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1. Who and what do you teach?

I teach different sociological and anthropological courses on globalisation theories applied to marketing and management. 1. MSc in Engineering - Product Development and Innovation, 20-30 students; 2. Bachelors - Marketing, Management and Anthropology, 90 students and 3. Cand. Merc + Cand. Negot, 120-180 students

Group 1

The students are engineers, which means that many have a very practice-oriented approach. This can clash with sociological and anthropological theories that deal with more abstract matters. It is therefore a constant (but enriching) negotiation in making those theories applicable. I love teaching that course, but as we sometimes speak different academic languages, we have to continuously adapt to each other.
I try to make it easier to grasp, so there is more focus on practical applications. Luckily, the students don't need to be encouraged to voice criticism of the theories, which leads to interesting discussions, which I very much encourage. Theories are not carved in stone in this field, so discussions will contrast one theory with another, and lead to a better understanding of the course. In summary, my main challenge is making abstract theories applicable for the students, while staying close to the academic language.

Group 2

This new programme, Marketing, Management and Anthropology, offers a cultural approach to Business Studies where we focus much more on the anthropological side of society, the importance of cultures and cultural environments. I am teaching students in the first semester of their Bachelor degree, which means that they are fresh out of high school. Many of them are very idealistic, not pragmatic at all, and thereby completely opposed to the engineers in group 1. Others are very insecure, as university is a completely new experience for them. All in all, they are very enthusiastic about the course and its contents, but they have no structure of analysis. They have a lot of opinions, but their ability to engage in complex arguments and critical thinking is not very developed yet.
With this group, there are therefore more discussions, and more critical engagement whilst still giving structures for thinking, frameworks to ensure they are not voicing opinions without using arguments.

Group 3

The students in this group are either studying for the more traditional Cand Merc (Business Management) or Cand Negot (a joint programme between Humanities and Business). This means that they are familiar with the more cultural approach to business that I teach. However, many people from other programmes or countries also attend this course, and they are not necessarily familiar with this way of working/teaching.

As it is a difficult course, the students need a lot of help with their assignments. But due to their large number, I can't give feedback to all of them individual. I therefore work a lot with peer (student to student) feedback in this class, something I also do to some extent with group 2. The difference between the two groups is that group 2 needs more help starting the process, while most students in group 3 have written longer papers before. They therefore know what a good paper is, but they need more help structuring their argument, and developing complex ideas.

2. How do you use student or peer feedback?

I use it simply as a practicality, because I don't have the time to read 120-180 papers of 15+ pages multiple times. Moreover, students should have the abilities to critically assess each other's work at the Master's level, and they can learn from each other, because they see and discuss other examples of papers. As I tell them, we are all better critics than writers, so we learn better from seeing mistakes.
During the semester, there is usually at least one lecture devoted to explaining all the tools, and the rationale for using those tools. I prefer to explain the tools in detail, even though I know that some of them know the tools very well, but I prefer making sure that we are all on the same page, and that the students don't just see this as unpleasant tasks, but actual learning opportunities.

3. How do you facilitate peer feedback?

Blogs

I used blogs for the students to submit the subjects of their final (exam) paper. This, and the comments I provide on the subjects, helps them finding an appropriate subject by gaining inspiration from each other.

Wikis and peer feedback

With the largest group (120-180), I use Wikis for peer feedback. Briefly, the process I use has 3 steps: (1) the students create a wiki, and provide a 500 word abstract of their paper; (2) in groups of up to 9 people, the students read each other's' abstracts, and provide constructive feedback to each other; (3) they submit an improved version of their abstract in preparation for the face-to-face workshops.
Before the start of those interactions, I provide the practical information, explaining how to use wikis, including how to give useful feedback. I show a few slides about what constitutes good feedback, which mostly includes checking the logics of a paper and discussing the argument and format. I insist on constructive criticism. For instance I remind them that communication online can sound harsher than intended simply because we don't receive as much information from non-verbal cues as we would in face to face communication.
If the students don't see why this tool is used, the results are less good. From my learning over the last years, I have noticed that a clear explanation of the pedagogic rationale behind the use of a tool is extremely valuable: the students gained more from the peer feedback because they were engaged in it and understand why they are doing this.

Face to face- peer feedback

I also use peer feedback with the first year Bachelor group, but it is mostly face to face, as I don't want to overload them with new tools. They send a four page draft of their final paper to their study group and me, which we then discuss in workshops. Before the workshops, we will have had an exercise about "what makes a good paper". The students work mostly with peer to peer feedback, but sometimes, I add a few words of individual feedback. More generally, they however know that even if they don't receive individual feedback from me during the workshops, they are always welcome to discuss their subject with my co-teacher and me, which is why I am comfortable letting them give and receive peer feedback.

Group Discussion

During the lectures, I briefly explain a particular course theory, which the students then apply to a specific case, in groups. So for example this afternoon, we are going to discuss consumer resistance and I have created a 2x2 table of ways in which consumer resistance can be manifested. They will then have to come up with examples of the different forms of resistance, which they will share with other. It is an approach I use a lot, starting out individually and then moving to small or big groups. I don't necessarily ask all of them to present, but I will have been walking around during the group work, so I'm listening in and/or answering questions, giving formative feedback all the time. In front of the whole class, I can then make a summary of what I have heard in the discussions if the students are reluctant to share all their examples.

4. How do you support the students with course assessment?

Example Assignments

I gave the Bachelors students two (fictive) examples of exam papers, a good one and a bad one, and I asked them to vote for which one was the good one and which was the bad one. Only one student got it wrong but he soon put his hand down. I then let them work on the two examples, and identify all good and bad practices present in those papers. I use example assignments for them to know what the expectations are. One of the goals of this course is for the students to be able to write good papers, but since they have just come from High school, they have very different backgrounds and levels, so I need set the common criteria straight.

I chose this format because for years, I have explained the evaluation criteria, but it didn't make for better papers. Working with the examples, I am amazed with the results they come up with – most of the time, they manage to find all the evaluation criteria on their own. And when I look at the papers they send in subsequently, I can see that they have paid attention.

Student presentations

I only use presentations for small groups because I there is nothing more boring than having 20 presentations in a row. I divide up the compulsory articles that they have to read and then they have to present different articles to each other, so they don't have to read all the articles. Since I will not repeat this part of the course, they are in charge of their colleagues' learning. This has the double advantage that the presenters prepare well, and that the other students actually listen. Of course during or after the presentations, I correct potential misunderstandings so that the students don't go home with a mistaken version of the course.

5. Why do you think it's important that the students take responsibility for introducing articles and theories?

Making the presentations that way creates a sense of responsibility among each other, it means the students are going to make a good presentation not because they are graded on this (they are not), but because they would be making fools of themselves in front of the others. Also, they don't want to provide the others with incorrect information. This is why this technique only works in a small group in my opinion, there needs to be a feeling of community.

If a student does not do his/her share in a group, it is up to the group to manage that. This is also a way of letting the students take responsibility for their learning. I have noticed that most of the time, the students find a solution. It is also a learning moment for them, sorting out conflicts in group, and managing less active individuals. In their professional life, they are also going to encounter people like this, and they will have to manage these situations.

Journal Tool

I have used the Journal Tool for the students in the small masters group to record their three main learning outcomes from the course, the applicability of this learning for their degree and the subject of their final paper. I am very surprised by how many have done it, 25 out of 30. And I will summarise their postings today in class.