CELT Teaching Tip for February 27, 2020

Ideas to help students prepare for midterms

Midterms are due March 6, and as students begin preparing, many instructors grow weary of hearing the question “what’s going to be on the test?” And further, some struggle with helping students effectively study for the exams. In a 2016 Teaching Professor Blog, writer Maryellen Weimer provided teaching activities that can make exam sessions more productive for students and less of a chore for instructors. With some adaptations, a couple of these activities included:

What’s going to be on the test? During class, prompt students to take 3-4 minutes to look over their syllabus, notes, and coursework assignments and write down five things that they are confident will be on the exam. The students then form groups of three to five students and compare their lists. Taking turns, the student groups can write the topics on the board – thus providing classroom-generated ideas for what will be on the exam. The instructor can offer clarifying remarks for exam topics generated.

What makes a good answer? In class, provide at least two examples of previous exam or essay questions. These answers can be constructed from a previous semester and should be at different quality levels. Students evaluate the answers individually and then share them as a group, focusing on what differentiates them. The goal of this activity is identifying concrete features of good answers. On their own time, students could then work on creating their own answers to the question posed and circulate their response to classmates for constructive feedback.

What’s the best way to study for the test? Students may rely on old standbys for studying including highlighting and re-reading class notes. Instructors can help students improve their performance based on cognitive psychology research. This research suggests studying for shorter periods across several days, quizzing and testing themselves, and trying different strategies such as reviewing alone and then with a friend. Instructors can encourage students to examine their calendars and develop a study plan over the course of several days (or weeks) to ensure studying occurs.

In addition to these tips, we encourage you to share the many resources available to students through the Academic Success Center website. This includes individualized and group-facilitated experiences through course-specific and general academic assistance such as academic coaching, Supplemental Instruction (SI), and tutoring services as well as Psych 131, an academic skills course.

With a joy for teaching,

Sara Marcketti, Director
Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
Professional Development Opportunities for Deeper Learning with CELT

Are you interested in exploring professional development opportunities with CELT? Applications to each of these four key programs will be accepted from March 2 - April 3. Click the links below to learn more about each program.

- **Course Design Institute.** The [Course Design Institute](#) is a four-day event full of interactive, hands-on and collaborative activities to give ISU’s instructors skills, time and space for designing or substantially revising their courses. Meets May 18-21, 2020.

- **SOTL Scholars Program.** The [scholarship of teaching and learning](#) (SoTL) involves faculty framing and systematically investigating questions related to student learning, with the goal of improving their own classroom as well as advancing practice beyond it through peer-reviewed presentations and publications. Meets twice monthly throughout the 2020-2021 academic year.

- **Teaching and Learning Academy.** CELT [Teaching and Learning Academy](#) participants will attend monthly sessions that address course design, evidence-based teaching strategies, inclusive classroom practices, peer-review of teaching, and documentation of teaching effectiveness. Local experts on college teaching and learning will lead sessions during the academy. Instructors from all disciplines are encouraged to apply for this cohort-based teaching and learning community. Meets monthly throughout the 2020-2021 academic year.

- **Teaching Partners Program.** The CELT [Teaching Partners Program](#), a cohort-based teaching and learning community, supplements departmental mentoring by pairing a new instructor with a senior instructor from a different discipline who is a successful and experienced teacher. Junior partners should be in their second or third year at Iowa State University. Partners discuss teaching and learning topics, complete classroom observations, and focus on documenting teaching effectiveness for continuous improvement efforts of use in teaching portfolios. Meets monthly throughout the 2020-2021 academic year.

Using Quality Matters to make your Canvas course easier to navigate

Quality Matters (QM) is an instrument for evaluating online and blended course design. In this week’s teaching tip, let’s look at how **Specific Review Standard 8.1: “Course navigation facilitates ease of use”** can help you aim for a consistent and logical wayfinding experience inside your Canvas courses:

1. Use the Navigation functionality in the Course Settings to get rid of the options you are not including in your course’s menu. For example, disable the Pages option and add individual pages as items inside a module.
2. Bring as much consistency as you possibly can to each module. For example, if your Module One contains Reading Materials, a Quiz, an Assignment and Supplemental Materials, ensure the identical order of items in all modules.
3. Reduce visual and mental clutter by strategically organizing your module. Instead of posting reading links as individual items, create a single Readings page within the module and include each reading link inside the page.
4. If your module contains many items, use Text Headers to organize within the modular structure.
5. Consider increasing items’ indent inside the module to give prominence to posted content.
6. Group midterm and final exams inside their own module to help students focus on exam content rather than navigating to the exam.

On Friday, February 28 CELT offers a [free full day workshop](#) on applying the QM rubric. The workshop introduces QM foundational concepts and opportunities for practicing the rubric’s applications in order to make decisions about the quality of online and blended courses. Participants will be awarded a QM certificate of completion upon attending. Register via [Learn@ISU website](#).
CELT Collaborator Spotlight: Nick Holmberg

In our teaching tips, we are highlighting the work of successful instructors and staff from across Iowa State University. We have asked them to share their highlights from the classroom, ideas for successful teaching and learning, and their favorite CELT program.

Nick Holmberg (MA-English, MA-TESOL), Testing Center Supervisor & Special Projects Liaison, shares a few strategies instructors can take to help students retain knowledge and skills for longer than it takes to pass a midterm exam:

- Provide context to knowledge and skills by regularly demonstrating and explaining how new knowledge and skills will be applied.
- Encourage students to always ask themselves how this knowledge or skill can be applied to the real world and/or their future profession.
- When feasible, offer frequent low-stakes quizzes to assess whether student learning has occurred without the added pressure to achieve.

Nick, who has been with the Testing Center since June 2019, shares that his favorite CELT resource has been the CELT Teaching Partners Program. See the program description above to learn how you can apply to participate in this program during the 2020/2021 academic year.

Campus Opportunities: ISCORE

Registration now open for the 2020 Iowa State Conference on Race & Ethnicity (ISCORE)

The Thomas L. Hill Iowa State Conference on Race and Ethnicity (ISCORE) provides an ongoing platform of sharing and applying new knowledge through presentations and workshops. Register through the ISCORE website (http://bit.ly/iscore-2020-conference) for:

- Pre-Conference is on Wednesday, March 4 (11 a.m.-5 p.m., Memorial Union) is open to faculty and staff only. View the Pre-Conference Program page (http://bit.ly/iscore-preconference).
- Conference is on Friday, March 6 (8:15 a.m.-5 p.m., Memorial Union) and is open to the Iowa State University community (students, faculty and staff). View the Conference Program page (http://bit.ly/iscore-2020-program).

Strategic Facilities Plan Survey and Upcoming Town Hall Sessions

Iowa State University is working to chart a course for facilities improvements on campus with help from national planning firm, Ayers Saint Gross (ASG). To help inform the plan’s development, a short, 10 minute, survey has been launched in order to better understand campus users’ experience with campus facilities. Participant responses will be collected through February 28, 2020 and will help shape a strategy for future investment in renewal and improvements of campus facilities.

Take the Strategic Facilities Plan Survey Here

Results of the survey and recent open houses will be discussed at Town Hall sessions tentatively scheduled for:

- March 24th: Curtiss Hall, Rm 127, 3-4 p.m.
- March 25th: Sukup Hall, Rm 22, 12-1 p.m.

Engage with the ReACT exhibition #WomenKnowStuffToo

Join us in celebrating Women’s History Month this March. The #WomenKnowStuffToo art exhibition will engage community members in an ongoing conversation celebrating women-identified artists and makers, women’s impact on the arts, and women’s expertise in a wide variety of fields and media.

Register to attend the opening reception, held in the Reiman Gallery of the Christian Petersen Art Museum (0003 Morrill Hall) on Tuesday, March 3, 4-5:30 p.m.
Learning Online: Canvas and Beyond

Canvas Exam Settings and Timelines
The ISU Testing Center has posted some excellent guidelines regarding exam settings and availability. Visit the Canvas Instructor Guides to see how to set quiz options such as time limits, answer shuffling, number of attempts, and due dates and availability.

Need help?
Stop by our CELT Open Labs. Visit CELT’s Canvas Open Labs webpage for days, times, and location or contact Canvas 24/7 support by clicking on the ?Help icon on the Global Navigation menu (far left of your screen) in Canvas for the 24/7 support options.

CELT's Upcoming Programs
To view our program descriptions and the most up-to-date schedule, visit CELT’s Event and Registration webpage (http://bit.ly/celtevents):

- Online event, Inclusive Classroom Teaching and Learning Community, Feb. 27 (4:10-5 p.m., Online only via WebEx registration page: http://bit.ly/30Hy9tj)
- Workshop, Applying the Quality Matters Rubric (APPQMR), Feb. 28 (9:00-4:30 p.m.)
- Seminar, Discuss Published Education Research in Your Discipline, Mar. 2 (4:10-5 p.m.)
- Workshop, Meditation: Why is it so useful and how can I use it in my classroom?, Mar. 5 (12:10-1 p.m.)
- Workshop, Service-Learning in Design: Challenges & Opportunities for Community-Engaged Coursework, Mar. 6 (9:00-11:00 am)
- Webinar, Exploring ways to create an inclusive learning environment, Mar. 10 (4:10-5 p.m., Online only via WebEx registration page: http://bit.ly/2FsM64Q)
- Seminar, ISU Online Learning Community (ISU-OLC), Mar. 13 (11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.)

How to Register
For in-person events, register via the Learn@ISU website (http://learn.iastate.edu) or email your name, department, name of the event, date of the event to celt@iastate.edu.