

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

From Bill to Law: A Hands-On Exercise

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

In this government course, students craft a legislative bill and debate it. The instructor randomly divides the class into two teams: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Each team drafts a realistic bill, which must follow the correct format and address how to implement the law if passed. The teams submit their bills in class the day prior to the debate. On the day of the debate, one member from each team introduces the team's bill.

Because time and space are limited, the two teams debate each bill as a whole class, with each team defending their bill. The instructor allots 15 minutes of debate time for each bill. Members have 30 seconds each for questions and 1 minute is allowed for a response. All students must participate in the debate and have unique supporting evidence for their respective team's bill.

After debating the bills, the class votes to pass or reject each bill. The two chambers submit passed bills to the "President" (the instructor) to accept or veto. In the case of a veto, the teams then vote on whether to override the veto.