

Inclusive Practices for the First Day and Beyond

Proposed activities submitted by participants at the Fall Conversation, September 12, 2019.
[Some minor edits for clarity.]

Names and Pronouns

(Note: Course rosters will indicate a "preferred name" in place of the legal name, if a student has submitted one.)

Have each student fill out a name placard with preferred names. I went by a nickname in college, and allowing students to self-name tells them you value their self-identification in a small way. I collect these and return/collect them each class to unburden students from losing them.

Strategy(s) to learn everyone's name, everyone learns all names. Class pumphandle: initiator says own name and receiver says that name back. Class pumphandle 2: initiator says own name and receiver says own name. Initiator says receiver name. Class pumphandle 3: initiator says receiver name. If mistaken, take the place in the circle. Class pumphandle 4: initiator says name and reveals a personal quirk. Receiver repeats quirk. Class pumphandle 5: initiator makes a physical gesture that receiver imitates. At the end all gestures are executed in a group expression.

Creating a system for preferred names, pronouns in short class sessions.

Questionnaire with questions about: preferred name/pronoun, reason for taking course, background in subject, what were you excited about learning my questions or concerns?

Print cards with "official" names, have them write the name/pronoun they prefer.

Is it expected by our students now that we invite them to say their pronouns during introductions? I feel if we do not do it we may leave out the person who really cares.

Introduce self with pronouns and show an object from backpack or pile that demonstrates who you are. Have students dig through their own backpacks for a descriptive item. All items go into a pile and then as a group try to sort and return to owner-recalling name and pronouns. Pronouns really matter!

Reverse roll call to avoid mis-pronunciations of names.

Instead of calling roll, have students introduce themselves.

I will put my pronouns on my syllabus.

Ask students to fill out an info sheet that asks (in part) 4 pronoun as: what are your pronouns?, can I use them in front of other students, faculty? Can I use them when it's just us?

Notecard with student names, pronouns, interests and learning needs that they want to meet.

Add pronouns to my syllabus.

Invite students to introduce themselves-name, where they call home, preferred pronouns, and what they hope to learn in this class. Then introduce myself, how I got interested in my academic subject, a bit about how college changed me (1st generation), and what I hope we cover/learn over the term.

Getting to know you / us

Novice level: use the greetings we just learned. Say them to several people. **Be loud!**

Upper level: Just in 3 minutes, tell a friend what you did in the summer, winter, spring break.

Then will find activities more people did, places 2-3 people visited, etc. Later, individual students can talk about anything interesting they did.

Move students- every other one moves 3 or 4 seats so not next to friends.

Pair off- introduce self and 2 things on a specific topic (Knox, school, family, whatever).

Introduce partner to class.

I will distribute a hand-out with a list of random questions. The students will circulate in the classroom asking each question to everybody. After that activity each student will introduce themselves to the classroom.

Have students first pair up and then introduce themselves along with place they like/find/just discovered on campus.

Interview and report: Get students in pairs (usually just turn to the person next to you), ask them to "interview" each other, questions might include: "most hated celebrity", "first concert", etc.

'Present' your partner to the full group.

First day for upperclass 300-level playwriting/screenwriting: Table read a play rotating the roles so everybody eventually reads every role (on the premise that this is what a playwright has to do - be everybody in the scene). As a means of imaginatively inhabiting other consciousnesses. For beginners: Go around the room, introduce yourself and tell of a personal reaction to a play or film.

Use name tents and have students introduce themselves by drawing a picture that represents how they feel about the first day of classes.

Ask students to find something they have in common with 3 of their classmates.

Student questionnaire: name, pronouns-pronunciation, past performance in pre-rec, comfort level with taking course. What are they excited about? What most worried about?

I will do the “tell me about myself” activity recommended by Judy Thorn. [See attached document.]

Small group intros instead of full group intros.

Postcards with key questions and then letting them introduce themselves with all or selected items (for example: pronouns, which may or may not be something to share with them at that time).

Transparent teaching

Thoroughly explain the purpose behind policies, practices, and expectations in class.

My goal is to be really transparent about what my students are learning and why. This starts on the first day, where I’ll talk about what brought me to this field and students will talk about why they’re here, etc. but primarily this is a practice I want to continue for the entire 30 weeks of the class. Before each unit I’ll hand out a practice quiz with the material they’ll be quizzed on at the end of the unit.

Creating a way for students to regularly review what they have learned and what they found valuable in the class session.

Make sure course structure and expectations are clear.

Ask students what their expectations are for the course?

Collecting reasons for taking the course (written).

Have them discuss expectations for the course at the start of the term.

Have specific questions for small group work - so that everyone has something to say - plus have them add a question.

Enlist students to generate content (oral presentation, self-generated research paper topics)

Establishing a classroom culture that values inclusivity

“Lower the stakes,” reduce the feeling of risk to encourage participation in class.

I am going to try to listen as much as I talk.

Professors can reduce anxiety by stressing that we are engaged in common inquiry where we will make mistakes and learn from those mistakes.

I'll create an ice breaker activity in which I'll have to participate. I'll speak to each student, ask preferred name and pronoun, introduce myself, and try to learn on thing about each student.

Have students talk about their goals or aspirations for the class and what they expect to get out of the class material. Students may individually do this or pair up and share what the other student said. Also have them mention a long-term goal (for the class or career). This can give students a chance to connect with each other on similar ideas.

Encourage everyone to participate in class, in some capacity, from the first day. Make sure they know how to voice concerns.

Watch a relevant or recent video/music catalyst for discussion.

On the first day of class, I will ask the students what they want to know about me as their teacher. That will hopefully give them the opportunity to get to know me better and make them more comfortable approaching me.

More personable in introducing myself to put students at ease with me.

For lab based classes, I start the first day by having students do something they design that is hands on. That gets them engaged right away.

Move around the room in a more informal way anytime I am in front of a group.

I am committed to allowing space on the first day of class for students to ask me questions to demonstrate vulnerability.

I can post a question for the group (e.g. what's your favorite dinosaur?) and students use their phones to text in answers, which are then displayed in real time. It's like clickers, except via text on their phones, so students can write out longer answers than just clicking A-E. We can then have a group discussion about particular ones, or discuss the progression of thoughts. The great thing about this is that participant answers get put up in real time. As I also mentioned

yesterday, the (potentially) terrible thing about this is that participant answers get put up in real time. I've had some people write silly things in intro courses, but even those are relatively rare. The thing I like most about it is that I get lots (90% or more) participation, so it seems like students who otherwise would not participate (i.e. speak up verbally in front of people) are doing so, and I can be encouraging to each response, as it comes in. If there's a wrong answer (pro tip: better to ask questions that do not have a wrong answer), we can have a conversation about how that answer might be better without actually singling out Tim Stedman as the person who (incorrectly) thought a pterodactyl was a dinosaur -- he can remain anonymous. And then we can go on to discuss how a pterodactyl is actually a different lineage of reptiles that is unrelated to dinosaurs.

Demystifying college and its arcane practices

Find ways to bridge communication with students, as individuals, but also as a class, for example by inviting and reminding them to come to office hours.

Help with Anxiety: Syllabus detailed, detailed instructions, bring questions to class, tell them this is hard, I'll help you and you're going to learn. We learn best by making mistakes.

Detailed instructions on small group work.

Student hours vs. office hours.

Instead of "office hours," call them "student hours."

"Student hours" instead of "office hours" communal activity (sound walk, performance).

Syllabus quiz.

Be mindful of focusing on the interdisciplinary nature of the course and the importance of multiple fields to fully understand the questions and explore the answers. #20 teach from the moment they arrive. And wait before taking an answer to questions.

I will include a syllabus statement on accommodations.

I will add to my syllabus a note that if there is anything on this syllabus that you can't do, let me know and we will discuss.

Syllabus: group annotation exercise in class, let the students take ownership of the syllabus rather than simply reading the syllabus to them.

Highlight CTL/Red Room resources on first day.

Adding language to the syllabus that talks about life happening and letting students know that when unpredictable things happen we can address them.

Spend little time covering the syllabus, but then have them complete an online Google form syllabus quiz prior to the next class meeting. The quiz would be multiple choice and address questions about attendance policy, late assignment policy, etc. The quiz will then count as their participation grade for that first day.

Be clear about structure/goals of the course and how it can be relevant to students with different interests.

A non-exhaustive overview of the syllabus.

In more advanced classes thinking toward power of experience, honors opportunities (mentioning it on the first day to follow up later).

Beyond the first day

Making a face-to-face meeting mandatory.

Anxiety and Retention: One-on-one meeting with each student, required, 15 minutes just to talk about how you're doing in class.

Perhaps set up short "get to know you" office hours with students.

I am committed to encouraging my advisees to visit their professors to "break the ice."

Use name tags in the first weeks of class.