

Flipped Classroom Experiences in an Introductory Sociology Course

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Introduction and Overview

- What is a flipped classroom? (5 minutes)
- My experiences using a flipped classroom approach in an Introductory Sociology course (10 minutes)
- Example classroom activity (30 minutes)
- Results of using a flipped classroom (5 minutes)
- Discussion of the benefits of such an activity

The Flipped Classroom

- What is it?
 - "...the inversion of expectations in the traditional college lecture" (Berrett 2012).
 - Lower level cognitive work: Students gain first exposure to new material outside of class (usually via reading or lecture videos)
 - Higher level cognitive work: Students use class time to assimilate knowledge through debates, discussion, writing, or other problem-solving activities (Brame 2013)
- How did it emerge? (Berrett 2012)
 - Has been common in the humanities for decades
 - Emerged in STEM disciplines by the convergence of:
 - Technological innovation
 - Proof of "learning" (think: *Assessment!*)
 - Economic reality, or larger class sizes

My Experiences with a Flipped Classroom

- Moving from lecture (Fall 2013) to flipping (Fall 2014)
 - Even the most animated lectures are usually met with boredom
- What I did differently in the course design
 - The syllabus set aside days for discussion and current events
 - Much more regular preparation throughout the semester
- How students responded
- How it positively affected their grades

Example Activity: Starting Outside of Class



Example Activity: Continuing Inside the Classroom

Student Writing-to-Learn (WTL) prompt:

“Spend a few minutes thinking about the news clip you watched last night. How do you feel after watching this clip? What was the most important issue or concept that you learned from watching it?”

A WTL exercise is considered to be “low-stakes writing” and “low-stakes graded.” It is an informal assessment that simultaneously demonstrates:

- *That the student was in class on the day that the WTL was assigned (attendance)*
- *Whether or not the student completed the homework outside of class (low-stakes writing)*
- *Fulfillment of a small part of the student’s final grade (low-stakes grading)*
- *Please see Bean (2011) for more information!*

Thinking Sociologically

Second student WTL activity:

(Can be combined with previous activity or used separately)

- “Based on our discussions of the numerous current events taking place right now, select one to write about further. Why is this current event important to you? Why do you think various media outlets are covering it?”

They are then asked to “think sociologically” about the event and how it relates to course content:

- “Now, think about one of the main concepts of our chapter on Race and Ethnicity that you’ve already outlined on your own. How might you analyze the current event you chose from any of our sociological frameworks we’ve discussed? In other words, think like a sociologist!”

This is a way that students can demonstrate their knowledge of course material while being able to make sense of a relevant social issue. If planned carefully, students can use their WTL responses toward a larger, perhaps more formal end assessment such as a paper or project.

Benefits of this Type of Activity

- Overall, student performance on most assessments improved across semesters
 - Students took ownership of their learning
 - Participation/asking questions increased
 - Less time taking notes
 - Didn’t ask what was going to be on the exam (as much!)
- Students were able to connect course material to lived experiences and socially relevant examples
- Teaching evaluations improved across semesters

Comparing Results Across Semesters

Grades	Fall 2013	Fall 2014
Exam 1 Avg.	84.8%	85.6%
Exam 2 Avg.	85.1%	89.3%
Exam 3 Avg.	90.6%	90.1%

Fall 2013 = Traditional Lecture Format
 Fall 2014 = Flipped Classroom

Selected Teaching Evaluations and Scores (Ranges from 1 to 5, with 5 being "strongly agree")	Fall 2013	Fall 2014
Overall, I would rate this course as a valuable learning experience.	4.7	5
Overall, the PROFESSOR was effective.	4.8	5
TECHNIQUE: My professor communicated the material clearly and effectively.	4.8	5
TEXTS: Class resources (i.e., text, other materials) effectively contributed to learning.	4.6	4.9
LEARNING: As a student I can apply information/skills learned in this course.	4.6	4.9

Discussion

Selected Readings

Bean, John 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.

Berrett, Dan. 2012. "How 'Flipping' the Classroom Can Improve the Traditional Lecture. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved February 26, 2015 (<http://chronicle.com/article/How-Flipping-the-Classroom/130857/>).

Brame, Cynthia J. 2013. "Flipping the Classroom." Retrieved February 26, 2015 (<http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/flipping-the-classroom/>).

Fulton, Kathleen P. 2012. "10 Reasons to Flip." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 94(2): 20-24.

Moore, Amanda J., Matthew R. Gillett and Michael D. Steele. 2014. "Fostering Student Engagement with the Flip." *The Mathematics Teacher* 107(6): 420-425.

Sams, Aaron, and Jonathan Bergmann. 2011. "Flipping the Classroom." *Educational Horizons* 90(1): 5-7.