A HANDBOOK
|OF
GOOD TEACHING PRACTICE:

TIP SHEETS FOR THE DIFFERENT DOMAINS OT TEACHING

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Chapter 1: Tips for Preparing a Course on the History of the American West
Jerry Long, Jed Woodworth

Goals

Motivation. Why should the students care about the course? Identify something to make them care.

Teach skills. Studies show that many students forget most of the content. Identify the specific skill you would like the students to take with them.

Know your audience. Most classes have both majors and non-majors. Are you losing the non-majors with your fascination with the detail?

Teach the simply story. Debunking can be taken too far. Many students don't know even the basics.

But complicate the past. Disrupt the black/white picture, "disorient" the student.

Don't re-invent the wheel. Look at course syllabi from other universities or professors at your university that have taught the same or similar courses before.

Content

Identify a theme. What is the unifying thread that holds the course together?

Find a problem. Students need to be drawn in to the subject. Start with a conundrum or a contradiction.

Learn the arguments. History is a series of positions argued by historians. Help students follow the major arguments over time

Unify the loose strands. Make connections to the loose or disparate parts. One way is juxtaposing books against each other.

Balance theme vs. chronology. What is the best way to make sense of the topic?

Balance old vs. new. Students need both the old and the new historiography, the classic and the "hot" texts.

Syllabus

Make a contract. Students will respect you if you hold to the syllabus. If you hold to your end of the contract, they are more likely to hold to theirs.

The simpler the better. No acrobatics.

Have the student's mind. Stagger the work load. Remember that students have limited time at the end of the semester.

Is the syllabus a teaching tool? Consider detailed syllabi that provide a complete description of what the students should learn and represent a useful reference for students in the future.

Chapter 2: Launching the Course: The First Week
Todd Dresser, Nancy Palm, Travis Tennessen

Nuts and Bolts
- Introductions/Learning names
    - Have students make table tent nametags and use them until you know everyone's name
    - Ask for a quirky fact during first day introductions—the quirkier the better
    - Force yourself to say student's names as much as possible—address them by name each time they speak or take role each class
    - Get students to come to your office hours by requiring visits at various points in the semester (possibly in conjunction with major assignments)
    - Note cards—get as much information as possible to associate names with faces and use digital photos if your institution makes them available
    - Get students to know each other through regular group work
- Modes of Communication
    - Some colleges have services like Blackboard that will set up classroom websites for downloading course handouts and allow students to chat about topics raised in class
    - Regardless of the method you choose to communicate with students (listservs, e-reserve, etc.), make sure they are aware of how to use the technology and are aware of exactly how it will integrate into your communication with them. If they need to check e-mail daily, be sure to let them know

Getting students interested in the course material from the start
- Dive right in—try engaging students with the material before anything else like introductions or handing out the syllabus
- Start on the first day with an activity that requires students to think about the material and discuss with each other
    - Students could discuss a newspaper article or political cartoon
    - Give students something to discuss while you are out of the room for a few minutes—this will communicate your trust in them and this will get them to engage with each other
- Display your enthusiasm for the subject material in as genuine a way as possible
- Make it clear that you will help students articulate their ideas

Determining your own teaching style
- Ask yourself how you learn and weave that into your teaching, but be careful not to only teach to students who learn like you do
- Show students how you think—metaphor of playing a card game with the cards facing up
- Remember that you do not have to show how smart you are, let go of the expectation that you should know everything

- Think about an experience you had where learning something was difficult (car mechanics, swing dancing, etc.) and teach toward someone with the same feeling
- Get feedback from others—peers are often the best and safest observers
- Videotape yourself teaching—you'll be surprised!
- Be aware of the various "teacher types" and identify the promise and pitfalls of each
  - Elitists
  - Grey-haired experts
  - Performance artists
  - Relativists
  - Storytellers
  - Bored/apathetic
  - Eager/timid
  - Polemicist/Provoker
  - Socratic
  - "I'm the Smartest"
  - Friend
  - Facilitator
  - Anti-elitist (no authority)
- Personal appearance
  - Know your university's culture
  - Make sure you are "comfortable" in your clothes
  - Remember the performance aspect of teaching—"being yourself" is not always the best option
  - If you go outside the established cultural codes for dress, make sure you have good reasons
  - Know who you are and what kind of impression you are trying to make
  - Find where your comfort level and your institution's expectations intersect, and shoot for that
- Revealing your relationship with course material/personal life
  - Never tell students that the course is not in your field, or that it is your first time teaching the course
  - Tell students enough about yourself to communicate why you are personally interested in and engaged with course material
  - Never give students a reason to think you do not know what you are talking about
  - Always consider what categories into which students might place you (hippie, nerd, elitist, etc.)
  - Do not make the classroom into a personal confessional
- The "threat of terror"—when to use it
  - Keep in mind that fear does not necessarily generate respect
  - Try calling on people randomly to speak from the start to eliminate this level of discomfort early on

Chapter 3: Diversity in the Classroom
Scott Burkhardt, Mark Goldberg, Keith Woodhouse

Our conversation about diversity in the classroom raised more questions than answers, which should be neither surprising nor discouraging. If answers to questions about diversity and pedagogy come too easily, they are likely to be overly simplistic and of limited practical use. It should be helpful, though, to review the particular concerns that came up in our discussion.

Much of the conversation was framed by two distinct concerns: on the one hand, the need for the TA to referee classroom discussions, in order to minimize the risk that some students might be hurt or silenced by other students' comments, and on the other hand the need for the TA to allow students to "come to things on their own terms," rather than to have their ideas and comments corrected. We discussed these concerns in terms of specific examples, like the use of anachronistic or overly broad terminology ("negro," "the black people," "the white man"); discussions that fracture the class along lines of race or class or gender, and which involve loaded pronouns like "us" and "them"; discussions that seem to presume certain kinds of uniformity within the classroom ("because this is a room full of Americans…" ; "after all, we're all comfortable, middle-class college students…"; "as liberal-minded people…"); or potentially explosive comments that may have been made in good faith.

We also considered the degree to which the classroom should be separate from or connected to the immediate world outside. Specifically, should we treat all students as equal, or should we attempt to work with each on his or her own terms? Is it the responsibility of the TA to be informed about campus climate and demographics, and if so, should that awareness affect his or her teaching? Should "diversity awareness" – however defined – be a part of the course curriculum, whether in an explicit or an unstated sense?

This was just a "tip-of-the-iceberg" conversation, but it was a good starting point, and it raised a variety of important questions.

Our group feels that offering the class a tip-sheet on diversity—a list of bullet-points touching on the topic— would not be appropriate for several reasons, and that it would indicate a kind of closure to the discussion that we feel is really the opposite of what the subject calls for. There are no easy answers on this issue, and it seems like the best way to be prepared for conversations about diversity in the classroom is to keep thinking about it. A list of bullet points implies that you've got in under control, all figured out. We all have our own biases, which we are often unaware of. Keeping the issue of diversity in the classroom active in your mind is probably the best way to catch these subtle kinds of bias.

In general, the assumption that there are right and wrong answers to these questions will limit conversations about it; the three of us agreed that dialogue about diversity should be one of the primary goals. Also, often in a brief discussion or written

piece on diversity, the conversation is(?) limited to race and gender. As was pointed out in class, there are other important factors to consider, such as class, religion, and sexual orientation, to name a few. Without the conversation becoming too diffuse, it's important to include these aspects of identity in definitions of diversity—the scope of this doesn't allow us to really do them any justice. Place and local histories, also affect diversity, which is another important reason to think about diversity as a continuing process of education (we won't be at Madison forever). We offer this in the spirit of encouraging future conversations.

Here are some resources for continuing the conversation:

Barbara Gross Davis, Tools for Teaching (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 1993)

James Banks, Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies, 5th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1991)

David Schoem, Linda Frankel, Ximena Zuniga, Edith Lewis, (eds.), Multicultural Teaching in the University (New York: Praeger, 1993)

Theresa Perry & James Fraser, eds., Freedom's Plow: Teaching in the Multicultural Classroom (New York: Routledge, 1993)

Chris Gaine, Gender, "Race" and Class in Schooling: An Introduction for Teachers (London: Falmer Press, 1999)

Nancy Loevinger, Teaching a Diverse Student Body: Practical Strategies for Enhancing our Students' Learning (University of Virginia: Teaching Resource Center, 1994)

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003)

Also helpful is the journal New Directions for Teaching and Learning, published quarterly by Jossey-Bass, as well as countless other Jossey-Bass titles, listed at http://www.josseybass.com

Additionally, there are important resources available at the University of Wisconsin:

The Multicultural Student Center, in the Red Gym, houses undergraduate minority student organizations, including Wunk Sheek, the Black Student Union, and the Asian American Student Union.

PREA (Promoting Racial and Ethnic Awareness) offers a calendar of campus events and regular e-mail updates. PREA holds discussions every other Friday at 4pm on the third floor of the Red Gym.

SEED seminars (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) provide forums for discussing different teaching philosophies and strategies for creating inclusive classroom environments. They are held on campus throughout the year, but registration is required. Check it out at www.library.wisc.edu/EDVRC

The Plan 2008 on-line resource guide has a list of organizations and activities involved in increasing campus diversity. http://www.studentaffairs.wisc.edu/divguide/step begin.asp

Publications like the Madison Times and Umoja offer close coverage of local issues as they pertain to local communities and students of color.

Chapter 4: The Lecture
Eric Freedman, Andrew Case, Brian Leech

I. Content Preparation

A. No value in just repeating readings but feel free to synthesize and please supplement
B. Prepare for knowing too much:
      1. Pare it down to a manageable form
      2. Too much information is un-signposted information
              -know your 3-5 soundbytes, important points
      3. How would you tell this story to someone who isn't a specialist?
C. Prepare for knowing too little: places to get lecture information
      1. Pull from textbooks that students have not seen
      2. Lecture and seminar notes from classes you sit in on
      3. State of the Field essays for Anthropology, Economics, etc.
      4. Historiography Resources
            a. *Reviews in American History*- journal with long historiographical reviews
            b. Houghton Mifflin, *Major Problems in American History* series
            d. Blackwell Publishing, *Companion* series
            e. Eric Foner, *The New American History*, 1997
            f. Francis Couvares, *Interpretations of American History*, 2 vol., 2000
      6. Where to find lecture "stories"
            a. Works that take the microcosm to macrocosm approach
            b. Thematically structured texts
            c. Popular histories
D. Remember the aesthetic principals of a great lecture:
      1. Serendipity- watching somebody think
      2. Conclusion or Synthesis you did not see coming
      3. Clear beginning, middle, end
      4. Perfectly structured for time

II. Content Organization

Effective lectures are not just a simple retelling of events. Rather, they focus on one main point, or a small set of points, that are interesting, significant, and related to other lectures in the course. A good lecture is organized, and its organizational structure can often be categorized as a particular genre:

A. Thesis with supporting evidence. Example: "The Cheyenne lost their hunting grounds primarily because of the Colorado Gold Rush" [Then use historical information to back up this claim.]

B. Exciting narrative or story, with rising action, a climax, and some sort of resolution—in short, history as drama.

C. Historical question with competing answers presented and defended, leaving it up to students to decide which answer is best.

D. Set of stories / anecdotes used to illustrate a larger point or set of points.

E. Thick description of a single event as an illustration of a broader theme.

F. Expose the myths lecture: Recount a common misconception; then use historical evidence to disprove or complicate it.

G. Moral outrage: Use historical information to demonstrate an instance of injustice, for example, a thick description of the Sand Creek Massacre and the events surrounding it. In these lectures, it is important to point out places where the argument may be weak or where objectives might be raised.

H. Thesis-antithesis-synthesis. Present a main historical argument, then present a counter-argument, then try to resolve the tension in some way. This might work well with a historiographical question that has attracted controversy, such as Charles Beard's *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution.*

Note: A number of these genres can be modified to include no clear resolution, if the instructor doesn't think there is one. It is fine to leave students with a sense of uncertainty if, as is often the case, an issue is currently unresolved in the historiographical literature.

Regardless of the genre, a good lecture requires a "hook" to draw students in at the beginning, and some kind of closing that often a recounts the major points made in the lecture. The various genres each have their natural hooks, for example, the myth, the question to be examined, the anecdote to be analyzed, etc.

Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind is to spend the greatest amount of class time on the most important points you want to make. An example was given in class of a course where the instructor spent a great deal of time recounting insignificant details, clouding what was really important in the lecture.

Something that we didn't talk about in class but which I thought of later is the idea of using various poetic or rhetorical techniques in the lecture, for example, repeating a cadence as in MLK's "I have a dream" speech, or returning again and again to a central metaphor.

III. Content Presentation

A. Practice a lecture for timing, content and readability
B. Avoid predictability of content and style
C. Project your voice clearly and consistently, change intonation and pause for key ideas
D. Keep strategies of recovery in mind

E. Beware of digressions, overuse of humor and personal anecdotes
F. Make choices on visuals carefully, be conscious of their impact and usefulness
G. Maintain confidence in yourself and enthusiasm for your content
H. Seek multiple ways of engaging students
I. Be prepared for bad days, bad lectures...and learn from them
J. Dress appropriately, but comfortably
K. Know your lecture space well, and be conscious of how it effects your presentation and your class

Chapter 5: Leading a Good Discussion
Josh Becker, Travis Tennessen

*Goals for Discussion***:**
- Clarifying vagueness or gaps in lecture and reading materials
- Preparing students for exams and written assignments
- Creation of a thinking space; a space for "I think" statements
- Developing a higher comfort level with course material
- Getting students comfortable with the process of learning and sharing
- Developing written and oral skills
- Constructing and contesting arguments collectively
- Examining specific issues and concepts in depth
- Helping students come to their own understanding of course material

Leading Discussion:
- **Starting your section on the right foot:**
  - Get to know students--especially their names!
  - Present your true self; students will see through a facade
  - Know the material and course themes in advance--add background readings if necessary
  - Be active immediately--don't wait until the bell rings and the staring contest begins
  - Keep students actively engaged throughout their time with you
  - Have syllabus prepared in advance; it should be separate from the lecture syllabus
  - Set expectations from the outset
  - Determine your motivational strategies before class begins
  - Cleary define the relationship between you and your students--are you a friend, mentor, disciplinarian? Early impressions are hard to change!
  - Have a substantive discussion at the first meeting, even if only briefly
  - Ask each student to speak at the first meeting to model the kind of participation you expect; this also gives students a sense of ownership of their ideas and knowledge
  - "Show" the safety of discussion sessions by modeling respect

- **Beginning and Sustaining Discussion (through a class period and the semester)**
  - Begin with questions having a "low embarrassment factor": "What surprised you about the readings?", "What did you like?", "What did you hate?"
  - …or, start with concrete thoughts and questions and work toward abstract concepts, but be ready to adapt to how students choose to approach topics
    - Give students a feeling of empowerment. Let their ideas and interests influence the course of discussion when possible
  - Connect the current topic with ongoing themes in the course
  - DO NOT be too predictable--it leads to passivity

- o Have students write their own discussion questions/reading summaries to share as a safety valve against early discussion death
    - ▪ "Pre-questions" asked before meetings may enhance participation, especially for shy students
- o Establish a positive-feedback loop of enthusiasm--help students feed off your enthusiasm and you can feed off theirs
- o Give assignments that lead into active discussion; get students "argumentatively-minded" prior to class

- **Concluding Discussion**
    - o Tie discussion to the larger themes of course
    - o "Sign post" the discussion's main points--where we've been, where we're going
        - ▪ Assign ownership of ideas and points to individual students
    - o Offer hints for understanding upcoming lectures and readings; get students thinking about next week's discussion
    - o Praise group for good discussion--if you can do it genuinely

Chapter 6: Alternatives to Discussion
Todd Dresser, Eric Freedman

Meta-question: Is this activity a real benefit or is it just a gimmick or a way to get out of work? Do the benefits outweigh the costs?

Alternatives to discussion:

Guest Speakers:
From our discussion, the key to using guest speakers effectively is "flow". In order to maintain a course's narrative, there are two things to be mindful of: preparation and relevance. Before the speaker enters your class s/he should be able to answer the following questions: What unit/lesson am I supposed to be enriching? How large is the class? What will the classroom look like? What sort of preparation/background knowledge will the students have about my topic prior to my arrival? How long am I supposed to speak? And, what are the major points that I am supposed to make? From the teacher's side, s/he should know how comfortable the speaker is in front of groups and what kind of experience the guest has in public speaking and/or leading discussion. Also, the teacher should make sure that the students have questions to ask.

Secondly, the guest speaker's presence must be relevant to the meta-structure of the class. Oftentimes, the flow of the class can be disrupted by the seeming irrelevance of a guest speaker. Again, hearken back to the overriding question: Is this activity just a means to ease the burden of teaching? If so, maybe a guest speaker is not necessary.

Finally, if a guest is brought to discussion section, it should be noted that this format usually does not promote actual discussion, but rather, question and answer (as was the case with Susan Johnson). It is often helpful to debrief a talk with a guest speaker afterwards. As an alternative to actually bringing the guest to the class, one can often arrange to talk with the person via speakerphone, using equipment available at some of the campus libraries (notably, the CIMC).

Mutation of the species "Guest Speaker":
Non-traditional students – Class discussion stressed life experience as a resource to enrich class discussion, but, by the same token, life experience should not be a moral franchise on the past. Walk the line carefully.

Student Presentations:
From our discussion there were two categories of student presentations: discussion leading and semester-long projects that result in in-class oral reports. As to the first, the take-home message seemed to be that students need a wide safety-net in order to lead discussion effectively. This may involve requiring students to work in pairs or small groups and a mandatory visit to the professor's office hours. Even so, student-led discussions may flag so the professor should be prepared to intervene as needed. The second category depends on a more difficult set of calculations. In order to have in-class reports based on student research, the professor needs to develop a solid project for students to do, and commit class time to developing research skills and class presentation.

As noted in class, this type of teaching may be more difficult than lecturing or leading discussion, so reverse the meta-question: Is this really worth the extra effort to do?

Simulations and Role Plays

In general, a role-play usually refers to any activity in which the students take on the roles of people other than themselves. In this sense, a debate in which students are supposed to argue positions they may not agree with is one specific form of a role-play. A more familiar type is for students to stage, for example, a mock UN meeting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with different students playing different players involved (i.e. Arafat, Hamas, Ariel Sharon, an Israeli peace activist, George Bush, etc.). The actual characters students play can be actual historical figures or fictional ones (sometimes they can be conglomerates of multiple figures holding similar views—i.e. a Dog Soldier from the Cheyenne).

By contrast, a simulation is typically a game with set rules designed to illustrate a particular social, political, or economic process. For example, students buy stocks in a computer-simulated market. They make investment decisions, and the computer uses some algorithm to determine what happens. Another example is the one I gave in class, with certain students making cars in a factory run by other students. The rules of the game determine what they can sell the cars for, who holds the property rights for the cars produced, etc. Simulations can sometimes grow quite complex, as in the case of "WorldGame" (http://www.worldgame.org/), where students are put on a giant map of the world and are supposed to attempt to solve various global economic problems. In general, however, the line between simulations and role-plays is often blurry.

When designing or implementing role plays and simulations, it should be noted that some students will learn more from and enjoy them more than others, depending on their interests and learning styles. As with other alternative teaching methods, the teacher should ask whether the gains from doing such an activity outweigh the costs. To design an effective role play takes a great deal of time, and they often do not work correctly the first time or two they are used. When planning a role play, the instructor should make sure there is plenty of time for debriefing, as students often gain the most from these discussions. Typically, what occurs in the role-play or simulation is not what actually happened in real life. Thus, in the debriefing section, instructors can ask students how the two differed and why they think so. These types of discussion can be useful in helping students think about questions of contingency.

Role plays and simulations were originally designed for K-12 classrooms as a way of getting students more engaged, and as a way of tapping into "multiple intelligences" (i.e. besides linguistic and logical/mathematical—see Howard Gardner's work on this). However, there may be many uses for them in college-level courses, particularly for underclassmen. If people are interested in using these forms of pedagogy, numerous role-plays can be found on the Web. Author Bill Bigelow has developed a number of role-plays for high school students that could easily be adapted to college freshmen and sophomores.

Discussion Variations:

There are a number of methods that teachers and education faculty have developed as alternatives to whole-class discussion. Again, most of these were originally developed for K-12 classrooms, as a way to increase student involvement in large classes (over 20 students), and as part of the "cooperative education" movement. However, much more so than role-plays, these methods are being used in college-level classrooms. In TA discussion sections, where the number of students often exceeds 20, the following methods can be particularly helpful:
- Small groups and report back: Students meet in groups of 3-5 to discussion some question or set of questions and then report back to the whole about what they talked about
- Journaling: Students write about a question for few minutes before discussing it as a whole class. This can help quieter students feel prepared to speak.
- Think-Pair-Share (corny name, I know): Students discuss a question with a partner before the whole group discusses it.

Bulletin Board type software and/or e-mail listservs:
"Priming the pump" seemed to be the main message here. If these types of communication are to have the effect of enlarging the classroom discussion beyond the walls of the classroom, the teacher should probably require students to post questions and teach them to respond in an appropriate manner. Always be wary of the fact that students may feel free to post things on the web that they would not say in class and that students still need to feel that their presence is as welcome in cyberspace as it is in your classroom.

Alternative Media:
Again, let the meta-question be your guide. Be careful not to let videos or music replace teaching and preparation. Also, make sure that the movie that you show is relevant to the topics discussed in the class. Perhaps some low-stakes writing or discussion after the movie would be a good way to make sure that students stay focused.

Chapter 7: Creating Assignments and Skill Development
Maggie Brokaw, Carl Nordenberg

I. Identify the skills that you want to teach
- A. Fundamental Skills: incredibly basic and yet too often ignored at undergraduate level.
  - a. Turning assignments in on time
  - b. Organization
  - c. Writing mechanics
  - d. How to take notes
  - e. Teamwork
- B. Writing: take course level into account
  - a. Introductory level: focus upon basic writing skills
    1. avoiding the passive voice
    2. sentence structure
    3. paragraph structure
    4. construction of an argument
       - a. use of evidence
       - b. sustaining and supporting an argument from introduction to conclusion
    5. plagiarism
  - b. Higher levels: focus more upon writing within the historical discipline
  - c. Peer-editing
- C. Speaking: how do you teach people to be articulate?
  - a. Pressing students on their points; as for their evidence
  - b. Law School method: position of "healthy paranoia" where student is outside his/her comfort zone and self-conscious of skills, this is where growth occurs
    - i. The fine line between healthy and unhealthy paranoia: intimidation is too far
  - c. Teach the jargon of the discipline, provide the vocabulary of the discipline
  - d. Teach the "set of rules" of the discipline, how to construct a historical arguments.
- D. Reading: takes two forms: *extensive* and *intensive*
  - a. Extensive: example: absorbing 250 pp in an hour
    - i. How to synthesize
    - ii. How to read for argument
  - b. Intensive: example: a semester studying one document
  - c. How to critique a piece of prose but not necessarily only find faults or vice versa
    - i. Teaching undergraduates to critique work
    - ii. The art of constructive criticism
    - iii. Source analysis
  - d. creating greater appreciation in general, "deepening capacity for wonder"

II. Assignments
    A. different types of assignments
            a. journals
            b. reaction papers
            c. gobbits
            d. found object exercise: find an object and explain its relation to the course
            e. writing policy memos/letters
    B. Good vs. Bad assignments
            a. Engage argument through own space
            b. Giving student ownership of subject
            c. Providing a hook for diving in
            d. Recognizable and realistic goals from outset
            e. Multi-faceted, open to students with a variety of learning/thinking ways
            f. Not boring to grade, avoiding predictable answers
            g. Avoiding easily plagiarized assignments
            h. Taking into account students' values
            i. Taking into account your own time constraints

Chapter 8: Mentoring and Advising
Scott Burkhardt, Carl Nordenberg

Formal Mode

What are Office Hours for? Teaching Space vs. Place For Putting Out Fires

Discussing Problems: this is one important function of office hours, which can be a private space for going over problems that arise over the semester.

We usually see the better students—the ones who know it's in their best interest and feel entitled to the time. The initiative is really on the professor to encourage the students who might not normally come; one way to do this is to include a paragraph in the syllabus welcoming students to come see you. Holding some of your office hours in a less formal setting—a coffee shop or the union—can be another way of making office hours more accessible.

Mandatory office visits are a way of ensuring that you get to know all of your students, but the time commitment could be gargantuan.

Email seems to be taking over some of the functions of office hours, but there are real advantages to office hours, mainly that they are dialogic and bounded.

Email is a great way of taking care of logistical issues, but it can also be a black hole.

A good general tip for email—regardless of how you want to incorporate it into your teaching—is to explicitly signal your accessibility in the syllabus as a "contractual" matter.

Two potentially useful limitations mentioned were: email blackouts (24-48 hours) before assignments are due; and a size limit (you won't respond to emails over 2-4 sentences, or you won't respond if it will require more than 2 sentences).

Writing Letters of Recommendation

Always ask for the key pieces of paper: a transcript, CV, draft of application, and a sample of the students written work.

Sentences centered on superlatives are less effective than those based on specifics.

With students for whom your enthusiasm does not run deep, what you *don't* say says as much as what you do say.

The Writing Center offers a class on writing letters of recommendation:
http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Classes/RecLetters.html

L & S Career Services has handouts, which they promise will soon be online:
http://www.lssaa.wisc.edu/careers/index.php

Informal Mode

Appropriate limits of intimacy

One general rule for negotiating these limits is to avoid doing anything that might compromise your authority. Another is to avoid things that violate or appear to violate equity.

As you go up the hierarchy of higher education, these limits become fuzzier and more complicated.

You are not a therapist: Listening is better than offering answers.

What do you do if student is weeping?
If you're the cause, suggest ways of navigating out of the space that is causing the tears.

Deep Tip: One way of evaluating your behavior *vis-à-vis* your students is to be very skeptical of any action that is about your needs—be suspicious of anything that you are doing that is not about fulfilling your professional responsibilities as a teacher.

Chapter 9: The Joys of Grading
Ryan Acton, Jed Woodworth

1. The joys of coercion
    a. Contracts:
        i. Weighting assignments
            1. Clearly describe expectations in syllabus; e.g., what is A paper, B paper; how much does each grade count for
            2. Grading hard ("scare tactics") okay on early assignments
                a. Tell students as you hand papers back that you intentionally graded them hard
            3. Grades early in the course should be used to send signals about poor performance
            4. Distributing assignments
                a. Early grades relieve students of having all their assignments due at semester end, but gives students less time to complete assignments as well
                b. Structure exam/paper schedule so that grading does not put an undue burden on you (or your TAs)
        ii. Class participation
            1. What do you do with students who never participate but are clearly engaged in the material?
        iii. Policies: late papers and rewrites
            1. Make hard line on late papers; students will manipulate you if you don't
            2. Rewrites at your discretion, can be very helpful for students, but can consume a ton of your time
        iv. Grade distribution
            1. Relative grading (highest grade is an A) vs normative grading (in order to get an A the student must have met certain goals)
                a. Looking for breaks in distribution okay for undergrad teaching
            2. Grade inflation is an ethical issue
                a. If you give everyone an A you devalue the grade; students who get an A may not feel like they've accomplished anything special
                b. If you fight grade inflation you are at risk for injuring a student's career, grad applications. In an academic environment where everyone gets an A, a B can be a killer.
    b. Outsourcing: TAs
        i. Make sure TAs guidelines for grading are clear
        ii. Appeals: supporting your graders vs. ensuring fairness
2. Evaluating
    a. Setting baselines
        i. See where students fall along distribution before giving grades

        ii. Might consider putting names on the back so grader not biased
       iii. On the other hand, looking at the "best" and "worst" student papers may help establish where students should be performing
       iv. Pass out old examples of A papers; B papers; C papers
    b. Grading on style/substance
        i. Grade more on substance than style
       ii. Proofreading a basic skill students have to learn; too many typos are a sign of laziness
      iii. Balance long/short comments, substance/style
      iv. Recommend campus writing center to students
    c. Commenting: extensive comments vs. limited time
        i. Tell students what they are doing well is often the hardest part, but is also very important; avoid negativism
       ii. Commenting on prose more work than commenting on substance
          1. Have students come to office hours, saving time on written comments, though most students won't bother coming
    d. Grades are both motivators as well as evaluators
        i. Grades can be used to "send message" to students, particularly if you know their personality and how they will react
       ii. Sometimes a "dissonant" comment can be combined with a high grade to motivate high performing students who are achieving good grades but not trying their hardest

3. The borderlands
    a. Grades as contract vs. the inherent subjectivity of grading
        i. Professors have some discretion in rounding either way when giving a student an overall grade
       ii. Students who try, but don't succeed: rounding up?
          1. OK to give the benefit to students who improve throughout the course of the term
             a. When handing back first test/paper grades, can tell class that improvement will be rewarded, but do not put in syllabus or students may take advantage
      iii. Students who almost succeed, but don't try: rounding down?
          1. Laziness is no excuse
          2. "I know you can do better"

4. Students with special needs
    a. Learning disabilities (ADD, dyslexia)
        i. University has resources for assistance; make sure you seek out school policy, etc
    b. English as a second language
        i. University has resources; invite students to office hours for discussion
    c. Remedial students

5. Discipline & Punish
    a. The forbidden grades: D & F?
        i. Don't surprise students in jeopardy of failing; give clear warnings

      ii.   Fs & Ds should be rare, only for students who don't show up, don't make a serious effort, or cheat

     iii.   Students often use these grades as signals to their parents

     iv.   Students who show effort should get A-C grades

      v.   At some private schools, giving a student a failing grade could provoke student appeals to the administration

  b. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating

      i.   You must have strong proof

      ii.   Going through official channels to discipline can consume a great deal of time and energy, and the burden of proof is on the professor

          1. Informal "plea bargaining" with the student can be effective way to short circuit lengthy process

     iii.   Internet resources (sample)

          1. Purchase a paper: www.12000papers.com

          2. Search engines for teachers: www.turnitin.com

          3. Information: http://www.web-miner.com/plagiarism

     iv.   Do not repeat assignments; do not give "obvious" assignments that are likely to be available on the we

          1. Remember that many frats keep archive of old papers and exams

  c. Always excuses!

      i.   My hard disc crashed now one of the most common excuses; warn them before hand to make back ups