

Teaching

A series of practical and innovative teaching tips for college faculty No. 4

The Top 10...

Ways to Show Students that You Respect Them

Your students will respect you and therefore trust and learn from you if they feel that you respect them. Your goal as a teacher is not necessarily to get a class to like you, but here are a few tried and true, sure-fire ways to make it clear to students that you respect them.

- ✓ Return graded work promptly with reasonable but not overwhelming feedback. Nothing annoys students more than an instructor who doesn't return or comment on graded work in a timely manner. Nothing.
- ✓ Arrive in class early, not just on time. Don't get to your classroom on time but use the first three minutes of class to set up. A class that begins like clockwork communicates that you respect the commitment students are making to attend your class, and it makes students who arrive late stand out to the whole room.
- ✓ Respect their time. Finish class on time. Every time. If you communicate an awareness of the clock and an appreciation for their time, students will feel respected and will likely forgive that one time when you absolutely must go over by three minutes. One time. Three minutes. No more. They'll know it must be important.
- ✓ Respect their time. Only let class out early under rare circumstances. Students will no doubt like you very much if you regularly end class early, but they will not respect you, the course, its content, or your institution for charging them for credit hours that, as you would be demonstrating, aren't necessary.
- ✓ Respect their time. Don't act like the work of your class isn't burdensome or speak in cavalier tones about "college work." Instead, convey to students a realistic understanding of the time and effort that your course requires

and then recognize and validate the time and effort that your students put into it.

- ✓ When you assign readings, always *use* them in class. Reward students who have read using reading quizzes. If students ask themselves “What did I read that for?” your stock (and the likelihood of them reading in the future) will fall.
- ✓ Respect your students’ ability to help you teach them. Students respect a teacher who is so secure that he or she asks the class for feedback about how well he or she is teaching. Use the last five minutes of class to ask students to respond anonymously to questions like these: “What am I doing in class that helps you learn,” “What am I doing in class that doesn’t help you learn,” and “What should I do the same/differently in class in the coming weeks?”
- ✓ Set clear guidelines for behavior in your course policies and then follow them. You can also invite a class to partner with you to create “ground rules” for the group at the beginning of a semester, unit, or project. What will the class policy be for cell phones, personal laptops, hand raising, challenging what another person says, disagreeing with someone, etc.? When students participate in creating group expectations, they take more ownership of the entire group’s learning experience.
- ✓ If your assignments require subjective grading, explain your grading through written feedback or grading rubrics. If grading rubrics feel too rigid or limiting for the purposes of your assessments, communicate to students why their work earned the grade that it earned and connect those reasons to what your assignment asked them to do.
- ✓ Have a crystal clear policy in your syllabus regarding the submission of late work. During the early weeks of the semester, reiterate how clear and firm your policy is and then stick to it for the duration of the semester with no exceptions. If you accept late work for reduced grades, is there a way in which your late policy can facilitate learning rather than simply penalizing lateness? Keep in mind that most students who submit work late need more than an extra day or two, so consider an initial consequence followed by a grace period before an increased consequence. If students perceive you as inconsistent or if you accept late work without consequence from one student when others worked to complete the assignment on time, well, you guessed it...

