

# FIRST DAY OF CLASS

**Basic Skills** (M<sup>a</sup> del Mar Suárez, loosely based on Lyons et al. 2003)



# Two purposes

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- To clarify all reasonable questions students might have relative to the course objectives, as well as your expectations for their performance in class.
- To give you an understanding of who is taking your course and what their expectations are.



**8 concrete objectives**

# 1. Orchestrate positive first impressions



- Your attire.
- The physical environment.
- Your use of the few minutes before class.

## 2. Introduce yourself effectively

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- Your qualifications.
- How formal/informal you want to be.
- How available you will be to the students (e.g., phone, email) and your office hour preference (e.g., set hours, open door, make an appointment).
- Research interests as they relate to the course.
- Trying to determine whether you are a harsh or easy grader, and how flexible you will be with deadlines.

# 3. Clarify learning objectives & expectations

- Describe the **prerequisites**.
- Highlight **main aspects of the syllabus**: objectives, their alignment with assessment, instructional strategies, reasons for choosing the textbook or other materials.
- Consider a **quiz** on the syllabus.
- Explain your **expectations for student behavior**.
- Communicate your commitment to the students' learning experience: Share some **advice for success** in your course (e.g., attendance, participation, keeping up with the readings) and let them know you are confident in their success as long as they put in the required effort.

## 4. Help students learn about each other



- Icebreakers or activities in groups

## 5. Set the tone for the course



- Whatever you plan to do during the semester, do it on the first day (if possible).

## 6. Collect data about...

### Baseline knowledge

- Relevant courses
- Ungraded pre-test
- How confident they feel about particular knowledge and ability to apply it

### Motivation

- Why
- Expectations
- Challenges

If inadequate prior knowledge/expectations, give alternatives... or not!

# 7. Whet students' appetite for course content



- Short reading about the course
- Generate hypothesis about the course contents
- Connect course to current events
- Reveal misconceptions



# 8. Inform students of logistics

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- Classroom changes
- Materials
- Switching teachers
- Administrative procedures
- Others

# References

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