

MATH 8001

March 30, 2012

Managing large lecture courses

Reminder: Syllabus assignment due next Friday, April 6.

Any issues arising in your current teaching?

We have talked some about the classroom issues relating to large lectures. Now, we turn attention to managing large lecture courses.

Roles that include management tasks

1. A lecturer supervising discussion sections taught by more than one TA.
2. A course supervisor for a multi-lecture course.

Let's focus mainly on the first, since it is the role you are more likely to take in your near future.

Policy

<http://www.policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/GRADEACCOUNT.html>

Grade Accountability

Instructors in charge of a course with multiple sections or laboratories must take reasonable steps to ensure that grading across sections or laboratories is consistent.

By extension, the students' experience of the class must also be reasonably consistent.

Guiding principles:

A. Communicate.

Show students that the various components of the course are working toward the same objectives.

Carbone, *Teaching Large Classes*, SAGE, 1998.

“Communicate to students: this class is taught by a team.”

B. Your flexibility with policies decreases as the number of students increases and as the stakes increase.

Use the syllabus as your tool/contract for specifying the expectations of behavior and standards of success in the course.

Timeline:

a. Pre-semester meeting

especially important when TAs meet students before lecturer does

Timeline:

b. Post-discussion and post-lecture updates

This collection of emails can serve as your course diary, as discussed previously.

Make available notes from lectures, both for the sake of students and TAs.

Timeline:

c. Exams

- Give exams in lecture or discussion?
- Grade by problem, write detailed grading guide
- Establish a uniform recordkeeping system. Moodle.
- Collect exam data, publish suggested gradelines

Timeline:

d. Final grades

- Normalize for differences in grading.
- Establish a protocol for post-semester grade disputes.

From Grade Accountability Policy

The instructor who is in overall charge of a course offering is accountable for all grades given to students. Responsibility for grading or evaluating student work in a course may be assigned to a teaching assistant or grader but ultimate responsibility remains with the instructor for the course.

Students have the right to request and receive an explanation for a grade during and after the course but have no right to challenge the academic merits of any grade.

Students may seek an explanation for a grade until the end of the following semester (not including summer session). The instructor is obligated to provide an explanation for a grade within a reasonable time if a request is made by the end of the following semester. The instructor is not obligated to reconsider the grade.

Special issue

TAs managing TAs

Consistency is at least as important as correctness.

From Heppner, *Teaching the Large College Class*, Jossey-Bass, 2007.

- Large courses cant be ad-libbed.
- A bad policy is better than an inconsistent policy.
- Put it in writing.
- Start like Attila the Hun; finish as Mr. Rogers.