Introduction

• Eng opens his introduction with a list of questions and statements.... How many have you thought about your own practice over the years?
• Eng bases much of his analysis on one fundamental assertion – and two problems: “Teaching in higher education is hard when you care. Unfortunately, there are two big problems: 1) Your students don’t care about your course; and 2) most college instructors (including full-time professors) don’t know how to teach” (2). Do you agree?
• Eng contends “students are busy. Possibly overwhelmed. But they do still care about doing well” before insisting “[u]nless your course connects with students in some way, they won’t invest beyond the requirements” (2).
• He maintains, “college instructors don’t ever learn how to teach. There is no training program or teaching license requirements as there are for their K-12 counterparts” (2). Should there be?
• Instead, Eng argues, “we learn to teach by imitating what our professors did – we lecture. In fact, lecturing is still the most dominant form of instruction in college, with over half of faculty using it in all or most of their classes” (2-3). This despite the fact that research “shows that traditional stand-and-deliver lectures do little to help students learn, much less retain what they have learned” (3). (See Figure 1).
• Eng concludes that “traditional lectures simply do not foster real-world skills like innovating, collaborating, and continuous learning” (4).
• To address this problem, Eng pulls from the practices of two industries to support his argument: marketing and K-12 education.
• “Marketers,” he insists, “know how to reach audiences. They are experts when it comes to building relationships that make consumers care” (4).
• As professors, he argues, we should do the same.
• Moreover, “[t]he best [K-12] schoolteachers know which pedagogical tools and strategies engage students” and know how to “cultivate a safe and supportive classroom community as the first order of business” (5).
• “As a former marketing executive and K-12 teacher,” he insists, “I’ve applied the perspectives from both industries to college teaching with astounding results” (5).

Eng concludes that “traditional lectures simply do not foster real-world skills like innovating, collaborating, and continuous learning” (4).

He continues (with no lack of self-confidence 😊) “[i]f you follow this guide, you will improve. Students will raise their hands more, invest in their assignments, and give you better end-of-term evaluations. Even better, you can read this book today and implement the strategies tomorrow – even if you’ve already defined your syllabus for the semester” (6).

This said, “Teaching College is not for those who consider teaching less important than their scholarly (research) endeavors. It is also not for those who believe good teaching is instinctive – that some professors simply have ‘it’ while others don’t. Every single effective teacher I’ve come across regularly reflects on and refines his or her craft” (7).
Introduction (Continued)

- Eng insists his book “is not, nor is it intended to be, viewed the same as peer-reviewed research. I simply want to pass along what two industries – business marketing and K-12 education – have taught me” (7).
- What do you make of Eng’s contention that “[u]niversities across the US are the envy of the world, but, truthfully, that is due more to the reputation borne from the research coming out of the universities than the teaching” (8)?
- Helpfully, Eng intends for his book to “meet busy instructors where they are. This means improving lectures by incorporating more interactive and hands-on work. Helping instructors redo their syllabi. Implementing strategies to encourage student participation” (9).

Part 1: Lay the Groundwork

Chapter 1: Understand the Common Problems of Lecturing

- Too many students “feel their professors aren’t teaching at all, in the sense they are not helping students understand, internalize, and apply what they read. Instead, they feel instructors regurgitate too much information from the texts…[and] rely on PowerPoint or one-sided lectures that leave students bored and disengaged” (14).
- “Lectures, at least in the traditional sense, rarely help” (14).
- For his part, Eng defines “traditional” lectures as “expositions by the teacher that dominate class sessions (think big lecture halls) as well as those that largely make up the class” (14).
- Eng identifies three main problems with lectures: 1) those that are too dense/long, 2) those that seem disconnected from students, and 3) lectures that rely too heavily on slides.
- What do you make of Eng’s characterization of the “ideal” student? “…one who reads their [teacher’s] overly long syllabi (most don’t), does complex assignments correctly the first time (which rarely happens), or answers questions thoughtfully and critically” (16).
- Assess Eng’s assertion that professors “can’t expect them [students] to be mentally present all the time” (16).

Problem 1: Too Dense / Too Long:

- Too many PowerPoint slides (15).
- “Dense and long lectures tend to duplicate the material from assigned readings” (15).
- Signs your lecture is too dense / long: 1) Students primarily take notes rather than participate 2) Students are bored/sleepy 3) Students cannot summarize covered material (15).
- Primarily covers what’s in the textbook.
- “One rule of thumb schoolteachers use to determine appropriate lesson length is to take the children’s age and double it” – after which students lose interest (17). Moreover, “adults aren’t that different” (17).
- “College students’ attention starts high at the beginning and peaks around fifteen to twenty minutes into a lecture” (17).
- For this reason, “didactic lectures should remain bite-sized and interspersed. Even if you add in ‘new’ material not covered in the text, it should be concise and relevant” (18). See Figure 2.
- “Add in other modalities, such as discussions, questions, and activities throughout” (18). (Figure 2).

Problem 2: Disconnected From Students:

- Lectures are too often 1-sided affairs. Students do not actively participate.
- “Students gain by being active, rather than passive, learners” (18).
- “Lectures need to relate to students’ lives, which explains why we have to know our intended audience” (18). Lectures should also be relevant. Move beyond “interesting facts” (19).
- How do you mitigate the “curse of knowledge” and “expert blind spot” (19)?
- “Students come in with all levels of knowledge and literacies about our discipline, and our high-level jargon flies over their head” (19).
**Problem 2: Disconnected from Students** (continued):
- Too often, students will not “admit being confused” (19). Instead, they “just jot notes and hope to make sense of them later” (19).
- Eng insists “[w]e can’t assume students get what we say. Connecting with them where they are – not where they ought to be – is more important” (19).

**Problem 3: Too Many Slides**
- What do you make of the student feedback about slides on page 20?
- Do you use PowerPoint? If so – how often? How many slides? How do you assess whether your slides are effective?
- On the positive side: PowerPoint “organizes our thoughts, structures our lessons, and helps us [as professors] remember what to say” (21).
- Have you ever used publisher slide decks like those Eng discusses on page 21? Are they effective – or do they, as he asserts, “on the whole...harm teaching and learning” (21)?
- Eng insists, “[a]void using (or even adapting) ready made slides” (21).
- This said, “if you know how to incorporate PowerPoint into your lecture, it can powerfully facilitate student engagement and learning” (21).

**Note Eng’s use of a “Summary and Action Step” strategy. Could you incorporate this strategy into your practice?**

---

**Chapter 2: Focus on the Student, Not the Content**

- Students “lose interest” and respect for their professors when they “engage in direct instruction the whole period, cram too much material, fail to connect with students, and rely too much on slides” (25).
- To combat these maladies, Eng insists, professors must understand “the psychology behind good teaching” (25).
- He maintains that he learned three “Life Changing Lessons” from the advertising industry:
  - Know your target audience.
  - Consider the big picture first.
  - Determine the main benefit to the audience (25).
- Ultimately, this chapter supports a “student-centered” or “learning-centered” approach to teaching.
Professional Reading Series:
Teaching College:
The Ultimate Guide to Lecturing, Presenting, and Engaging Students

• Acknowledging that teaching is “more than simply conveying knowledge,” Eng cites Daniel Pink’s contention that good teaching depends “more on the ‘creative, heuristic, problem-finding skills of artists than on the reductive, algorithmic, problem-finding skills of technicians” (26).
• “[T]eaching starts by knowing your students” (26).
• Students tend to “filter … lectures through their own experiences and knowledge” (27).
• “[P]eople connect new knowledge with what they already know. So when professors start lecturing above the students’ heads, learners have no experience to connect to” (27).
• For this reason, Eng tells us, “start from where your students are. Activate their prior knowledge to see what they know, so that you can fill in the gaps. This will ensure students learn more readily” (27).
• Do you agree with Eng? If so, how do you meet students where they are and, more important, help them improve / expand their knowledge/understanding each lesson? If not, why not?
• Do you “cover the material” rather than “teaching” it? What is the difference (27)?
• I must admit - the following quote hit a little bit too close for comfort for me. How about you? : “Just because you feel drained at the end of a vigorous lecture doesn’t mean you’ve been an active teacher – just that you’ve made lecturing more about you and the content rather than about the students” (27). Do you agree?
• Instead, Eng says, “[y]our need to uncover the wants, needs, and level of the students – your target audience. If too many students are daydreaming or texting chances are your lectures are simply not connecting with them (27).
• Have you considered applying Nancy Duarte’s seven questions for business presentations to your students (28)?
• Think, for a moment, about your students. Develop an ideal client profile (ICP) for them – acknowledging that different courses might very well require a different / unique ICP.
• Marketers consider demographic (age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, family structure, employment data, etc.) and psychographic (values, beliefs, fears, behaviors, etc.) data to target an ICP (28). What demographics work for an “Ideal Student Profile” at this institution? …in your field / discipline? Has this ICP changed over time?
• Eng contends that, to be effective, an ICP must be “laser-focused” (29).
• Note how Eng uses his ICP to tailor assignments, classroom activities, etc. in his class, insisting “knowing your target audience can even help you in the day-to-day interactions with students” (30).
• What do you make of Ken Bain’s identification of three types of learners: surface learners, strategic learners, deep learners (32-33)?
• What do you make of his assertion that “years of schooling” have taught students that learning “emphasizes grades, convergent (read: closed) thinking, and conformity, rather than creativity and open-ended thinking. We condition them not to take risks, so they do only what’s required” (33)?
• If, as Eng contends, “this mindset is hard to change,” what can we do?
• What do you learn from students by listening to and communicating with them before / between classes?
• Do you consider your students’ “Big Picture Goal” (34)?
• Eng insists “[p]lanning backward is a strategy that effective educators adopt when planning their day-to-day instruction” (35).
• I disagree with Eng’s apparent dismissal of short-term goals in favor of focusing on students’ long-term aspirations. In this sense – I feel he is a bit misguided – but I tend to teach within the core curriculum. What do you think?
• This said, I like the prompt: “My students enroll in _____ because they want to _____ and be able to ____” (37). Consider students’ Big Picture Goal when drafting the learning outcomes for your course.
• Can you precisely identify the “big benefit” of your course? Does it tie in with your students’ Big Picture Goal?
Chapter 3: Adopt an Active Approach

Eng argues “what works for children works just as well for adults” (43). Can we use what works for children with our students – without treating them like children? Can we have adult expectations for them?

“Like children, adults learn best through a hands-on, active approach” (43).

“Active learning increases the academic performance of college students, cuts down the failure rate, and reduces the achievement gap between Blacks and whites and between first-and second-generation students” (43).

“Learning by doing” is one of the driving forces shaping the next generation of students (43).

Eng believes today’s students want (and need) more hands-on practice. Do you agree? (44).

What do you make of Eng’s distinction between “teaching” and “helping students learn [by focusing upon] what students actually do in the classroom” (44).

Consider, for a moment, Harvard Magazine’s contention that active learners “…take new information and apply it, rather than merely taking note of it. Firsthand use of new material develops personal ownership. When subject matter connects directly with students’ experiences, projects, and goals, they care more about the material they seek to master” (45).

Students “construct their own knowledge, rather than receiving it” (45).

Is it really “tempting to fail certain students for the good of the greater society” (45)? I don’t recall ever feeling like or thinking this….

Our job, as professors, is to “get them ready to the best of [our] abilities =, by taking them from Point A to Point B via experiences” (46). Essentially, Lev Vygotsky hypothesizes, we lead them through the Zone of Proximal Development to scaffold student learning. See Figure 3.

What do you make of the “traditional” “I/We/You” model of teaching vs. Eng’s ostensibly nonlinear/flipped “You, Ya’all, We” model (47-48)?

- I – instructor does it. We – Class does it. You – Student does it.
- You – Students do it. Y’all – Pair up. We – Class does it.

Eng favors the latter – but concedes there are certain times when the traditional model works.

“Problem-based learning” often requires students to struggle – which can be difficult for professors who, instead of teaching – first poses a problem, dilemma, or situation – and guides the students through solving it themselves.

See Figure 4 for Active Learning Strategies.
Active Learning Strategies

- Red – Amber – Green Cards
- Think-Pair-Share
- Muddiest Point
- Role Playing
- Micro Teaching
- A-ha Moment
- Chain Notes
- Pause Procedures
- Turn Back
- Reading Response Paper
- Student Generated Test Questions
- Can of Wisdom
- Minute Paper
- So What?
- Case Studies
- Exit Ticket
- One Sentence Summary

For a comprehensive list of possibilities, see: http://www.usf.edu/atle/documents/handout-interactive-techniques.pdf

Figure 4