Course and Syllabus Design

GradSTEP 2012

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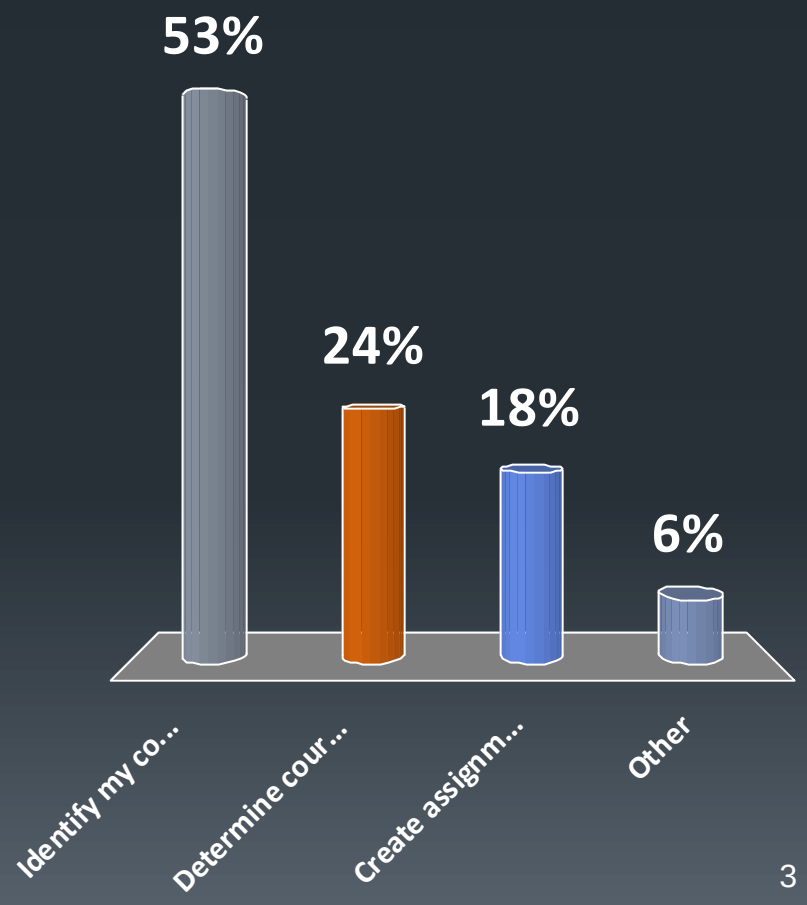
What did you bring?

Show of hands:

1. A draft syllabus
2. Syllabus from a course they completed
3. Draft assignment

My highest priority for this session is:

1. Identify my course goals and outcomes
2. Determine course content
3. Create assignments
4. Other



Workshop Structure

Today's Workshop Activities:

- Introducing Integrated course and syllabus design
- Reflection & writing
- Small-Group sharing
- Occasional report-out

Workshop Enduring Understandings

Significant learning experiences can be *designed* into the course. They are not random.

Workshop Enduring Understandings

Teaching, like all scholarly activity, is an evolving process of inquiry, experimentation, and reflection. Designing effective learning experiences is a *process* and an *outcome*.

Courses are dynamic across semesters as instructors gain experience.

Backward Design

What should students learn/take away from this course?

Learning Goals

How will I know if students are learning what they need to know?

Feedback & Assessment

Plan learning experiences and instruction

Teaching & Learning

From Understanding by Design by Wiggins and McTighe

The Best Course

Think about the best class you have ever completed.

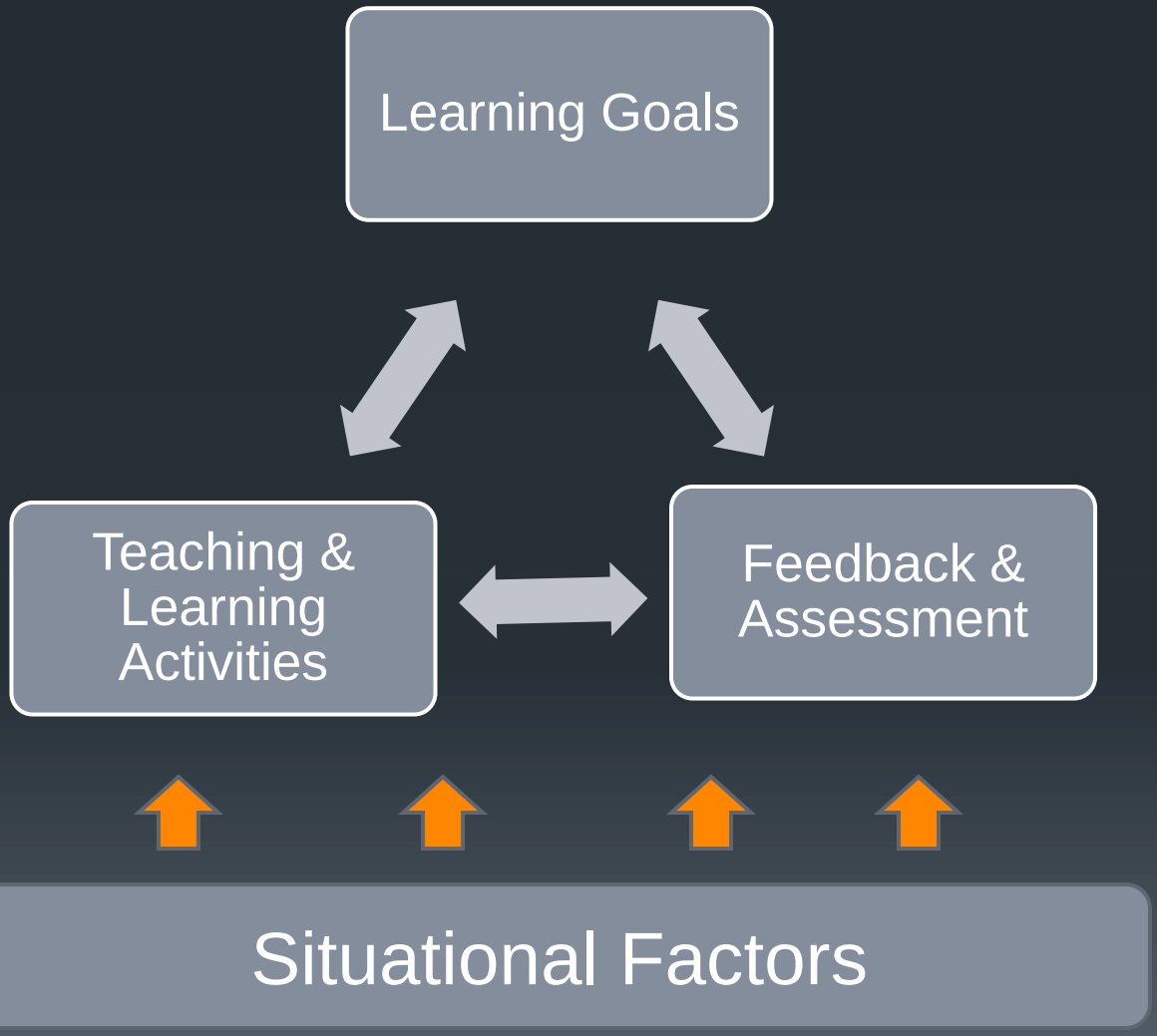
How was that class structured?

What content lessons do you remember?

Take a minute to think, then write a response to these questions.

Think, Pair, Share

Integrated Course Design



Source: *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* by Dee Fink, Ph.D.

Situational Factors

Questions to Consider:

1. What are the special instructional challenges of this particular course?
2. What is expected of the course by students? By the department, institution, profession, society at large?
3. How does this course fit into the larger curriculum?

See Step 1 Worksheet.

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Writing Learning Goals

Learning Goals:

What you want students to get out of the course.

What is important for them to learn and retain 2-3 years after the course is over?

What kind of thinking or application abilities do you want them to develop?

How do you want them to keep on learning after the course is over?

Step 2 Worksheet: Write your “Foundational Knowledge”, “Application” and “Learning How To” Goals. Share with a neighbor.

Learning Goals for Significant Learning

Significant Learning for students *integrates:*

Foundational Knowledge
Application
Integration
Human Dimension
Caring
Learning how to learn

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Planning Feedback & Assessments

In a Learning-Centered Model:

Assessments help students learn through:

1 Forward-Looking Assessment
2. Self-Assessment
3. Clear Criteria and Standards
4. FIDeLity (Frequent, Immediate, Discriminating, Lovingly delivered) Feedback

Source: *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* by Dee Fink, Ph.D.

Forward Looking Assessments

"In what kind of situation do I expect students to need, or to be able to use, this knowledge?"

Design a classroom exercise, essay, report, or other product.

Example from Business and Geography:

Imagine you are an advisor to a company that wants to establish itself in Tennessee. The company wants your opinion on which region of the state has the necessary workforce, infrastructure, purchasing power, and prospects for growth that signal its suitability for the company's investment.

See Step 3 Worksheet.

Source: *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* by Dee Fink, Ph.D.

Criteria and Standards

Teachers need to identify what counts as good work, and to share this with students.

Criteria: What are the traits and characteristics of high quality work in your discipline?

Standards: How good does the work have to be to rate acceptable? Exceptional?

See Step 3 Worksheet.

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Teaching and Learning Activities

To achieve Significant Learning, we need new Instruction Strategies.

Active Learning: “Involving students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing.” [meta!]

Students learn best when they engage ideas, concepts by using them.

Source: *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* by Dee Fink, Ph.D.

Active vs. Passive Learning

Passive Learning

Receiving Information and Ideas

Active Learning

EXPERIENCE

Doing

Observing

REFLECTION & DIALOGUE, with:

Self

Others

See Table 2.

Source: *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* by Dee Fink, Ph.D.

Active Learning

Integrating Experience, Information & Ideas, and Reflection

In Class:

Debates
Simulations
Guided Design
Small Group Problem Solving
Case Studies

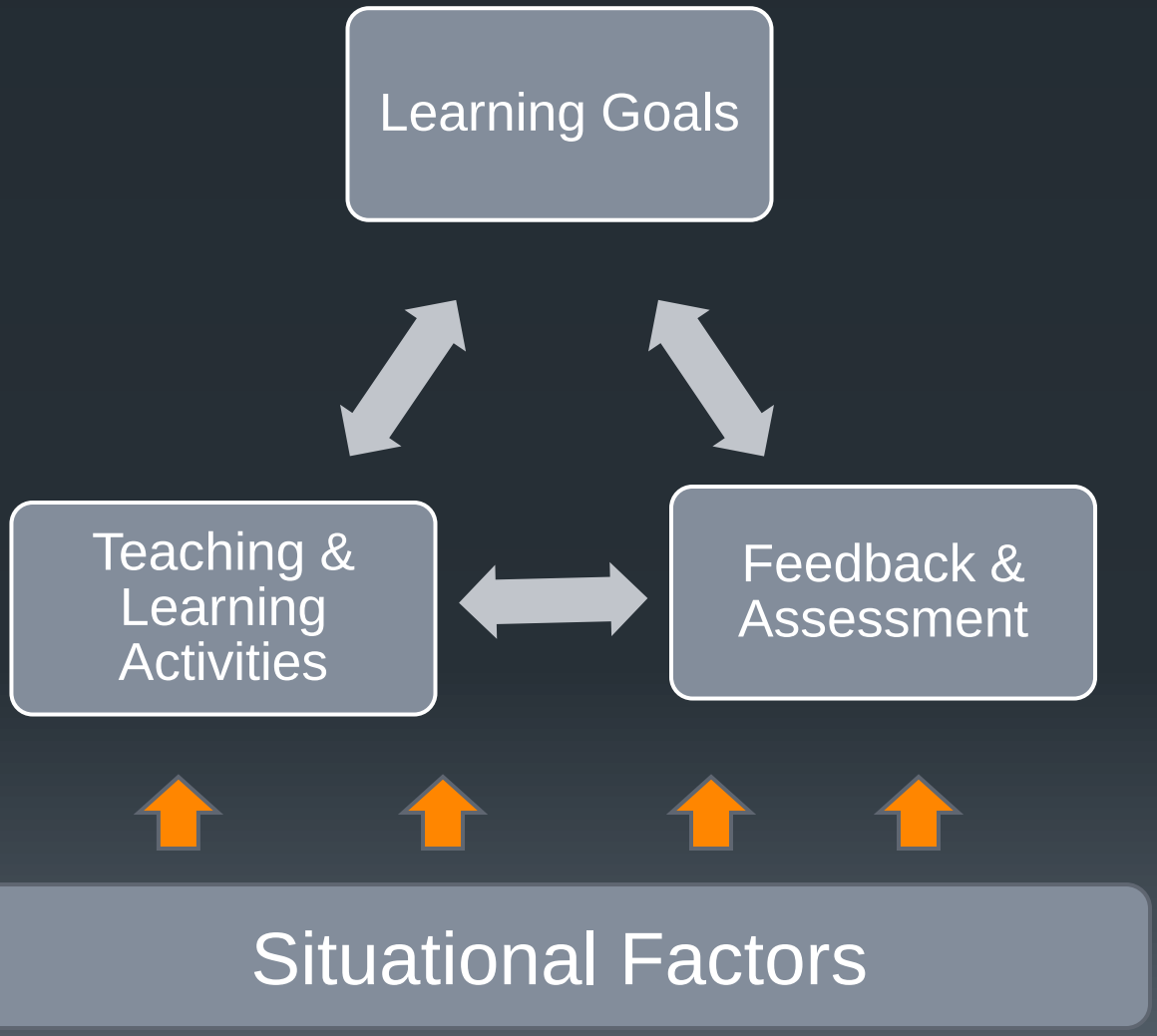
Out of Class:

Service Learning
Situational Observations
Authentic Projects

What kinds of active learning might work in your class? Write a minute paper about the activity, how it might work, and the resources you need.

Source: *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* by Dee Fink, Ph.D.

Integrated Course Design



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Integration

Check your work!

1. Situational Factors
    1. How well are these reflected in the decisions you made about learning goals, feedback & assessment, learning activities?

2. Learning Goals and Feedback & Assessment
    1. How well do your assessment procedures address all types of learning goals?
    2. Is your feedback giving student information about all the learning goals?
    3. Do the learning goals help students learn how to assess their own performance?

Integration

Check your work!

3. Learning Goals and Teaching/Learning Activities
    1. Do the learning activities support all your learning goals?
    2. Are there activities that do not serve any major learning goal?

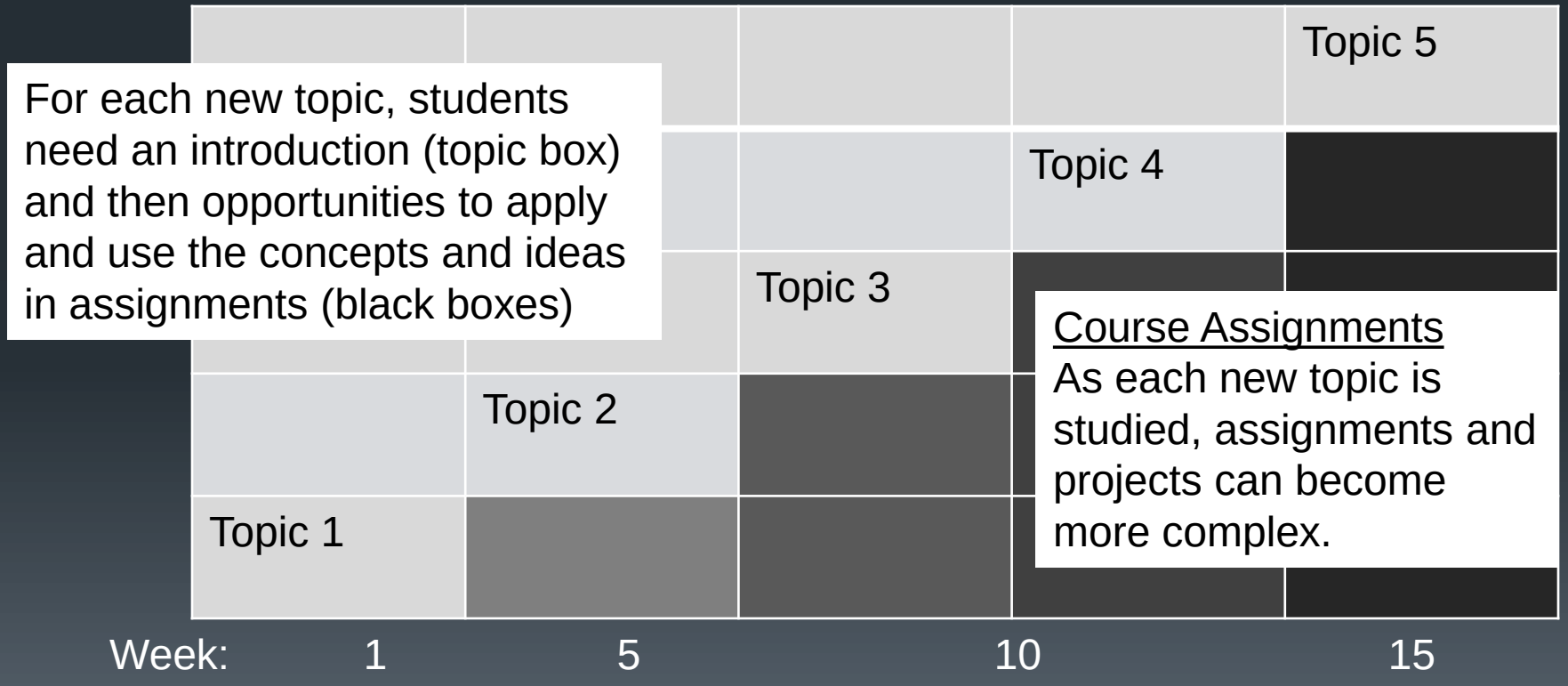
4. Teaching/Learning Activities and Feedback & Assessment
    1. How well does the feedback loop work to prepare students for understanding the criteria and standards that will be used to assess their performance?

Source: *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* by Dee Fink, Ph.D.

Syllabus Design for Significant Learning

I have my Learning Goals, Feedback & Assessments, Teaching and Learning Activities. Now what?

A Structured Sequence for Course Content



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Sequencing Course Content

Options to consider:

Micro/macro: Begin by describing a large complex phenomenon (macro perspective) or offer a detailed analysis of one aspect of the phenomenon (micro perspective).

Distal/proximal: Begin by presenting an immediate and pressing problem related to the field of study (proximal perspective) or by describing the origins, heritage or context (distal perspective).

Phenomenon/structure: Emphasize description and analysis of unique and significant events, people, or ideas (phenomenon) or emphasize description and analysis of theories, themes, and universal applications (structure).

Instructional Strategy

Arrange your teaching and learning activities so that complexity and energy for learning increases and accumulates as students learn each major topic in your course.

Set up activities that:

1. Prepare students for later work
2. Give them opportunities to practice -- with prompt feedback – doing what you expect them to learn to do
3. Assess the quality of their performance
4. Allow them to reflect on their learning

Activities can be in or outside of class.
See Worksheet 1.

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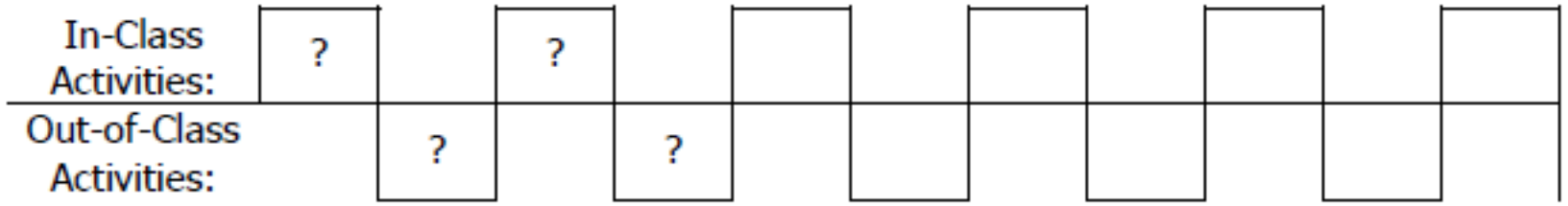
Instructional Strategy

Figure 8 - The "Castle Top" Template for Creating an Instructional Strategy



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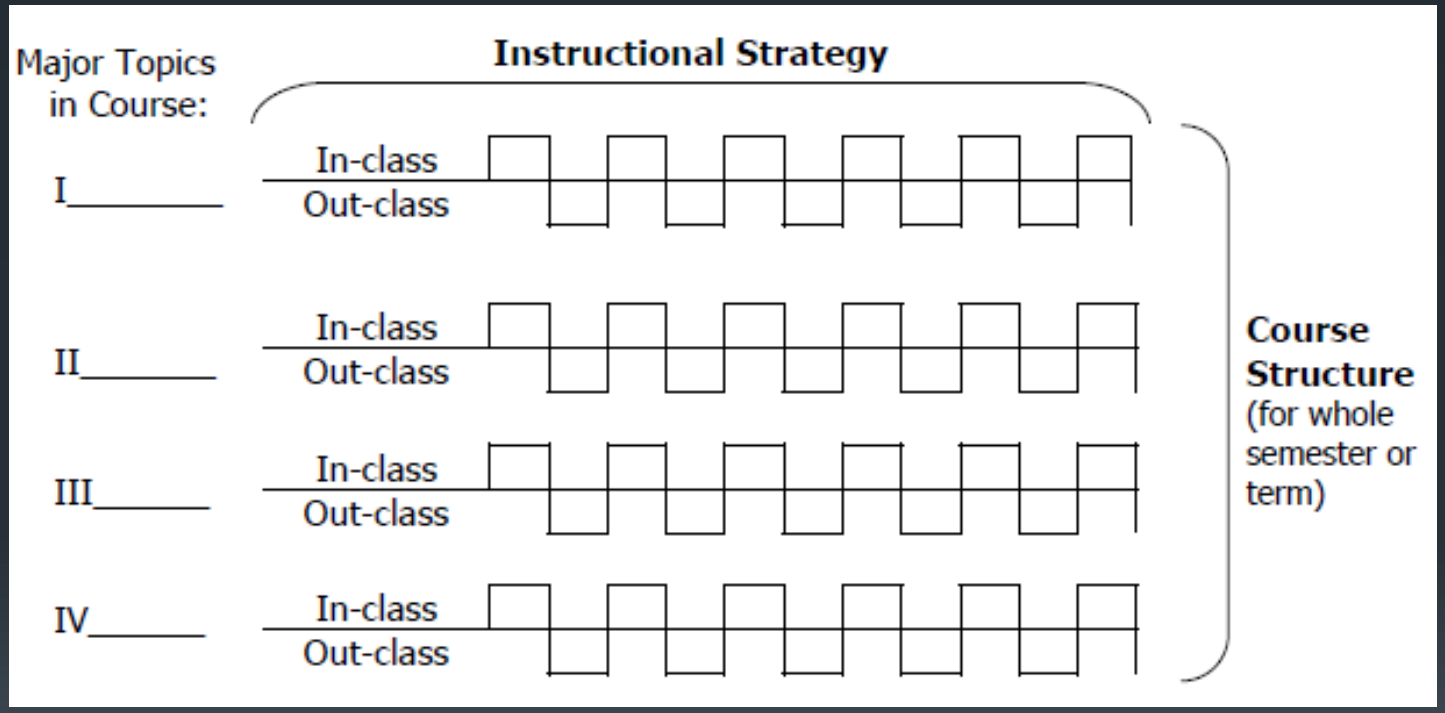

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Final Considerations

How will you grade?

- How will you grade students' success in meeting all your learning goals?
- What is the relative weight of each item?

Logistics, Course Policies, Classroom Management

How will you know if your course was successful?

- Collect feedback from students mid-term
- Schedule a Small Group Analysis from the CFT

See "Creating a Syllabus"

Course and Syllabus Design

Thank You

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