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Checklist before class:  
---- Are texts in the bookstore?  
---- What are library resources for the course?  
---- Have you looked at the classroom?  
---- Do you have enough copies of your syllabus?  
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### HINTS FOR FIRST CLASS SESSION

1. Arrive early for the first class meeting, because it allows you an opportunity to become comfortable in the situation and make any last minute arrangements for the unexpected. Among your “advance work” activities is the greeting and chatting with people as they arrive for your course.
2. Welcome students to the course as you call the session to order on time. Write the course title on the board so that any students arriving after you start will know immediately whether or not they have found the right classroom.
3. Introduce yourself by telling the students about why you are qualified for what is forthcoming. Relax and tell them in an anecdotal way some of the riches that you will bring to the classroom. Beware of falling into any traps of eroding your credibility by nervous statements, such as, “I’ve never taught before,” or “This course is new for me, too.” Remember you are hired as the expert: now relate this to the students.
4. Students next need to introduce themselves to the entire group. Openness is most helpful to this process as it helps create the atmosphere of the mutuality of resources that we can be to each other. Facilitate the sharing, or use another approach, such as, dividing the students into groups of two with a five minute break to get acquainted; then each person takes a turn introducing the other person from the group. These introductory activities are well worth the investment of the time, in order to establish a community in the learning enterprise.
5. Why did you take this course? Inquire for general interests, majors, backgrounds, student status, or any expectations. Although most people will be reticent to express too much at first, you would like to learn whom your learners are and what they wish to learn. One way to facilitate input is to ask student s to identify some problems or issues they expect to investigate in this course.
6. Introduce your course. Depending on the length of the class session and frequency of class meetings you might want to spend more or less time on giving the students the general outline of the course. In a longer session it might include your initial lecture or presentation of materials.
7. Distribution of syllabus. This item should not be confused with the preceding one. It may be done in conjunction with the above, but once the students have the course information in hand, it will need to be interpreted. This is particularly true of assignments and grading policies. Invite questions about specific items enumerated in the syllabus. Two ingredients, among many, that should be incorporated into the syllabus are of such importance that they deserve special mention. Course objectives (four to six global ones), which you expect all students to strive to

reach should be included in the syllabus. Also include a set of “tentative” topics and activities for the semester; make these “tentative” because your data collection may require subsequent modifications. Briefly, by illustration, relate activities and assignments to course objectives. In other words, let the students know where you want them “to go” academically and why.

8. Testing. Give students some hints about how to study for YOUR exams. A diagnostic evaluative instrument is sometimes administered during the first class session to discern each student’s level of preparation for accomplishing the course material at hand. Results can be helpful for reorganizing instructional objectives, counseling students, and investigating academic support avenues.

9. Textbook(s). The opportunity of a good text can be the greatest of resources. Explain to the students its assets and utilization in your course so that they know how their investment will benefit their learning. Never demean a text because the negatives will undermine the hope you have for a learning atmosphere during the first meeting and the value of the text as one (of many) learning resources. A collective class critique of the text at the conclusion of the course may be of value as decisions are made regarding text selection for subsequent semesters.

10. Don’t forget to give students a break every 1½ hours. If the span of attention wanes earlier, don’t try to accomplish one more thing. You can always begin where you left off by reviewing your previous points. (It should also be noted that the order of nos. 6-9 is not sacred, but the discrete tasks involved with each should not be confused with each other.) If you wish to keep the introduction of the course distinct from the initial lecture, you may want to have a break between the two.

11. Administrative matters, such as verification of the class list need attention at some point. It is recommended that the class roll not be taken at the beginning of the first class, but later when you judge that you will have all in attendance. If you need a telephone tree, circulate a list in order to get telephone numbers for unseen emergencies connected with cancellation of class.

12. At the end of class (please end class on time), summarize or better yet have student summarize the most salient points of instruction. Students’ feedback, right from the start, is invaluable. Make assignments for their homework and relate these to your goals and objectives for the course. Set the stage for the content of the next class.

13. Stay around after the dismissal of class so that the visiting begun earlier can continue. It will always help to relate more about yourself as well as having a chance to clarify any areas that the students may not understand.

14. Extend your academic colleagues the courtesy of erasing the chalkboard when you are finished!

15. Above all enjoy this and each class because your enthusiasm will be contagious!

Have a wonderful semester!