

Active Learning in General Ed. Course

I am teaching assistant in Department of Urban And Regional Studies. I actually don't lecture but I assist Professor for teaching General Ed. Course, URBS 100, Introduction to city since fall 2009 and having a great experience of service learning from this teaching. As this is general Ed. course, its major target is to make student aware of certain field and in this case is about the urban affairs. This topic is obviously not new to all but the case is that most of have not thought it seriously though these are all about the daily life activities. Teaching this course has to cover very vast area in one semester.

Active learning is one of the best ways that I have experienced in this nine month of my teaching field to engage students actively in learning process in class and make them alert on those topics even outside the class and let them learn more by themselves about the city, society, individual, culture religion, tradition, diversity, basic needs and the administration of the city. These all activities are very used to all, but had never realized by most. So, Group Discussion is the best way for teaching this course for exploring and sharing the ideas and to know more about the new world in and around.

In this Course, Students are given some questions based on exercise of text book and some Project lists to do in group. They are set in number of groups of 4 or 5 in class. They do discussions in class and share their own views/opinions and come up with some result as group summary. Thus doing this, they get chance to share their ideas with diverse group of people they are living around, know their ideas, lifestyles and will have habit of thinking about the experiences of their doings and observing which not only make them learn about the topic they are covering in course but will also make them alert and keep learning in every activities.

The development of self confidence in student and internal personality is another thing that I observed in class while doing these activities. One student was scared to speak in group at beginning of spring semester, but now she feels so comfortable in presenting her group summary. Extra credits for the involvement in the events like frontier forum and other

conferences has its separate advantage and goal of making students more alert and active. Professors always start her class with some questions from students to her. This is another effective way to make student alert on the topic they had already covered and make them ready for the day.

The text book information and experiences they learn through these discussion obviously make them more knowledgeable ,good initiator, self analyzer and decision maker in any other kind of job they do . Almost all of the projects are in team work. For the last final project which gives a whole general idea of city and urban affairs, they are supposed to choose their own group with whom they feel more comfortable based on experience they had in whole semester in doing previous assignments. I got surprised that they came up with a group and most of them have diverse group which is good sign of being active in learning process. One another project I have seen as very helpful to the students which gives them sense of being a part of the community they are living is the City council meeting project in which they actually have to be in the real meeting of city and experience it and do similar kind of project in class as a play with some given issues ,discuss with an act as if they themselves are council member and public in city council meeting. This made student more active in ongoing matters of the city and some are still participating in regular council meeting.

I have reviewed the group summary and all other assignment papers by students. It's good to have that experience of analyzing how the students are doing and learning and if they are getting 100% of what is discussed in class. Consultations to student individually have made them more comfortable to talk with me rather than talking directly with Professor. More than other I am having experience of the quote that I usually hear and it is true.

“Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand.”