



Encouraging Student Motivation Series

PART 2: Teaching Strategies for Motivating Students to Attend Class & Complete Tasks

Motivation is perhaps the most critical non-academic factor to positively affect student performance on coursework (Ambrose et al., 2010; Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004). Increased motivation has been linked to increased academic achievement (Paulsen & Feldman, 1999), success in handling stressful situations (Struthers, Perry, & Menec, 2000), and better study skills (Robbins et al., 2004).

How can I encourage students to do the assigned readings for class?

Careful framing of reading assignments is an important way an instructor can encourage students to critically engage with course texts, and can influence how much effort students' devote to assigned readings. Below are suggestions you might consider incorporating into your course design, adapted from Bean (2011):

Strategies	Teaching Suggestions
Incorporate reading guides.	Reading guides can help students understand how to engage with difficult texts. Your guide could define key terms, explain necessary background knowledge and the reading's rhetorical context, and/or ask questions for students to consider as they read.
Establish relevancy for readings.	Establishing the relevancy of a reading can help students understand how a text relates to the rest of the coursework. One way you might do this is to consistently refer to specific aspects of the readings during lecture to directly tie the readings to class work. Another way could be to ask students to cite key concepts from course readings in their work.
Avoid summarizing in class.	Consider avoiding summarizing assigned readings during class, as this can send the message to students that completing assigned readings is not necessary.
Remind students that they are novice readers of scholarly works.	Let students know that scholarly publications are meant for a specialized audience, and that therefore it is natural to struggle a bit with the language and content. This gives them an explanation for the difficulty besides personal failing.
Share your own strategies.	Share your own reading, note-taking, and response writing strategies, and discuss how they differ among different genres of writing. Students may feel nervous when faced with academic reading assignment, and your strategies may help alleviate some of that anxiety.

Additionally, here are a few suggested assignments to encourage student engagement with readings:

Activities	Teaching Suggestions
Reading quizzes.	Online assessments or a brief pencil-and-paper or clicker quizzes at the beginning of class can help you quickly assess reading comprehension. If you want student to engage more critically with a text though, consider using assessments that require application or inference of central topics--this can encourage more deep reading and avoid sending the message that students should skim assigned readings for the "correct answers." (Bean, 2011)
Marginal notes approach.	Consider using a marginal notes approach, where students are encouraged to explain each highlight or underline they make in a text--for example, is it a



	particularly compelling piece of evidence? Something that is unclear? A key term? This strategy helps students to develop stronger reading comprehension skills as they actively engage with the text instead of just passively reading it. To bring this into the classroom, you could start class by asking students to read aloud from their marginal notes.
Says/Does activities	Says/Does activities ask students to closely analyze each paragraph of an assigned text by reflecting in writing on both what it says (a summary of the content) and what it does (its purpose or function within the article). This can heighten understanding of structure and encourage close reading.
Summary tasks.	Asking students to summarize a text can be one way to emphasize students' ability to separate main points from supporting details, and to encourage students to suspend their own judgements and focus on an author's points. Consider giving students the option to summarize the reading with a graphic organizer: a flowchart, diagram, concept map, or drawing. A popular addendum to this activity is to have a second short writing that responds to, argues with, questions, doubts or goes beyond the original reading.
Mock author interviews.	Ask students to write mock interviews with the author, in which they pose questions and the author responds from their particular intellectual standpoint.

How can I motivate students to attend class?

Class attendance has been linked positively to class grades, and is a stronger predictor of college GPA than standardized test performance or study skills (Crede, Roche, & Kieszczynka, 2010). Simply noting this to students is a simple way to promote attendance. Below are some suggestions for encouraging attendance:

- Low-stakes active learning activities can encourage student attendance. For example, short reading quizzes, think pair share activities, free writes, etc.
- Another option is to incorporate small-group activities into your classes. This will allow students to benefit from active learning techniques (Bligh, 2000; Prince, 2004) and provide an experience that is not available through webcasting/podcasting a missed lecture. Active learning has been proven to benefit students of all backgrounds across a wide variety of course topics and classroom settings (Freeman et al., 2014; Reimer et al., 2016).
- While small-group activities result in more interaction, the use of clicker questions can also be a useful form of formative assessment. Not only can you gain a better picture of your students' understanding, but this in-class work can also double as low-stakes participation activities.

Citation

Center for Educational Effectiveness [CEE]. (2018). Encouraging Student Motivation Series. *Just-in-Time Teaching Resources*. Retrieved from <https://cee.ucdavis.edu/JITT>

References

- Ambrose, S. A., et. al. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 66-90.
- Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *ResearchGate*, 40, 518–529.
- Bean, J. C. (2011). *Engaging ideas: The professor's guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom*. (2nd ed.) San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bligh, D. A. (2000). *What's the use of lectures?* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Crede, M., Roch, S. G., & Kieszczynka, U. M. (2010). Class Attendance in College: A Meta-Analytic Review of the Relationship of Class Attendance with Grades and Student Characteristics. *Review of Educational Research*, 80(2), 272–295. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654310362998>



- Freeman, S., Eddy, S. L., McDonough, M., Smith, M. K., Okoroafor, N., Jordt, H., & Wenderoth, M. P. (2014). Active learning increases student performance in science, engineering, and mathematics. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *111*(23), 8410-8415.
- Lotkowski, V. A., Robbins, S. B., & Noeth, R. J. (2004). The Role of Academic and Non-Academic Factors in Improving College Retention. ACT Policy Report. American College Testing ACT Inc.
- Paulsen, M. B., & Feldman, K. A. (1999). Student motivation and epistemological beliefs. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, *1999*(78), 17–25. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.7802>
- Prince, M. (2004). Does active learning work? A review of the research. *Journal of engineering education*, *93*(3), 223-231.
- Reimer, L. C., Schenke, K., Nguyen, T., O'dowd, D. K., Domina, T., & Warschauer, M. (2016). Evaluating promising practices in undergraduate STEM lecture courses. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, *2*(1), 212-233.
- Robbins, S. B., Lauver, K., Le, H., Davis, D., Langley, R., & Carlstrom, A. (2004). Do psychosocial and study skill factors predict college outcomes? A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, *130*(2), 261–288. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.130.2.261>
- Struthers, C. W., Perry, R. P., & Menec, V. H. (2000). An examination of the relationship among academic stress, coping, motivation, and performance in college. *Research in Higher Education*, *41*(5), 581–592. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007094931292>