Chapter 7: The Techniques of Teaching

Abstract: How should we teach to best enable learning? This chapter discusses techniques from which instructors in the Department of Social Sciences can draw in order to maximize cadet learning and development. This chapter should not be considered a “how to,” but rather a selection of principles and “best practices” drawn from the literature of teaching and learning. Ultimately, how instructors choose to structure their classroom must be shaped by the personality and style of the instructor. This chapter is designed to help instructors find the right techniques to fit the substance of the lesson, their students, and their style of teaching.

There are undoubtedly as many ways to teach a given lesson or topic as there are teachers. How you go about teaching is often determined by a variety of influences: the need to match techniques to material; your past educational experiences; your desire to involve students in a meaningful manner; and your aspiration to vary techniques to sustain interest within a particular group of cadets. The solution you derive will also be shaped—as it should be—by your personality and teaching style.

This chapter provides a variety of techniques and some suggestions that you might find helpful in devising approaches that reinforce your teaching style and natural strengths.

Incentivizing Lesson Preparation

One of the central challenges facing instructors is getting students to prepare for each lesson. A frequently heard discussion point among first-year instructors is the observation that many cadets inadequately prepare for class, if at all. There are several contributing factors to this phenomenon. First, as noted earlier in Chapter 6, cadets have numerous demands placed upon their time. In addition to heavy academic loads each semester, cadets also have various military obligations, sports participation, and other extra-curricular commitments that place demands upon their time. Second, new instructors teaching core courses in the disciplines of political science and economics may find that some cadets perceive social science courses as less important in comparison to other required courses. This perception is undoubtedly linked to the
third contributing factor, which is that cadets, when in a time-constrained environment, will often choose to complete immediate pay-off assignments, such as a graded problem set, over assignments such as pre-lesson reading.

Given these challenges, new instructors should give some thought to how they will incentivize their students to prepare for class. Though certainly not exhaustive, there are several approaches discussed below.

- Communicate High Expectations. Through both verbal and non-verbal cues, create a climate of high expectations in your classroom. Expecting more out of cadets – and frequently communicating that expectation in the classroom – will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Additionally, you will find that you need to tailor your expectations to the individual student.
- Pop Quizzes. Some instructors find that the pop quiz, or reading quiz, is an effective way to incentivize cadet preparation for class.
- Classroom Participation. Some instructors incorporate a requirement for cadets to come to class with a summary of the day’s assigned reading. At the beginning of class, cadets are then randomly selected to summarize and/or critique the day’s reading.

**Maintaining Perspective**

Veteran instructors emphasize over and over again that it is vitally important to provide a unifying perspective on the course as a whole. The challenge arises from the fragmentation of the subject into a sequence of individual 55-minute lessons. Imparting to students the unifying themes, integrating concepts, and threads of continuity that run through the course is an essential first step in helping you students tie the lessons together in an orderly way. Several techniques can assist you in keeping your course in perspective and on an even keel. One of the most valuable is to allow a few minutes for summation at the end of each hour in order to enable students to synthesize key ideas developed thus far. You might want to call upon a cadet to summarize the lesson to see if the main points were grasped. This technique is an excellent feedback mechanism. Brief discussions of the high points of the next lesson can be also be useful in helping cadets to integrate the material and to focus their studies.

The day’s lesson also can be set in perspective by requiring cadets to open their notebooks automatically to the course outline at the beginning of each hour; discussion of the lesson can then follow by relating it to the past lessons or lessons. In the broad outline a sense of continuity can be achieved by including the lesson title and a few points from the last lesson in separate blocks above and below the outline of the day.

Providing an over-all perspective is a continuous task throughout the course, but its importance increases during the last few lessons. Instructors agree that review is important not only because repetition helps to drive home major points, but also because a course overview can help cadets to see the course as an integrated whole. It can also be useful to devote time at the end of each block to summation, review, and questions.
Choosing Methods of Instruction

Your choice of instructional methods, several of which are listed below, is governed partially by what the students already know and partially by the nature of the subject. Consider these methods as a toolbox from which you can choose as appropriate. Methods can be categorized into three basic approaches: discussion methods, application methods, and audiovisual methods.

The Discussion Method

Because discussion is a familiar and comfortable way to exchange ideas and reach conclusions, it is ideally suited for use in the classroom and applicable to most methods of instruction. You can use discussion as a means of promoting reflective thinking, generating and improving creative expression, and promoting effective collaboration. The fundamental premise of teaching through discussion is that it is more important to teach how to think than to what to think, thus enabling cadets to operate comfortably in the realm of complex and ambiguous ideas.5

Learning is often more effective when cadets ask questions relevant to a particular problem being examined and when cadets themselves attempt to answer the questions.6 When the discussion is going well, group interaction tends to be predominantly student-directed and the emotional and intellectual involvement of students is at a maximum. Your objective is to guide the substantive content of the discussion and to help the group use its creative potential.

In order for discussion to be effective as a teaching technique, instructors should consider how best to craft an environment in the classroom conducive to fruitful discussion. These considerations include the arrangement of the desks in the classroom, your position within the classroom, and your responses to cadet contributions.7 To enable fruitful discussion, cadets should feel as though the classroom is a place to exchange ideas, not just receive information from the instructor. Above all, instructors should strive to create a “natural” learning environment where students encounter the skills and information they are striving to learn embedded in the questions driving the discussion.8

Some additional techniques to encourage classroom discussion are listed below:

1) Generating interest, perhaps by dramatizing the problem or startling the section; instructor enthusiasm is almost is almost indispensable here;
2) Setting the climate of discussion by creating a friendly and warm atmosphere;
3) Restating points in a clear, understandable way that can lead to further group effort, as well as periodically summarizing so as to give concrete expression to progress being made;
4) Showing appreciation of things said;
5) Stimulating the reticent into being participants and holding the excessively verbose in check;
6) Providing knowledge or expert opinion to expand the cadets factual base on which they can begin to think meaningfully about certain problems; and finally,
7) Encourage reflection before response. Don’t be too quick to answer your own question if no one immediately responds.9
Questioning

Questions are important in every teaching approach. Your skill in conducting a discussion depends to a great extent on your ability to apply the questioning technique. William H. Burton, in *The Guidance of Learning Activities*, comments on the difficulty of mastering this technique:

> The actual technique of questioning is one of the most difficult and, oddly enough, one of the most neglected problems in teaching. It remains a constant problem for many good teachers. Good questioning requires the ability, native or acquired, to think quickly and easily while facing a class, to shift and change as thought progresses, and to phrase questions in clear and unambiguous terms.

A lead-off question can open up the general area for discussion, whereas a follow-up question can guide discussion. Follow-up questions also apply where you want a student to consider an idea more deeply or to explain something more thoroughly, or when you need to bring the discussion back to a point from which it strayed, or when you want to include a reticent student in the discussion.

To be effective, questions should be short, unambiguous, and linked to a desired learning outcome. It is considered a best practice to prepare your questions ahead of time, thus allowing your questions to be integrated into the lesson plan. Not only should you think about the content of your questions ahead of time, you should also give some thought to how you will deliver the question. There are four basic forms of delivering questions, and each is discussed below.10

1) The Default. The default method is to ask the question, pause briefly, and then call on someone by name. This delivery method gives all cadets in the class a moment to consider the question and formulate a possible response before someone is called upon.

2) The Directed Question (aka the “cold call”). This method involves calling on a student by name, pausing, and then asking the question. The directed question may be effective in getting the attention of a particular student; however, the drawback is that the remaining students in the class may lose interest in the question.

3) The Volunteer. This method involves asking the question, pausing, and waiting for a cadet to volunteer. This technique is especially effective when the question relates to conceptually challenging course material. You may find it awkward to wait for a response; however, research shows that waiting up to ten seconds before rephrasing the question is optimal.11

4) The Choir. Ask the question, pause briefly, and then prompt the entire class to answer in unison. This method is most effective when trying to reinforce a simple but important concept.

**Discussion Techniques**

Several specific techniques for guiding discussion are provided below.
The “Any questions on the lesson” Approach

By initiating a class period with an appeal for cadet questions, you can often strike an extemporaneous note that stimulates cadet comments and arouses interest. However, questions will sometimes touch on impertinent matters, in which case the reply should be limited. This “play it by ear” approach allows maximum flexibility in the development of the lesson. On the other hand, you may use this time as a routine question period of limited duration preliminary to a more orderly development. At some point in the course it is appropriate to take general questions on the course to date, as well as to pursue review questions.

Open Discussion

An instructor can refer cadet questions to another cadet in the section. This method, which is often effective, tends to initiate a discussion in which the instructor participates primarily as a monitor or arbiter while the cadets effectively reach out by themselves. Personal involvement of the student in this way tends to wet his or her appetite for further participation. You should try to get all cadets “committed,” but care must be taken that the discussion stays on course and not too many points are raised at one time. Particular attention must be paid to the means of transition from one point to the next; the intervention of the instructor with a transitional statement or new point can be an effective way to redirect discussion.

Raising Topics for Discussion

An instructor can introduce a question or a problem, perhaps keyed to a discussion question listed in the syllabus, and refer it to the section either by asking for volunteers, or addressing it to a specific cadet. This method tends to start a discussion tied primarily to the instructor. A good “starter” question will, at a minimum, have the merit of defining the problem or raising the issues for analysis. The use of quotations from a variety of sources – speeches of public figures, passages from a philosophical, literary, or political work, or even from cadet writing – has the merit of not only being interesting but also thought provoking in that the quotation must first of all be understood in relation to the lesson. An example might be the juxtaposition of the following quotations, used to raise the issue of bureaucracy and government:

Yes, bureaucracy subverts democracy.

I believe it is time for us to declare our independence from governmental bureaucracies grown too large, too powerful, too costly, too remote, and yet too deeply involved in our day-to-day lives. Even though there are many things government must do for people, there are many more things that people would rather do for themselves.

-Gerald R. Ford

No, bureaucracy does not subvert democracy.

The legislative programs of administrative agencies . . . tend to incorporate the objectives of private groups and to temper and to modify them in the public interest. Indeed, in
many situations of policy parturition it seems that the bureaucracy is the only participant
animated by a devotion to the common welfare.

-V.O. Key, Jr. (Political Scientist)

Who is right, if either?

Reference to Personal Experience

Cadet interest is readily aroused if the subject matter can be tied in with the personal experience
or knowledge of a cadet or an officer. However, cadets usually react unfavorably to a personal
experience that is not directly pertinent to the subject. Consider using other officers with
particularly relevant experience as guests to participate in discussions related to their area of
expertise.

Reference to Current Events

Contemporary public issues and problems, or the news items of the day, often provide an
excellent point of departure in practically all Department of Social Sciences courses. You may
wish to make particular portions of the daily newspaper or selected websites a part of normal
assignments in order to facilitate such discussion.

Reference to History

Calling upon student knowledge of history to develop the historical background of a modern
issue not only deepens understanding but reinforces one of the basic appreciations that a social
science curriculum endeavors to foster. Allusions to historical events and the drawing of
analogies between past and present are among the most interesting ways of raising discussion.
You should review the history core courses cadets have taken to get a better appreciation of
points to which you might refer. Make it a point to consider the age of your students each year
and reflect on what they have experienced. You’ll be amazed how their experiences differ from
your own.

The Short Lecture

Often, an instructor will find it advisable to lecture for a few minutes on the lesson to introduce
additional subject matter, integrate several past lessons, or show how the several standards of a
complicated economic problem or method of analysis are interwoven. A good approach is to set
the stage for a short lecture by getting the students personally involved, as by allowing
discussion to reach an impasse—either of point of view or of how to proceed with the analysis.
At such junctures the attention of the student turns quite naturally to the instructor, who may then
proceed to make certain points, not so much to provide an answer, but to show the way to
sensible conclusions.

Devil’s Advocate

In this approach an instructor presents a plausible argument in support of a particular viewpoint,
with the object of drawing cadets into taking issue with it. Usually, an extreme position is
adopted or the case is deliberately overstated to provoke the student, but it is also possible to
develop a provocative conclusion from premises and argument that the students have been led to accept. Taking a stand in this manner stimulates recall of data to refute the initial argument, produces an attack on the instructor’s premises and conclusions, and develops a viewpoint contrary to the original one. By this method the other side of a question is raised for discussion in an endeavor to move to a more balanced view. One must remain alert to exploit different student reactions. If cadets too readily accept your view, you could suddenly reverse your view and launch an attack on the “straw man” that they have been led to accept. Should some cadets support your new position when others attack it, your task becomes one of moderating the ensuing discussion.

This approach works very well in subject areas where cadets have fairly rigid, pronounced, or well-developed views. Early in the course such views may be directly challenged; later, when cadets feel that they have learned the “right” answers, the tables can be turned by challenging these answers from a position akin to their early beliefs, thereby forcing them to articulate their present views as well as to note the merit or weakness of their earlier ones.

**Small Group Discussion**

One way for instructors to encourage discussion is to divide the class into small groups. Some cadets will feel more comfortable contributing to a discussion in a group rather than the larger class. One technique, especially when discussing an issue or concept containing multiple positions, is to have each group grapple with different questions relating to the issue under examination. After a few minutes of discussion in the small group, you can reconvene the class and have each group discuss the salient points of its small group conversation. When considering this technique, you must always give thought to structure and timing – how you will focus the groups, and how long will you give them to discuss.

**Application Methods**

Most classes are centered on discussion approaches, but it is often important to have cadets do something in another format to keep their interest, emphasize the relevance of material, and help them internalize concepts. This observation is in keeping with existing scholarship noting the importance of experiential learning. Experiential learning theory conceives of student learning as a process, not simply a set of desirable outcomes. Therefore, learning is "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experiences." Moreover, experience must be followed by reflection in order to effectively create new knowledge for the learner. Some of the department’s courses have implemented experiential learning opportunities on a course level. For example, the Introduction to American Politics course conducts a congressional simulation exercise where cadets role-play as members of Congress. Following a simulated legislative process, cadets are also asked to reflect upon their experience in the form of a brief essay. Application methods also work on a smaller scale, and the examples below might be considered for use in the classroom.
**Cadet Presentation**

A cadet can be assigned a topic, told to outline it on the board, and present a brief lecture to the class. Frequently it is worthwhile to have two or more cadets give presentations on the same subject from differing perspectives. A PowerPoint slide or board diagram that the cadet is required to explain or use in the presentation is an effective adjunct to this method of generating student participation.

**Role Playing**

Certain subjects lend themselves to simulated situations in which cadets defend one side or another of a given question as though they were actual protagonists; or participate in a particular activity, such as a policy-making body, as though they were actual participants. To be effective, cadets must be able to play the roles assigned with a reasonable degree of realism.

Role playing can occur either on an impromptu basis where no prior preparation is required or on a forewarned basis when students receive advance notice and prepare for their particular roles. The former method tends to demand more resourcefulness on the part of instructors and students. The impromptu technique may be especially useful when cadets have sufficient general knowledge and background to cope meaningfully with the issue. But where role playing demands special knowledge and preparation, advance notification and assignments are necessary. Also it might prove useful to assign particular roles early in the course. Such assignment should encourage familiarity with particular viewpoints, facilitating impromptu role playing. However, major disadvantages evolve out of prolonged identification with a narrow or limited range of information, to include the loss of spontaneity and resourcefulness that occurs when roles are assigned randomly.

Here are several suggestions that may assist in making the role playing technique successful:

- To break association with the routine method of classroom participation, rearrange desks according to the number of roles to be played to facilitate more face to face contact.
- Use desk signs to designate different roles.
- Careful selection of those to play key roles is important. Do not, however, choose the same few every time. At first try to select those who will be enthusiastic, resourceful, and able to express themselves. This example may encourage others to do as well when they are chosen for key roles.
- Prepare special briefing sheets for each group in the drama. These sheets should contain special instructions about general responses required and factual information that will assist in the development of meaningful responses. Occasionally, you might encourage group interest and argument by slipping some significant conflicting information into two or more roles.
- Try to avoid interrupting the drama unless discussion really deviates from the point. The ever-intruding instructor is an obvious and handy crutch.
- Role playing can be overdone if used too frequently or if too much time is devoted to it in class. Over reliance may lead to “slapstick” and wasted effort. When it appears that the
useful purpose of role playing has been accomplished, you should “cut” the scene and either summarize what has occurred or open group discussion.

One comment about the structure of roles might be helpful. Role playing can use generally either the “inquisitor” or the “one-stand” technique. The latter is a drama where each person in a role makes a prepared contribution in turn. The drawback with this technique is that once each role has made its stand, the person can relax; participation and interest may wane. However, with the “inquisitor” technique this shortcoming is avoided. Each role, even though it may make some prepared contribution, must be continually alert for questioning by the “inquisitor” role. Accordingly, suspense and interest persist.

**Debating**

Most cadets are familiar with the rules of debate, and it is sometimes possible to stage an extemporaneous debate in the section room on some problem pertinent to the subject matter. Instructors have been successful in dividing the section into “sides” and allowing the debate to alternate between individuals on each “team.” A team captain is appointed who is responsible for that side’s opening statement and for recognizing members of the team. Care must be taken in formulating the resolution in precise terms and in such a way that neither side is given a distinct advantage. A 10-15 minute presentation period, in which each team confers in round table fashion to prepare its case, and during which the instructor may answer questions, is often an effective way to begin. Such debates also can be planned in advance. Policy questions, framed in a way to highlight the conflict in both ends and means, generally are suitable for handling in this way. During the debate you can act as a moderator and also take notes for your critique. This method also has been particularly effective when the debate has been arranged to pit different sections against one another.

**Audiovisual Methods**

Audiovisual methods may assist the student in learning. When you present an idea to students by means of words alone, students must picture in their minds what you are trying to communicate. Psychological research has demonstrated that most students learn more easily through the sense of sight than through any other sense. Try to capitalize on this principle by using visual aids whenever they will help cadets. If a description, concept, principle, or an object can be visualized, then you should try to get that visualization in your classroom.

It is important to remember that visual aids, especially PowerPoint, do not take the place of verbal explanation. However, if used judiciously, they can help to make an explanation clearer to your students.

**Chalkboards or Dry Marker Boards**

Instructors use a board outline to show the major points in the lesson and to assist in an orderly presentation (which may or may not be followed, depending on the way the class develops). A useful variation of the standard board outline is to fill it all or partly in as the lesson progresses through student discussion and instructor lecturing.
Here are some tips for using boards:

- **Print in block letters.** Stay away from writing in script; it is difficult to read. Use all capital letters, and print in letters large enough for everyone in the section to read easily (usually two-to-three inches).
- **Be neat.** Neat board work is simply easier to read and follow, more attractive, and a better reflection on you. Neatness only takes a few seconds more, and the benefits of it are well worth the time. Always provide a title for diagrams and special graphs.
- **Maintain voice contact.** When writing on the board, you obviously have to look at what you are doing. Therefore, you must break eye contact. Talking while you write or draw maintains some contact with the class and avoids long silence that may cause student attention to waiver while you are working. It’s not easy; you have to practice.
- **Prepare involved work before class.** Some board work is either very complex or requires a lot of time to put on the board. Instead of trying it during class, you should put it on the board before class when you can take your time and be neat. Then cover your work with a shade or some other object until you need it.

**Maps**

A clear map can be a valuable aid in many of our courses. You should check early on with your course director on the stock of available maps. Consult map catalogs (don’t overlook the Geography and Environmental Engineering Library as a source) for ideas on how to improve your instruction by using more and better maps, then pursue a requisition through the Department Administrative office.

**PowerPoint**

If the chalk or dry erase board is the most widely used aid, then running close second are the projected aids. All classrooms have a computer and projector, which are most frequently used to project PowerPoint or other computer based programs.

While PowerPoint can be helpful, avoid overuse. Many cadets will seek to write down every word the instructor projects, sometimes at the expense of listening or engaging. Also, it can be problematic to project an approved solution after cadets complete board work. If cadets come to expect this pattern, they may engage less in trying to figure things out on their own.

**Films and Videos**

Useful as a change of pace and cadet interest generator (if not overdone), film clips or other videos can enhance your teaching. Many clips can be played in an individual classroom directly from the Internet; however, make sure you are in compliance with copyright provisions before using.

**Making Instruction Interesting**

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by USMA instructors relates to the wide range of aptitudes and interests found in the typical cadet section. Advanced versions of the core courses afford
some leveling, but in all elective courses and even in the non-advanced sections of core courses you will quickly perceive different levels of ability and academic performance among your students. The matter becomes one of, “If I try to pitch the instruction to the better student, will I lose the less accomplished student?” Alternatively, “If I keep the instruction at a rudimentary level, will the more gifted student become disenchanted?” Unfortunately, there is no easy solution to this dilemma. Your goal—elusive at times, but achievable nonetheless—is to offer each student opportunities to reach for his or her highest level of academic capability. The key here will be your own enthusiasm and your ability to get cadets involved in each class. Again, we have no standard answers but here are some ideas to consider.

**Avoid Rehashing the Reading Assignment**

Adopt a fresh approach to the subject matter that raises the essential points in a way that provokes discussion. For example, in a class studying the determinants of demand, address the demand for pizza in the Corps of Cadets. What would make pizza sales go up?

**Arouse Curiosity**

Be on the lookout for editorials, anecdotes, cartoons, case studies, quotations, and ideas of great philosophers, which have considerable value in gaining attention and provoking thought.

**Achieve Variety**

To avoid monotony, a change of pace should be introduced in instruction whenever possible; e.g., vary teaching techniques, use teaching aids, rearrange the classroom and so forth.

**Use Humor**

When properly timed and employed, and when in good taste, humor can enliven a listless class and arouse those cadets who tend to doze or daydream. Humorous stories and anecdotes also may bring to life certain concepts, theories, or personalities that are part of the subject material.

The proper role of humor is as an aid to teaching. Its best uses are in illustration and attention getting. Never get in a situation where you ridicule a cadet, whether in a humorous vein or otherwise. Also, never ridicule our colleagues in another academic Department or the Brigade Tactical Department. Humor must be consistent with the value that we place on treating everyone with dignity and respect.

**Common Classroom Problems**

**Cadet Intellectual Attitudes**

Cadets often misunderstand the difference between fact and hypothesis. When cadets say “labor unions are powerful,” they often mean this observation as a fact, although the statement is merely a hypothesis or proposition to be proved, i.e., it must be supported with empirical evidence before it can be taken as substantiated. Again, the test of observation in adding evidence is sometimes neglected, as when cadets appeal to authority as proof, e.g., “Aristotle said that…”
Another misconception among many students is the notion that theory belongs to the physical sciences. There are several ways of dealing with this notion, but suffice it to say that while cadets should understand the differences between the natural and social sciences, they also should see that the role of theory is the same in both.

Other cadet intellectual attitudes that pose teaching problems include the quest for certainty, over-simplification, dogmatism, the use of slogans as a substitute for thought, and the belief that all problems are susceptible to solution by “doing something.”

**Patterns of Participation**

Cadets with considerable ability are sometimes reluctant to express themselves in class or to use their talents fully. Sometimes they lack confidence. You can draw these people out in class by redirecting questions at them and allowing them plenty of time to think. They can be prodded gently to give a special topic or book report. Try to show that you are aware of their ability and confident that they can make a real contribution in class.\(^{15}\)

Some cadets like to talk, but are inarticulate; they express themselves, but do not say anything. Fuzzy thinking and a general lack of comprehension is the main source of this difficulty, though inability to articulate what is understood also contributes. A good approach in this situation is to seek value in the cadet’s answer, and ask the cadet to refine their answer with a constructive follow-up question that builds on this value.

In no case should sarcasm be used to silence a verbose cadet. The remedy lies in sharpening ideas. You will need to become practiced in the “critical art of rephrasing cadet questions,” so that by example you can assist a student to say what he or she means. Individual counseling after class, in private, with specific criticism and suggestions for improvement is also helpful.

Discussion may occasionally become an argument, or opinion may shift from an issue to personalities. Sometimes individuals so completely identify themselves with one side of an issue that they consider any criticism as a personal affront. To remedy this situation, you can divert discussion into the third person, or ask each participant in the controversy to restate points on which disagreement exists. This technique tends to focus attention on the issues and away from personalities.

To correct a cadet who talks about something only slightly related to the point at hand, the instructor should try to perceive the “drift” of thought or the linkage of meaning between separate comments and then convey the relationship to the group. Or the instructor may interrupt with a question such as this: “Now, how is your comment related to the points we are discussing; I don’t quite see the connection?”

Sometimes discussion may disintegrate when an instructor is unjustly abrupt with one cadet or completely ignores his or her contribution. This behavior tends to destroy confidence because cadets may feel that the instructor regards their remarks as unimportant. On the other hand, if cadet comments reflect an obvious misunderstanding, you have an obligation not to let an incorrect statement go unaddressed.
When talking, you must talk to the whole group. You should search around constantly for reaction to what you are saying. A good deal of communication goes on at the sub-verbal level, and besides, nothing tones up the general harmony of a group like direct eye contact.

Discussion ought to be a pleasant as well as a satisfying experience, and achieving this state of affairs may require the instructor to be able to shift comfortably from the serious, intent pursuit of understanding to a bit of levity, and then back again.

The Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE)

The CFE is less a place than a service. Its mission is to provide support to USMA faculty members in their teaching mission. To accomplish this, the CFE regularly offers seminars and workshops on topics of interest to USMA faculty members and publishes a monthly newsletter to keep the conversation going about teaching and learning. It also coordinates the Master Teacher Program for USMA instructors who want a structured way to continue their development as teachers. The CFE also provides individual consultations with faculty members or Departments who request its services.

The Master Teacher Certificate Program is anchored in the belief that teaching and learning are inextricably linked—that faculty members are learners as well as teachers, and students are teachers as well as learners. Hence, the Program is designed to be a learning experience for everyone involved.

An interdisciplinary, two-year experience, the mission of the Master Teacher Program is to develop the competencies and skills of USMA faculty members for the dramatically changing academic workplace of the 21st century. Through monthly sessions, review of classroom teaching, and reflective activities, the program provides participants with:

- a pedagogical framework that can serve as a basis for planning, implementing, and reflecting on their teaching and learning activities;
- a repertoire of skills that will allow participants to operate in a variety of different teaching situations;
- the ability to review and assess their teaching critically and revise it appropriately;
- techniques for helping learners acquire important discipline-related skills and knowledge;
- the ability to assess students’ learning throughout the program of instruction.

For more information about the program, visit at:  [http://www.usma.edu/cfe](http://www.usma.edu/cfe)

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a menu of techniques and some suggestions for you to consider. Regardless of the teaching methods you select, your techniques must be tailored to the course material, your students, and your own strengths.
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