Learner-Centered Teaching Techniques

This spectrum arranges learner-centered teaching techniques by complexity and classroom time commitment. Preparing by Laura Schram, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan.
Learner-Centered Teaching Techniques

- **Explicit learning goals**: In the syllabus and during class, tie the rationale for assignments, policies and activities to learning outcomes.
- **Discuss/develop learning skills**: Create resources for and discuss learning skills, e.g., effective study skills, discussion skills, note taking, group study, etc.
- **Student-to-student resource sharing**: Ask students who have been successful in the lab/course (past or current) to share study suggestions and strategies for succeeding in the course.
- **Skeletal lecture slides**: Create intentional gaps in lecture slides (e.g., give key words but not definitions) and ask students to fill in gaps.
- **Student-led summaries**: Students summarize key points at end of class/start of next class.
- **Classroom Assessment Techniques**: Use class response slips/ungraded quizzes for students to provide anonymous feedback on their learning. (Angelo & Cross, 1993)
- **Pre-term Needs Assessment**: Poll students on first day of class or before term begins about their learning goals and needs. For example, have them answer such questions as: “In the best class I ever had, students…”, “In the best class I ever had, the teacher…”, and “I learn best when…” (Weimer, 2002, p. 108). Alternatively, create a low-stakes assignment for the first class in which they read the syllabus carefully and submit in writing what they hope to get out of the class (Coffman, 2003).
- **Student-led discussion**: Students take primary responsibility for managing a discussion topic or pre-lab presentation.
- **Partial student-led lecture**: Students take responsibility for giving main points of readings or key concepts.
- **Rubrics with learning goals**: In assignment rubrics, which articulate and quantify expectations and standards for grading each assignment, tie the rationale for assignments to learning outcomes.
- **Formative assessments**: Assess learning steps and process (e.g., paper outlines, concept maps for labs, how students report that they plan to study for exams) in addition to summative assessments of final products (e.g., final paper, exams). Reflective journals or learning logs are good ways to implement this.
- **Repeat summative assessments**: Allow students to rewrite papers or retake exams to improve their learning (and their grades).
- **Midterm Student Feedback**: Gather and incorporate student feedback on what is helping student learning, and how to improve learning environment.
- **Student-created assignments**: Allow students to pick paper/project topics and/or write exam questions.
- **“Cafeteria” assignment model**: Students have some choice in selecting the type/weight of assignments that they complete.
- **Peer and/or self-evaluation**: Students rigorously assess either themselves or others on assignments (e.g., papers, participation) with a rubric for evaluation from the instructor.
- **Group assessments**: Students have the option to take exams and/or write reflection papers as a group.
- **Student-developed policies**: Students deliberate as a group and determine through consensus building some classroom policies, e.g., on group work, attendance or participation.
- **Problem-based learning**: Structure the course syllabus around exploring one meaningful real-world question, rather than a traditional textbook approach, and engage students in a long-term process of investigation of this problem and collaboration on how to solve or investigate the question.
- **Student-developed syllabus/content**: Students deliberate as a group and determine through consensus what topics from a set of options will be covered in the course.
- **Base groups (e.g., hevruta)**: In sustained pairs, students engage in deep, sustained discussions of a text, setting the agenda for their conversations. (Bergom, Wright, Brown, & Brooks, 2011)
- **Individualized learning/Keller Plan**: This method takes into account the individual backgrounds and needs of students by allowing students to self-pace/share control over the pace of instruction, moving on to new content after students have shown mastery of the material, and varying instructional methods to meet individual student needs.
Sources and Suggested Reading
Learner-Centered Teaching


