

# ONSITE TEACHING BASICS

Welcome to Academy of Art University! The information below is being provided to help you get started in the classroom. We want you to be successful as an instructor and hope that you utilize this as an easy reference guide. Please keep it handy and use it during the semester, starting with day one.

## FIRST DAY: INSTRUCTOR AND STUDENT INTRODUCTIONS

- ❖ **Start on time; take attendance from the LMS.**
  
- ❖ **Have the following information on the board for students to see:**
  - **Your name and contact information.** Students will want to know the best way to reach you if needed. (AAU provides instructors with an email account. This is the email that you should provide your students.)
  - **Course name, section number, day/time the class meets.** This will help ensure that students have come to the correct classroom.
  - **Agenda for the day.** (Writing a few bullet points about the day's agenda creates a sense of structure for students to see. This is a good practice to do each week.)
  
- ❖ **Introduce yourself** and share a little about your industry experience and how it relates to the course. Students will be interested in knowing about your professional background.
  
- ❖ **Get to know your students.**
  - Consider doing an **“icebreaker”** activity to learn who your students are. One useful first day “icebreaker” is to pair up your students and ask them to interview each other for a few minutes. They should find out basic information from one another such as their names, where they are from, areas of professional interest, hobbies, any relevant experience they may have in relation to the course, etc. Then, they introduce each other to the class. You’ll find that students are often more comfortable introducing someone else rather than themselves to a class and that icebreakers are useful for building rapport.
  - **Find out your students’ names** and whether they have any preferred names they like to go by. (International students often have other names they prefer to use.) Also, find out how their names are to be pronounced.
  - **Find out what your students already know** by assessing their existing skills, needs and interests. Some teachers use questionnaires or a pretest of concepts/vocabulary for the first day. The more you know about their capabilities, needs and interests, the more you can adapt your teaching to their needs and build on their skills and experience.
  - **Moving forward: Keep relationships with students professional in tone at all times, including all email, feedback.** While it is important to be friendly and approachable, it is essential to be respectful and to avoid violating boundaries of professionalism.

## FIRST DAY: COURSE OVERVIEW, POLICIES, AND AAU SUPPORT

- ❖ **Go over the course outline briefly and explain the skills that students will develop by taking your class.** Explain how the course fits into the major and profession. If possible, show samples of projects they will be doing or examples of industry work that employ the ideas or techniques they will be learning. The idea is to get students excited about what they are going to be able to accomplish as a result of taking your course.
- ❖ **Review the course supply list and any textbooks listed.** Do not make changes to items appearing on the supply or text lists. The information is published on our website, and students may have already purchased items in advance. Art supplies can be purchased for some courses at our 466 Townsend and 60 Federal buildings, as well as at local art supply stores. If you need any materials and or textbooks, please contact your department administrator. Do not borrow art supplies or materials from students.
- ❖ **Explain the AAU attendance and grading policies found on the syllabus.** Check with your department director to see if there is a department-wide policy you need to adhere to. Explain your policy for accepting late work. For absences that are unexcused, some teachers reduce grades by one full letter for each week an assignment is late; others do not accept late work at all to underscore the need for meeting professional standards. Whatever your policy is, it is important that students are aware of it and that you are consistent in enforcing it throughout the semester.
- ❖ **Academic Support:** AAU offers academic support for students through department workshops and ARC (Academy Resource Center). Workshop schedules will be posted in the department or in classrooms; check with the department to find out if workshops related to your course are offered. Be sure to remind your students of these resources at the beginning of the semester and at crucial times, when students may need more assistance.

## PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

- ❖ **Come to each class fully prepared.** You are expected to do the lecture/demo indicated on the syllabus, starting with the first session. Practice your demos in advance to insure they are professional and go smoothly. Make sure you have all materials needed, slides ready etc. before each session begins.
- ❖ **Start every session on time; don't let your class out early.** We ask for your cooperation in ensuring that classes are not let out early, even on the first and last days of the semester, as cutting class short violates our contract with the students and may be grounds for a student grievance. Please bring sufficient material and activities, and have students start their homework in class when possible, so you can insure they are on the right track.
- ❖ **Take attendance at the beginning of each class session.** The university relies on having accurate, up to date attendance information, as it can impact a student's financial aid and outreach by AAU support services. Submit the attendance immediately after your class through the LMS (online Learning Management System). If a student arrives after you have submitted attendance, you can edit the attendance within 24 hours of finishing your class.

## PLANNING THE CLASS SESSION

- ❖ **Follow the course syllabus and outline published on the LMS each week.** Please do not deviate from the syllabus because this is a legal contract with the students. It must be adhered to as it dictates what the students can expect from your course and from each session.
- ❖ There are **two components necessary to creating lesson plans:**
  1. Knowing what you're going to teach. Refer to the course outline to see lecture/demo, activities, and assignments for each session.
  2. Determining ways to figure out if your students were "getting it" through a progression of activities that will help build their skills.
- ❖ Ask yourself: *What do you want them to know how to do once they leave the class that day? How will you know if all students "got it"?* Think of ways to determine this, before they leave to do their homework. For example, have students complete a worksheet, take a quiz, or work on in-class practice activities.
- ❖ Ensure that sufficient time is blocked out for lecture and/or demonstration and that students have time to practice and apply what has been taught. Check in several times during each lesson to find out how each student is doing after each building block of information. The progression of your activities will vary according to what you are teaching.
- ❖ **When planning a lecture, it can help to organize your thoughts around a few key points or principles you want students to learn.**
  - **Outline your lecture in advance** to insure you remain focused when presenting material.
  - **Present visuals, examples for comparing and contrasting, or case studies that demonstrate the key points and principles of your lecture.** Don't just talk. Our students tend to be visual learners. This is especially important due to the large international population at AAU.
- ❖ Studies have shown that students are not able to remember information that is presented in lengthy lectures. With this in mind, try to **keep lectures to 10~15-minute segments and break up your session with other activities and coursework they can practice in class.**

## LECTURES: PRESENTING INFORMATION

- ❖ **Students tend to learn better by doing and experiencing, not by listening. Try and avoid creating a class where students are passive; keep them engaged by:**
  - **Breaking up your lecture by posing questions.** Think about questions that students can discuss in pairs as well. (Don't make the mistake of answering your own questions. Give students enough time to process and respond to your questions.)

- **Summarizing the most important points** you covered and **write** them on the board. Require that students take notes. This will help students understand what information to prioritize.
  - **Get all students interacting with the material** and with one another to create an environment that is truly engaging and effective. For example, show samples or case studies (strong to weak work) and use them as a basis for discussion in which students identify strengths and weaknesses, according to criteria you present. This kind of activity can be done by putting students into pairs to analyze the pieces and then write down their thoughts. Then you can call on a few students to share their opinions with the class. This is also a good way to gauge their understanding or clarify information they may not have fully grasped during your lecture. When students collaborate in the type of manner, they learn and retain information better.
  - Working on exercises or assignments in class.
- ❖ **It is important to communicate clearly and concisely. Speak loudly enough to be heard at the back of the room. Circulate or move while speaking; this will help you come across as more relaxed and natural.**
- Don't ramble on or worse, read exclusively from presentation notes or PowerPoint slides. If you're using a PowerPoint, explain each point by putting them into your own words. Don't just read what is there. Remember what kinds of presentations inspire *you*!
  - Show what you mean by **presenting strong and weak work to discuss and set clear expectations**.
  - It will be helpful to **go over vocabulary terms with your students in class** so that they can learn the concepts more effectively. This will also help them to develop the ability to utilize professional terminology when speaking.
  - For classes that have **international students**, remember to speak slowly and use clear, non-idiomatic language to help them understand. Please be sensitive to their challenges and mindful of the way in which you communicate.

## DEMONSTRATIONS

- ❖ **Show students a finished example of what the demo will cover** to orient them before doing the demonstration. Additionally, take time to review the supplies you will be using.
- ❖ **Explain what you are doing, and why, step by step** as you do the demonstration.
- ❖ **Avoid doing long demonstrations**; students will not be able to remember everything if overwhelmed with a lot of information. Instead, break your demos into small segments—and have the students immediately practice each segment in class. Move on to the next part of the demo after you've seen that students understand the previous segments.
- ❖ **Ensure that everyone can see and hear you**. Some students may be too shy to let you know that they are unable to see or hear what you're saying. It is important that you address this proactively.

## HOMWORK ASSIGNMENTS

- ❖ **Provide clear, precise assignment requirements in writing**, via handouts, course downloads or the board. Don't wait until the last few minutes of class to introduce homework, when it is likely to be rushed or specifics not covered well.
- ❖ **Show and discuss examples of what the homework should look like** and how it will be graded.
- ❖ **Start homework assignments in class when possible** to provide support to your students and ensure they're on the right track.
- ❖ **When possible, show examples of strong, mid-level, and weak work as you introduce new assignments.** This will help students understand in advance what to aim for and what approaches are problematic. When students have clear targets, they will usually meet or exceed them. Check with your department to see if sample assignments or rubrics are available for your class.

## CRITIQUING

- ❖ **Critiques are intended to help students improve their work** by addressing the main aspects of a piece that are working successfully, identifying areas that need revisions, explaining why the revisions are needed and providing tips that communicate how to improve. Be sure to go over these things in critiques. Post the criteria by which you are evaluating the work, to focus your critique.
- ❖ **Avoid long and lengthy critiques that would take up most of or the entire class time.** Focus the critiques on common successes and problematic issues and go over a handful of pieces in depth that addresses the principles and criteria for the benefit of the entire class. Then, you can meet each student individually or in small groups to provide personalized feedback while the rest of the class is working.
- ❖ **Base your critiques on objective, factual observations** related to the assignment criteria or rubric. Avoid a critique based on subjective, personal opinions. Relate your feedback to principles, so that students understand the broader context, not just the specifics that you ask them to fix.
- ❖ **Communicate in a manner that is thorough, constructive and respectful.** Be specific and to the point, so that the student knows what to focus on to improve. Again, please be mindful of our international students and speak slowly, using vocabulary that is clear for them to understand. When possible, use visuals to help reinforce your explanations.
- ❖ **Acknowledge each student by name** as you critique their work.
- ❖ **Encourage students to get involved with the critique** by asking them to offer their observations and suggestions; this can also be done in small groups.

## GRADING

- ❖ **Grade honestly.** Students need to be given honest assessments of their progress so they may know where they stand throughout the semester. Honest grading allows students to understand their level of skill relative to industry standards, and can serve as a catalyst for improvement. Please check with your department director to find out about the expectations for grading accurately and to avoid the possibility of giving inflated grades. Use a rubric for transparent, unbiased grading.
- ❖ **Grade on time.** Instructors are required to submit all progress, midterm and final grades on time. Students rely on grades to know if they are in good standing and to seek out workshop and tutoring support if needed. If grades are submitted late, it can impact a student's ability to make timely improvements. Additionally, students may not register for classes and in some cases, may impact their financial aid or not be allowed to graduate. For these reasons, we ask that all instructors get their grades in on time. Grades are formally submitted to the LMS four times during the Fall and Spring semesters: Week 4 (progress), midterm, week 11 (progress) and at the end of the semester. For the Summer semester, grades are submitted twice: midterm and at the end of the semester.

## HELP FOR STUDENTS

- ❖ The [Academy Resource Center](#) (ARC) provides help for students in need of assistance. Please note, it is ultimately up to each student to decide whether and how much to engage with the help offered.
  - [Workshops and Tutoring](#) | (415) 618-3865
  - [English Language Support](#) | (415) 618-3903
  - [Classroom Services \(accessibility resources\)](#) | (415) 618-3775
- ❖ The [Library](#) provides access to resources and databases that students can use for research assignments. Sign your class up for an Information Literacy session or take a tour of the Materials Library.
  - [Information Literacy Session](#)
  - [Materials Library Tour](#)

## INSTRUCTOR SUPPORT

- ❖ **Faculty Evaluation & Coaching** offers support to instructors throughout the semester via in-class observations, training visits, phone calls and email. To learn more, please visit: <http://faculty.academyart.edu> | (415) 618-3855 | [facultyevalcoach@academyart.edu](mailto:facultyevalcoach@academyart.edu)
- ❖ **Please speak with your department Director, Lead, and or Coordinator** for advice on best practices, grading, obtaining examples of previous student work to show in class, course content, etc.