



VIDEOTAPING SUGGESTIONS

If you decide to videotape your class, contact the Knapp reserve desk (x2368) to reserve the video camera and a videographer at least 2 weeks prior.

What to look for (and what to ignore) in your videotaped class

These suggestions draw heavily on Maryellen Weimer, *Improving College Teaching: Strategies for Developing Instructional Effectiveness* (San Francisco 1991), pp. 207ff. Various faculty members here at Wellesley made helpful suggestions. If you have suggestions, please let the PLTC know so this handout can be improved (Beth Hennessey x3005).

General suggestions

This list of suggestions emphasizes observations and doesn't delve into how you might interpret your observations and develop strategies for improvement. It is usually helpful to talk to someone else about your tape and your observations to help you move from the observation stage to the interpretation stage. The PLTC Faculty Director would be happy to talk with you or to recommend others as you work out your thoughts.

After an initial spasm of horror, be untroubled by:

- What you look like on tape ("I thought the masking tape on my glasses didn't show.").
- What you sound like on tape.
- Your awareness of the camera.

Consider watching the tape once just to get past your reactions and then watch it a second time to focus on the teaching.

Try to be objective and to make specific and relatively detailed observations. Perhaps use a check-list to help yourself focus. Don't be too quick to judge yourself.

After you've watched your tape, think about what worked, what didn't, and what you might do differently. Expanding the use of successful strategies might be just as valuable as modifying unsuccessful ones. If you do things differently, try to get a sense of the effect: did the change make a difference? Talk to the students, too: they may have good advice, especially if you emphasize that you're interested in concrete suggestions and show that you're willing to discuss strategies and modify what you do. Some students, however, may be bewildered by your asking for their advice; they may think you're

trying to deny that you are The Professor. Explain why you're asking for their thoughts. If you watched the tape with someone else, you may want to go back for further discussion.

Specific suggestions

Some of these questions are relevant to all classes, others only to certain kinds of classes. Select some of the questions to help you focus as you watch your tape. You might watch the tape or parts of it several times with different questions in mind.

As the class began:

- What was the first thing you did as part of the class? Preview today's session? Refer to something from the previous class? Mention upcoming assignments? Announce a public lecture?

Physical questions

- Where did you stand or sit during the class? At the lectern? Leaning against a wall? On the edge of the table?
- Did you move around during the class? Where? From side to side at the front? Toward and away from the board? Were your movements continual? Repetitive? Were they keyed to what you were saying? (e.g., you backed up every time a student asked a question)
- What did you do with your hands? Grasp the lectern? Put your hands in your pockets? Gesture? How often did you gesture? When did you gesture?
- Where were your eyes focused? On the student in the middle of the first row? On the back wall?
- Did you smile? How often? When? Did you laugh out loud? Did the students? When?
- How did you use your notes? Did you read from them directly? Get lost in them? Glance at them?

Structure, organization, examples, transitions

- How was the class session structured as a whole? From example to theory? Theory to example? Two/three/four topics given equal time?
- Did the class session use the same type of instruction throughout (e.g., lecture, discussion, group work, student reports)? How much time was given to which types of instruction?
- How did you emphasize main points? Repeat them aloud? Write them on the board? Use an overhead? A slide? Say, "Are you all following me?"
- How did you use examples? To introduce main points? To illustrate main points?

Were your examples short (1-2 sentences)? Long (several minutes)? A mixture? Where did your examples come from (e.g., your own experience, the textbook, the news)?

- How did you mark transitions between the different parts of the class session? Say "And now we'll move on to the next point"? Erase the board? Ask if there were any questions?

Questions

- Did you ask questions? What kinds of questions did you ask? Rhetorical questions? Real questions? (Did the students appear to know which were which?) Did your questions have straight-forward, correct answers? Did they require analysis and thought? (Did the students know which were which?)
- How did you ask questions? Of the class as a whole? Of individuals called on by name? Did you use students' names? Did the students use each others' names?
- What kinds of questions did the students ask? factual questions? Interpretive questions? Specific questions? General questions? "I'm lost" questions?
- When did the students ask questions? When you asked if there were questions? Whenever they had a question? When they looked desperate and lost?
- What happened when a student asked a question? Did other students answer the question? What did you do? Say "Good question"? Respond with a quick answer? Ask the class if anyone knew the answer? Call on a student without asking for volunteers? If no one answered a question right away, how long did you wait for an answer (5 seconds? the eternity of 10 seconds?)?

Participation and attention

- Did you encourage students to participate? If so, what did you do? Did the students participate? What did they do?
- What did you do if the students weren't paying attention or participating or if their attention lapsed? Glare at them? Raise/lower your voice conspicuously? Ask a question? Tell a joke? Then what did they do?

Visual aids and equipment

- Did you use blackboards? Overheads? Was your handwriting legible? Was it legible to a student in the back of the room? Were your diagrams clear and consistently labeled?
- Did students write down everything you put on the board? (Did you want them to?) Did their comments and questions suggest that they understood what you wrote on

the board?

- What did you use the blackboard/overhead FOR? A roadmap of your argument? (Could a student reconstruct your argument by looking at the board?) To note down students' contributions? To indicate relationships with lines and arrows?
- If you used a computer, did the program do what you wanted it to? If the screen was projected, was the projected image easily visible to all the students?
- If you used slides, did the machine work? Were the slides in the order you anticipated? What did you do if the machine malfunctioned? Were the slides easily visible to all the students? Did the slides illustrate the points you were making?
- If you used equipment for demonstrations, did the equipment work? What did you do if something broke or if you got an unexpected result? Were the effects clearly visible from all parts of the classroom? Did the demonstration illustrate the point you were making? Did the students' comments and questions suggest that they understood the point of the demonstration?
- Did you rely in a single type of visual aid?

Handouts

- Was the handout legible? Did you have enough copies? How long did it take to pass it out? What happened while it was being passed out?
- Did the handout illustrate the point you wanted it to? Did the students' comments and questions suggest that they understood the handout?
- Did you expect the student to access material on First Class and the web on their own? Did they have them when needed in class?

As the class ended

- How did you end the class? By reviewing what was discussed? By alluding to the next session? With a discussion of the homework? With a glance ahead to the next hourly?

If other questions occur to you, please share them with the PLTC and we'll add them to the list.