Best Practices for Teaching & Learning
Session 2: Designing a Course & Constructing a Syllabus

1. Introduction to this session

   - The goal of this session is to illustrate how backward course design can lead to a more effective course.

   - By the end of this session, you will be able to:
     - *State* the components of a syllabus
     - *Identify* the components of Backward Course Design
     - *Evaluate* content for a course you would like to teach based on content priorities
     - *Define* and *develop* learning objectives for a course you would like to teach

2. Constructing a syllabus

   - Syllabus is a "roadmap" and contract

   - Elements of a syllabus
     1. Basic course information
     2. Description, including the "big ideas"
     3. Goals & learning objectives
     4. Assessments
     5. Schedule
     6. Policies

3. Designing a course through backward design

   - Backward Design:
     Planning backwards can help you design and deliver a more effective course by minimizing memorization and maximizing transfer.

   a) Before you begin, prioritize content:
      1. Big ideas & core tasks**:** enduring understanding & core knowledge
      2. Important to know & do
      3. Worth being familiar with

   b) When planning, ask yourself the following questions:
      1. What understanding about big ideas should students leave with?
      2. How do common misconceptions inform your selection of desired understanding?

   c) Break the course into 3-5 big ideas and organize your course based on those big ideas.
   d) Define course's learning objectives.
   e) Design learning experiences and activities that support course's learning objectives.
   f) Design assessment strategies that will help determine whether students are meeting course's learning objectives.

- Pair-Share Activity
  Identify the big ideas within your discipline.

- Think-Pair-Share Activity
  Prioritize content for a class you would like to teach based on the principles of content prioritization.

- Discussion of readings:
a) Wiggins & McTighe. Understanding by Design, Chapter 1: Backward Design and Chapter 2: Clarifying Content Priorities
b) Munzenmaier & Rubin. Bloom's Taxonomy: What's Old is New Again.

4. Learning objectives

a) Use the S-K-A Scheme to help you define your learning objectives:
   - **Skills**: what should students be able *to do*?
   - **Knowledge**: what should students *know* and *understand*?
   - **Attitudes/Attributes**: What *attitudes* or *attributes* should students have?

b) Learning objectives are specific, observable, and measurable statements about student behavior.

c) Each learning objective should contain 3 basic elements:
   1. A *verb* that describes an observable/measurable action.
   2. A *description* of the conditions under which the action takes place, ("When given ___, you will be able to ___").
   3. An *indication* of what will be accepted as evidence that learning has occurred.

d) Learning objectives should address a range of cognitive abilities:
   Use Bloom's Taxonomy to help you define cognitive abilities
   1.REMEMBER – 2.UNDERSTAND – 3.APPLY – 4.ANALYZE – 5.EVALUATE – 6.CREATE

- Think-Pair-Share Activity
  Based on the topics that you identified in your pre-session assignment, identify the underlying concepts and write learning objectives for a course you would like to teach.

5. Post-session assignment