Creating an Effective Plan
(Elective Seminar)

Seminar Description

Up to this point, TA training has covered a variety of topics essential to enhancing your instructional techniques and facilitating an ideal classroom environment. This seminar focuses on ideas to consider when crafting lesson plans and facilitating review sessions.

Seminar Objective

- To learn strategies for creating well-organized and productive lesson plans
Creating an Effective Plan: Table of Contents

Approaches to Lesson Planning................................................................. 3
  Outline learning objectives for your students ........................................ 3
  Determine how you will introduce the lesson ........................................ 3
  Design activities to meet your learning objectives .................................. 3
  Decide how to check for understanding ............................................... 4
  Develop a conclusion for your lesson .................................................. 4
Assessing Your Lesson Plan ................................................................. 4
The Importance of Flexibility .............................................................. 4
Works Cited ......................................................................................... 6
Additional Resources ......................................................................... 6
Approaches to Lesson Planning

Instructors exercise a variety of techniques when planning lessons for their respective courses. While some instructors will write or type extensive, detailed notes to capture all of the material they intend to cover, others might jot down a few topics to expound upon in the course of their lectures. Moreover, in some discussion-based seminars, instructors may create lesson plans that are less extensive in order to encourage students to steer the discussion.

Ultimately, your lesson plan is your framework or “road map” for how you want your class to progress. While approaches to lesson plans vary, the following strategies will help you organize lesson plans productively:

Outline learning objectives for your students

Milkova (2012) suggests that the first step to lesson planning is not only deciding what you want your students to learn, but what your students should be able to do at the end of your class. In addition, you should consider the following questions when determining your objectives:

- What are the most important concepts, ideas, or skills I want students to be able to grasp and apply?
- Why are these concepts relevant?
- If I am faced with time constraints, are there certain ideas that I can skip? Are there specific concepts that I must cover if I am pressed for time?

Determine how you will introduce the lesson

Techniques for introducing a lesson include distributing a brief handout or worksheet, showing a video related to your topic, posing a question that helps you gauge what students may already know about one or more of your ideas, or providing a verbal overview of key concepts. Milkova (2012) adds that you should also be cognizant of widely-accepted ideas or common misconceptions related to your topic as you consider how to introduce your lesson effectively.

Design activities to meet your learning objectives

What tasks are most conducive to the learning objectives you have established? For example, you might have students complete a short, independent writing assignment, collaborate on solving a scenario or case study related to your topic, or (depending on the size of your class) solve a simulated problem related to your topic as a large group.
If your lesson incorporates multiple activities, you should also consider both the order in which you will present the activities and the amount of time each activity will take. Doing so will help enhance the flow of your lesson.

**Decide how to check for understanding**

In what way(s) will you check to see that your students have grasped the material? While some instructors will invite verbal responses to comprehension questions at the end of a class, others might request a written response to a question that tests students’ understanding of a major concept. Furthermore, some instructors may opt to check for understanding midway through a lesson or at another pre-determined point prior to the end of class. Doing so ensures that students have grasped the material you have already presented before moving on to topics that are potentially more complex.

**Develop a conclusion for your lesson**

Your lesson should not end with a simple “That’s all for today.” Instead, summarize the main points of your lecture. (You may either do this yourself or call on students to sum up key ideas from the class.) In addition, try to establish continuity in your class by suggesting connections between your lesson and the topics you plan to cover in your next session. (You might do so by posing a rhetorical question that gestures toward future concepts.) You might also conclude your lesson by sharing either a story that sums up the ideas you have covered or a quotation that reemphasizes your topic.

**Assessing Your Lesson Plan**

After you conclude your lesson, spend some time reflecting what went well and what might be improved in future classes. Svinicki and McKeachie (2013) suggest maintaining a teaching journal in which you document reflections on how well your students received “different approaches, lectures, and discussions” (p. 18). Noting your students’ reception to specific topics and tasks will offer good insight into how you present your material if you teach the same class in later semesters.

**The Importance of Flexibility**

While well-organized lesson plans help create a logical road map for a class session, they should not hinder your flexibility with regard to how your class progresses. For example, you might intend for the discussion of a particular topic to last for just twenty minutes. However, if you find that your students are captivated by the topic and eager to continue the discussion, you might eliminate another activity you had planned (or postpone it until the next class period if
time allows) in order to let the discussion run its course. Effective lesson plans will ensure that you engage and present your material in thoughtful ways. At times, however, student responses might steer your lesson in new, fruitful directions.
Works Cited


Additional Resources

Print


Electronic
