

Teaching Tips for Adjunct Professors

Welcome to UC Hastings! We're grateful to have the benefit of your experience and expertise in the classroom. Even if you have prior teaching experience, you may find it helpful to review the following book, which goes into much greater depth than does this tip sheet regarding the characteristics and practices of the best law school professors: Michael Hunter Schwartz, Gerald F. Hess & Sophie M. Sparrow, *WHAT THE BEST LAW TEACHERS DO* (2013) (available at <https://www.amazon.com/What-Best-Law-Teachers-Do/dp/0674049144>).

Student course evaluations of other adjunct professors at UC Hastings reveal a handful of practices that distinguish many of our most highly-rated adjunct faculty:

- Our students feel fortunate to have access to adjunct faculty whose teaching is grounded in practice.
- Students especially prize organization, including well-planned syllabi and lectures that work clearly toward learning outcomes for each class day.
- Relatedly, students reward with praise faculty who helpfully provide “roadmaps” by telling students what will be covered and fulfilling that promise each class day.
- Students especially appreciate when assigned reading materials are appropriately edited. A rule of thumb is that for each class hour, up to 25-40 pages of reading is typically assigned.
- Students also appreciate when faculty directly link assigned reading to in-class lectures and discussions.

In short, the most positively reviewed faculty are organized, provide clear sign posts regarding what is being covered in the course and each class day, carefully curate reading materials, and link class discussion to assigned readings.

The rest of this tip sheet focuses on a few additional pedagogical issues about which new adjunct faculty typically have questions, including tools for enhancing student engagement, working with teaching assistants, providing feedback, and being available outside of class. If you have any questions about teaching, please feel free to reach out to Academic Dean Morris Ratner (ratnerm@uchastings.edu).

1. Enhancing Student Engagement

- Set the expectation that all students will do the reading and participate in class from the first day of class.
- Be clear about expected reading and preparation time. The usual rule of thumb is three hours of preparation for each hour of class time. Take into account the density of the material, the type of course, and the structure of the class session

when assigning the number of pages to be read ahead of time.

- Make class participation a substantial portion of the student's grade (10-50%).
- "Cold call" on students.
- Use the Socratic Method. Ask many more questions of students, rather than providing answers via lecture. Place the onus on students to keep the discussion moving.
- If you ask a question that students do not answer, break them up into groups of two and have them find the answer and report back to the class.
- Distribute discussion questions in advance of class.
- Ask students to formulate a critical question regarding the reading prior to coming to class.
- Take the last two minutes of class and ask students to write down what they do not understand, and begin the next class by clarifying those questions.
- Prepare problems or exercises for students to work on in class and then report back to the group.
- Ask students to answer a short quiz (yes/no, multiple choice) at the beginning of class, and then reveal the correct answers through class discussion over the course of the class.
- Divide the class up into groups and make each group responsible for discussion questions on a particular day and topic.
- Have the students draft short response papers in advance of class that you then can use to stimulate discussion.

2. Working with Teaching Assistants

- In courses with teaching assistants, which are not usual, maintaining close and continuing communication is crucial.
- Fully share course objectives and any course adjustments.
- Regularly meet with teaching assistants to provide direction, to get their feedback regarding both their own and individual student concerns, and as part of the monitoring of their performance.
- Visit the Faculty Resource Page for information on working with teaching assistants, or contact Laurie Zimet in Academic Support for further guidance.

3. Providing Feedback

- Utilize mid-semester assignments, e.g., simulation exercises, journal entries, short quizzes, practice examinations, paper drafts.
- Provide written and/or oral feedback before a next assignment is due.

4 Being Available Outside of Class

- Schedule at least two hours per week outside of class to meet with students individually.
- Consider meeting times other than just before or after class.
- Consider using Skype or Facetime to offer additional ways for students to meet with you without your having to come to campus.
- Contact Roz Foy (foyr@uchastings.edu) in the Academic Dean's Office to arrange on-campus space and meeting times for student office hours.