



SF Approaches to University Teaching



Presented by
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History of this workshop

- ▶ SF approach to life EXCEPT as professor!
- ▶ Email “loop” with Klaus S., Dominik G., Benoit de Bellefroid & Colin C.
- ▶ Experiment, evaluate ... “retain and amplify”!
- ▶ Share PLUS receive feedback/suggestions



U.S.A. university vocabulary

- ▶ School year begins in late August, ends early May
- ▶ One semester = One 16-week school term
- ▶ 3-4 hours of classroom time per course per week
- ▶ Students take 4-5 courses per semester
- ▶ “Lower-division” students = first two years
- ▶ “Upper-division” students = second two years
- ▶ A student must major in a specific academic subject



U.S.A. university vocabulary (cont'd.)

- ▶ Evaluating results -- assignment, exam, course grade
 - ❑ Highest grade “A” (90-100% correct)
 - ❑ Lowest grade “F” (Below 60% correct)...no “E”
 - ❑ “+” and “-” at B, C, D ... A- but no A+



Brief Profile

- ▶ Organizational development, late '70s to late '90s
- ▶ Became a university professor
- ▶ Still consult, but not as main professional focus
- ▶ Am comfortable with organizations of many kinds
- ▶ Enhanced my work with consulting clients
 - ❖ A “laboratory” for consulting



Brief Profile (cont'd.)

- ▶ Communication Studies Department—generalist curricula
- ▶ Applied organizational communication, undergraduate & postgraduate students
 - Intro to org. comm. (8-30 students)
 - Communication training design and delivery (8-15 stdts.)
 - Consulting skills (8-15 students)
- ▶ “Intro to Communication” (COM 105), 150-180 students



SF Element #1

- ▶ The design of Day One of a course



The most important day of the course!

- ▶ Course culture
- ▶ Instructor expectations
- ▶ Begin building community
- ▶ Intention:
 - ▶ Claim and draw upon strengths
 - ▶ Develop human connections
 - ▶ “Solutions, not problems” re: the unknown



“The unknown”

- ▶ Ambiguity ... fuzziness ... cloudiness
- ▶ “How should I approach this task?”
 - ▶ Assignment ... specifications/guidelines
 - ▶ Exam ... test item
 - ▶ Communicating with instructor



Day One . . . “What’s the deal...?”

- ▶ “What’s the deal with this course?”
 - ▶ “How hard is it?”
 - ▶ “How do I get an ‘A’?”
- ▶ “What’s the deal with this professor?”
 - ▶ “Is he ‘cool’—or a jerk?”
 - ▶ “Does he make class meetings interesting—or boring?”















Day One template

I. “Welcome ... and ‘rumor control’...”



[*rumor control example for SOL '13*]

DATE	CLASS	RATING	COMMENT
2/27/12	COM105	 Poor Quality Easiness  Helpfulness  Clarity  Rater Interest 	AVOID HIM AT ALL COSTS. He is horrible. He takes FOREVER to get his point across and he spends more time trying to confuse you on the tests instead of testing your knowledge on the subject. He is extremely anal about everything and has horrible handwriting when he returns your work so the feedback he gives is pretty much useless.  Report this rating

DATE	CLASS	RATING	COMMENT
11/9/11	COM105	 Average Quality Easiness  Helpfulness  Clarity  Rater Interest 	Unfortunately this class is a necessary evil. He is a horrible professor, extremely anal and even cried on the first day of classes. Exams are hard, so begin studying at least the week before. COME TO CLASS! and suck it up because he is the only one who teaches this class.  Report this rating



Day One template

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2. “I’ll be asking some questions; I’ll answer any questions you have for me; and you’ll meet some classmates ...”



Day One template (cont'd.)

3. “Pick a partner ...”

▶ “What do you think this course is about?”

4. “What did you say or hear that resonated with you?”

☞ [Collect 3-6. *BRIEFLY* comment as necessary ... place in “harmony” frame.]



[illustration of COM 105 purpose]

More than a course in which you “learn about communication”

We want to produce **people of character**.

- Smart consumers of information.
- Active involvement in community.
- Confident and wise family members.
- Dedicated relationship partners.

Tikkun olam



Day One template (cont'd.)

5. “You will need a pen and a piece of paper ... pick a new partner ...”
6. “As someone who may take this course, what are ‘current conditions’ for you?”
7. “What’s your ‘future perfect’ re: what you want out of this course?” (Miracle question may be asked here.)
8. “Write brief notes re: future perfect.”



Day One template (cont'd.)

9. “Pick a new partner ... Partner A, Partner B”

10. “Partner A, strengths you bring to accomplishing the future perfect ... Partner B, same question.”

11. “1-10 re: how likely are you to ____? And: adjust as necessary. And: One small step? And: adjust as necessary.”



Day One template (cont'd.)

12. By ____ p.m. tomorrow: for ten “bonus” points, email me what you discovered after thinking about all this.” [*Detailed criteria.*]



SF Element #2

- ▶ Evaluating student results...can this be done in an “SF way”?



Conceptual foundation

- ▶ Like a performance evaluation but not oral
- ▶ Take as much “edge” off evaluating/evaluation as possible



Conceptual foundation

- ▶ “Strengths” and “deltas”
 - ▶ Like the Greek letter Δ
 - ▶ “Strength” = keep ... nourish ... amplify
 - ▶ “Delta” = consider a different choice next time you encounter this situation/task/condition
 - ▶ (These terms are becoming part of my department’s vocabulary!)



Evaluation approaches

- ▶ Clear and specific criteria for grades/scores
 - ▶ For course in general ... apply in more detail as necessary for an assignment
 - ▶ “Decide what grade you want and meet the criteria.”
 - ▶ “Make an argument in support of your claim that your results should earn a different grade/score.”



Evaluation approaches (cont'd.)

- ▶ Every evaluation framed in terms of strengths and deltas.
Examples:
 - ▶ Writing assignments & exam debriefs
 - ▶ Debriefing of in-class activity: self & peer evaluations
 - ▶ Visitors' announcements
 - ▶ Strengths and deltas FOR ME (e.g., design, activity, presentation, etc.)



SF Element #3

- ▶ One-to-one meetings with students...SF for sure!



My basic approach

- ▶ 1. “What shall we accomplish by the end of this conversation?”
- ▶ 2. “What are ‘current conditions’ for you regarding ___?”
- ▶ 3. “What would a ‘future perfect’ look like for you regarding ___?”
- ▶ 4. “What strengths do you already have that will move you in that direction?”
- ▶ 5. “1-10, how likely that you will use them to that end?”
- ▶ 6. “How can you get to [9, 10]?” (May be some negotiation.)
- ▶ 7. “What do you now know, or what can you now do, as a result of this conversation?”



SF Element #4

- ▶ **Incorporating SF language into routine academic/instructional processes**



Example of language use

- ▶ Almost all assistance by instructor becomes coaching...also:
“Partner B, you’ll coach Partner A on ____...”
- ▶ Old (“not-very-SF”) way of writing assignment guidelines...
 - ▶ Brief version of guidelines for the assignment
 - ▶ Long version of guidelines for the assignment
- ▶ New (“SF”) way of writing guidelines
 - ▶ Brief version becomes simply “Guidelines for the assignment”
 - ▶ Long version becomes “Coaching version of the guidelines”



SF Element #5

- ▶ **Class discussion ... not just “good ideas” but notable behavior/action**

