

Large group teaching: introduction to the collection

(Collection 5 of 7)

Overview

Large group teaching, whether a formal lecture or simply a class with too many students to be legitimately called a seminar, will inevitably form the basis of much of your teaching in English and Creative Writing. It is a teaching form that is romanticised and regularly depicted in films and on television but, in real life, it is a mode of teaching that is difficult to get right. Part of the reason for this is that lecturers and students often have divergent ideas of what is meant to happen in a lecture, that is, what a lecturer is meant to do and what the students are meant to learn, and indeed whether that is a uni-directional or mutual enterprise. How many lectures you give in a module as accompanied by how many seminars will vary from module to module and from institution to institution. Where you lecture and how many students you must lecture to will probably not be decisions you have any control over, although the physical space in which you teach and students learn are profoundly significant. You can determine, however, your own philosophy of teaching and you can account for student needs as part of the process of designing effective and stimulating lectures that will enhance student learning and keep them engaged with the materials.

This collection of activities provides platforms and exercises through which to refine your ideas about what a lecture should and can do pedagogically. An underlying premise is that our subject expertise, our wealth of subject knowledge and our own experience of lectures are important but not sufficient materials with which to construct the best possible lectures for today's students. Lecturers today have to make decisions about the effective use of technology in lectures, how to accommodate different learning styles in lecture, how to sustain the attention of students who often engage with lecture and other forms of technology simultaneously, and how to provide students with what is



known as a 'value-added' experience if only to keep them coming back to the lecture hall and recognising lectures as a fundamental building block of their learning experience.

The activities you will find in this collection comprise ideas and examples of lectures and 'lecturnars' (the lecture/seminar hybrid), guidance on how to evaluate other people's lectures, prompts for reflecting upon and evaluating your own lectures, and suggestions of how to stretch the limits of lecture and large-group teaching structures.

Links & References

- Gibbs, Graham, and Sue Habeshaw and Trevor Habeshaw. *53 Interesting Things to Do in Your Lectures*. Fourth Edition. Bristol: Technical Educational Services, 1995.
- Race, Phil. *The Lecturer's Toolkit*. Second Edition. London: Kogan Page Limited, 2001.
- Showalter, Elaine. *Teaching Literature*. London: Blackwell, 2003.

Professional Standards Framework

- **Core Knowledge 2:** Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
- **Professional Values 3:** Commitment to the development of learning communities
- **Professional Values 4:** Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity

More information about the Professional Standards Framework can be obtained from the summary factsheet in the *Subject & Pedagogy* collection in HumBox.

<http://humbox.ac.uk/2731/>

Individual & Group Activities

In this, as in other Pool collections, some activities are primarily designed for use by individual lecturers. Others are designed for use in groups: for example in departmental development workshops, or in the context of Certificates of Academic Practice and the like. We hope that both individual teachers and course leaders will adapt resources and



2 | This resource is part of a set of professional development resources for Higher Education English (including English Literature, English Language & Creative Writing) called 'The Pool'. The resources were developed by the English Subject Centre in 2011 as part of a JISC/HEA Open Educational Resources (OER) Project. This work by the English Subject Centre is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales License.

activities in ways that suit their own circumstances. Where we have not made a clear distinction between group and individual activity that is because we think that readers will prefer to make their own decisions about how best to adapt the item to their own purposes.

Resources in the *Large group teaching* collection

- **Large group teaching: introduction to the collection (*you are here)**
- Peer reviewing lectures: resource overview
 - Peer review: A Science of Literature lecture
 - Peer review: Shakespeare's London lecture
 - Peer review: The Odour of Chrysanthemums lecture
- Identifying good and bad practice: resource overview
 - How to give a bad lecture: individual activity
 - How to give a bad lecture: group activity
 - The written and the improvised
- Planning and evaluating your lecture: resource overview
 - The genre of the lecture: individual activity
 - Peer review: group activity

