

FYS: "What Works" (or could)

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May 17, 2013

Some of the ideas below I've tried, and others (*) were generated during our FYS workshop.

1. Read *Learning how to Learn* by Wirth and Perkins early in the term. When going over it have students continually pause to do writing and sharing exercises, like considering one of their own proficiencies (e.g., football, piano, etc.), estimating the amount of time spent on it, and breaking down tasks related to that proficiency into Bloom's categories. Together, map the course's learning objectives onto Bloom's taxonomy and explain how each should be facilitated and demonstrated through course activities and assignments. At the end of the term, revisit this last taxonomy and ask students to comment on their own success and struggles in the course with each kind of learning.

2. Have students read an accessible piece on expectations of college writing—ideally something organized as a list. Have students break it down in small groups to share and discuss each in turn: was each expected in their high school? what do they take these words to mean, exactly? do they agree or disagree that these elements are important in good writing? what kinds of writing might not meet these expectations but still be considered "good" and why? Then have students produce a written statement detailing which of these expectations they believe they will be able to meet with ease, with struggle, or not without assistance. Use these to discuss that while the criteria may look the same as criteria in high school, the standards may nonetheless be different (e.g., they may have had to write thesis statements, but perhaps college-level expectations of complexity in a thesis statement may be greater), to point students to campus resources, etc.

*3. Having had students talk with upper-class students (or alumni) about the Cornell academic experience, have them write a recommendation letter from the perspective of a Cornell professor detailing their accomplishments and the legacy that they have left behind at Cornell. One might also ask students to write a letter, perhaps a goodbye letter, from a peer praising their strengths as a prior classmate and friend. Use these letters to help students identify some academic and personal goals. Use this to point to campus resources in helping them meet their goals (e.g., Career Services, organizations)

4. To stress the importance of note-taking, and to help students understand how to take notes in a non-lecture format, have one or two students take minutes on class discussion each day. At the beginning of each class period, distribute, read, and make necessary amendments to these as students compare the minutes to their own class notes. The students will have a set of review notes to study from. Use to discuss the function of note-taking in learning (kinetic learning) as well as the function of recording.

*5. Have students complete an analytical exercise on the first day of class, to be repeated at the end of class, to gauge how far students have come in "higher order" thinking. This could be the completion of a multiple-choice pre-knowledge survey; an analytic description of a cinema frame or painting; a reading of a poem; a summary of a scholarly article; justification of an ethical/legal stance; etc.