

Classroom Scenarios

Below you will find a number of scenarios drawn from reported classroom events. In each case, consider two questions: What can you do now to address this situation? What could you do to avoid (as much as possible) this situation in the future?

1. You begin a new unit in your course. As you start introducing the material, you notice the all-too-familiar “glazed eyes”, doodling, and general lack of attention from your students.
2. You discover as you grade an assignment that students have taken as historical fact something that was misrepresented and popularized in a current, popular film or television show. Because of this, the students completely “miss the mark” with the assignment.
3. You design an all-class discussion activity based on the readings for the day. Instead of participating in the discussion, students sit there and passively stare at you, creating an uncomfortable silence. Later, when confronted, students complain that they DID do the readings, but there is “too much information” in the text and they can’t memorize it all.
4. You realize that students seem to understand the content that you have presented to them, but only in the context of your presentation. They claim that they understand the material completely when you are up in front of the class presenting it, but when they study after class they cannot reproduce the same intellectual results with same material.
5. You assign a written project that requires students to compare and contrast, critique, or analyze a topic of study and realize that students have no idea how to go about doing these activities. They complain about the project and ask you to tell them “what you want”.
6. You are now at the end of a unit of study and you think that, by and large, your students understand the material as it has been presented. But based on overheard conversations between students and discussions you have had with them, you suspect that the students still have no concept of how this learning will be applied to their eventual professional situations.

