

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Real World Law Enforcement Training Strategies to Engage Students

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

This instructor brings real-world peace officer training strategies into the classroom to engage students in collaborative and contextualized learning experiences. By employing strategies obtained through peace officer instructor training, the instructor encourages students to take ownership of their classroom experience through a variety of active learning opportunities: simulated roll call, weekly team presentations, and an experiential learning assignment.

Simulated Roll Call

Because this course is part of the peace officer training program, the instructor begins each class with a roll call that simulates what officers do at the beginning of their shift. During this time, the instructor takes attendance, provides any important updates, and then introduces a current event based on a real-world law enforcement scenario, such as a local homicide or mass shooting. The instructor uses this time to engage students in a large class discussion. While the nature of the topic and its relevance to the course content typically generate participation, the instructor prompts the discussion with a question. For example, the instructor may ask, “If you were the investigator on this case, what would you look for first?” The instructor then asks everyone to answer individually. After each student provides a response, the instructor then shares their own perspective and lets the students ask questions.

Weekly Team Presentations

At the beginning of the semester, the instructor randomly assigns students to a “team” that will serve as their learning partners throughout the course. Student teams participate in a weekly flipped classroom style activity and deliver a presentation. In providing the primary ground rules, the instructor states, “There will be differences of opinions, be understanding, and work as team.” There are three main components of this activity: 1) reading the assigned chapter, 2) conducting a presentation, and 3) writing an individual paper. The entire class is assigned the same chapter; however, each team determines what topic within the assigned chapter they want to cover. In addition to the course textbook, students are provided with an outline of the chapter and expected learning objectives. The teams work independently outside of class to create a presentation. During the next class period, each team presents their topic—each student is expected to play a role and students are graded on participation. The entire class may ask questions at the end of the presentation, and then the instructor provides immediate feedback, adding any additional information that may have been overlooked. The instructor stresses the importance of learning to present in front of others because this is something they will be expected to do on the job, especially if they advance to a leadership role or become a training officer. The day of the presentation, each student submits a one-page individual report of their team’s topic. The goal of the report is to ensure that each

student learned the material and to help students develop their writing skills. Writing reports is an important skill in law enforcement; therefore, the goal is to help students learn to support an argument using evidence and to write using appropriate grammar. As such, the instructor provides written feedback to each student on their reports.

Experiential Learning Assignment

Another important part of the class is an experiential learning assignment. For this activity, students work with their preferred law enforcement agency to learn about a job they are considering. For example, a student who wants to work as a correctional officer may schedule a visit to a jail, or a student who wants to be a patrol officer may schedule a ride-along. Students are then required to submit a two-page report of their experiences, discussing what they learned about the job. As with the other paper, grammar and the student's ability to support an argument using evidence are the most important elements, and the instructor provides feedback accordingly.

How to Ensure Participation in This Innovative Teaching Practice:

The real-world examples tend to be more engaging for students. The instructor monitors discussions to see if students are “hooked” into the discussion and calls on each student to provide a response to prompts.