

Cheating Lessons Overview

Learning environments that reduce the incentive and opportunity for students to cheat can also increase their motivation and mastery of course material. The five areas outlined below offer opportunities for you to reduce cheating in your courses or on campus, or to increase student learning in your courses, or both. Consider incorporating one or more of the suggested techniques into the courses you are planning for the spring semester.

Fostering Intrinsic Motivation

- Frame courses around open-ended, authentic problems, questions, or challenges (consider problem-based learning, community service learning, or inquiry-guided learning)
- Help students see—or, better yet, discover for themselves—the relevance of your course material to their current lives, the local community, or their future professions

Creating Mastery Oriented-Classes

- Offer students choices in how they demonstrate their learning to you; give students the opportunity to work within their strengths, even if you also challenge them in areas of weakness
- Consider contract grading, in which students can choose from a menu of assessment options and create their own (contracted) package of assignments and exams

Use Frequent, Low-Stakes Assessments

- Use the first and last five minutes of class to give students multiple opportunities for retrieval and rehearsal of essential course material
- Help students understand how to study more effectively by talking to them about how our brains learn and memorize new information (i.e., study with the book closed!)

Build Student Self-Efficacy

- Offer early success opportunities; avoid opening assignments which are so complex or challenging that a majority of students fail
- Communicate to students effective strategies for learning the course material and succeeding in the course; survey former successful students and pass along their strategies

Contribute to a Campus Environment of Academic Integrity

- Do not strike private deals with students who engage in acts of academic dishonesty; report all instances of cheating to the relevant office on campus
- Work with your administration to identify or create an educational experience required of all first-time offenders
- Remind students of the importance of academic integrity prior to all major exams and assignments

Adapted from *Cheating Lessons: Learning from Academic Dishonesty* (Harvard University Press, 2013)

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Fostering Intrinsic Motivation: Reframing the Course

To increase student's intrinsic motivation, consider framing courses around **problems, questions, or challenges** that students will find intriguing, or that you can help them find intriguing. The examples below come from a revision I made in the description of a senior seminar for English majors on 21st-century British literature and culture. The first time I offered the course, in 2009, I described it using the standard coverage model. When I taught it again in the fall of 2013, after reading the research on intrinsic motivation that you will find in *Cheating Lessons*, I framed the course in an entirely new way.

2009 Course Description: The Coverage Model

Our seminar will explore the character of contemporary Britain through its most recent cultural productions, from novels and plays to film and television. We will seek to understand contemporary Britain in its own right, as well as the features that both distinguish it from, and link it to, America today.

The texts I have chosen for the course will focus particularly on race, gender, and sexuality as areas in which the British national identity is most fiercely debated. The devolution of the British colonial empire, which occurred through the second half of the twentieth century, continues to have a massive influence on British cultural and social life, both in the form of immigration and race relations in Britain, and in Britain's position on the international stage. We will explore contemporary Britain through the lenses of race, gender, and sexuality, but we will consider through those lenses a wide range of issues that affect contemporary Britain today.

2013 Course Description: The PQC Model

What makes you an American? Is it because you live on American soil? Or were born to American parents? Or do you possess some characteristics or personality traits that are distinctly American? Or perhaps you believe in some abstract ideals—like liberty or justice—that you identify as distinctly American? Is American-ness something real, or does the notion collapse under these questions?

Thinkers and artists have long struggled with this question of *national identity*: what defines a group of people as belonging to a nation? This question matters deeply in the modern world, because so much of the conflict that we see in the world today—and that we have experienced throughout world history—stems from arguments about national identity. That identity can serve as a reason to fight or exclude people who don't share what connects us, but it can also serve as a force to help unite people around a common set of causes, traditions, or places. In this class we are going to explore the question of national identity, and the uses to which it can be put—both for good and for ill—by considering 21st-century Britain, and examining how today's British artists are attempting to question or (re)-define what it means to be British in the modern world. To assist us in our quest, we will draw on two textbooks and a host of cultural expressions, from novels and plays and artworks to films and television and even the opening ceremonies of the London Olympics.

For more on the importance of intrinsic motivation to learning in higher education, look at Ken Bain's *What the Best College Teachers Do* (Harvard UP, 2004).

Creating Mastery Orientated Classes Offering Students Choice and Control

Susan Ambrose and her co-authors argue, in *How Learning Works: 7 Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*, that we can help students build mastery orientations toward our course material—increasing learning and reducing the incentive to cheat—by giving them choices in terms of how they demonstrate their learning to us. John Boyer, a geographer at Virginia Tech, pushes this strategy to the limit, giving his students the opportunity to construct their own package of assessments from a wide range of options. He describes his approach in the following excerpt from his syllabus, the full version of which you can find online here at:

http://www.thejohnboyer.com/images/uploads/World_Regions_Syllabus_Spring_2013.pdf

An Excerpt from John Boyer's World Regions 2013 Syllabus:

"This is a radical, experimental course when it comes to grading, and I hope you embrace and enjoy this change. If you don't, then you should bail out now, not later. Instead of having a set amount of mandatory activities that you are required to do and then assessing your grade from your performance, I am going to provide a host of opportunities for you to earn points towards your grade, thus allowing you to choose your path according to your interests and skills.

It's a 'create your fate' grade: you choose what you want to work on, and keep earning points doing different activities until you achieve the grade you desire. Are you an excellent test-taker? Then take lots of tests. Not good at taking exams? Then do alternative written or film viewing assignments to earn your points. I would suggest mixing it up and doing a little of everything to cover all your bases and ensure you get enough points to get the grade of your desires.

BUT BUYER BEWARE! You can't wait until the last minute to make this happen! The one way you can screw this up is to keep putting off things until the end of the semester, living under the delusion that you can do a whole bunch of stuff in the last weeks of class to make up for slacking all semester. **THIS WON'T WORK!** Almost all of these assignments consist of turning in things every week and/or attending scheduled events all semester long...AND THERE ARE NO 'MAKE-UPS' or 'EXTRA CREDIT' or any other additional opportunities offered at the end of the semester to earn points. So choose and plan your semester wisely!!!

Please note that the point totals shown for each activity are the maximum points possible; you don't simply get all the points simply for participating. In other words, you can earn up to 125 points for taking the Final Exam, but if you only get half the questions right (a 50% conventional grade) than you would only receive 62.5 points towards your final grade (50% of 125 points = 62.5 points earned). The inverse is true for films: they are worth 20 points each, and you can attend 10 (max of 200 points), so you could earn anywhere from 0 to 200 points for that activity based upon how many you do."

Whether or you embrace Boyer's specific approach, consider finding ways to offer students choices in demonstrating their learning to you in a course.

For more on mastery-oriented students and courses, look at Susan Ambrose et al, *How Learning Works: 7 Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* (Jossey-Bass, 2012).

Frequent, Low-Stakes Assessment: Leveraging the Testing Effect

Research on human learning and memory suggests that students need frequent opportunities to engage in the retrieval and rehearsal of course content. While we know that such opportunities will help take advantage of the testing effect, they do not require us to engage in continual testing of our students. Instead, we can take advantage of the first and last five minutes of class in order to give students the opportunity to recall, rehearse, and synthesize course information and concepts.

Questions to Open a Class

- 1) What was the most important concept you learned in Wednesday's class? How about Monday's?
- 2) How does the reading you did last night connect to the material we worked with last week?
- 3) How did last night's reading relate to the overall themes or goals of the course?
- 4) Before we begin today, can someone remind me of the definition of X? Or of the steps we take to solve X type of problem?
- 5) Let's review the major themes/concepts/types of problems we have considered thus far in the course. Who can help me start?
- 6) The topic of today's class will be X. Before we start, take two minutes and write down the most important things you know already about X.

Questions to Close a Class

- 1) What was the most important thing you learned in class today?
- 2) What question do you still have about the material we discussed today?
- 3) Now that we have covered this concept in more detail, can you relate it to X concept or problem that we considered earlier in the semester?
- 4) Remember the last paper/assignment/problem you did for the course. In light of this new material, how might you approach it differently now?
- 5) Pick one of the topics that we covered in class and tell me how you might have encountered it in your own life?

For an exhaustive compendium of frequent, low-stakes activities you can use in a college classroom, see Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross, *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers* (Jossey-Bass, 1993).