

Students first enter a classroom with three questions: Who is the teacher? Who are the other students? What will I be expected to do?

The relationships within a learning community:

### **Student-Teacher Relationship**

What do students want to know about a teacher?

- Who are you?
  - Why are you the teacher?
  - What qualifications do you have?
  - Are you a person as well as a teacher?
- What kind of a person are you?
  - Are you rigid?
  - Are you easily rattled?
  - Can you handle criticism?
  - Will you really try to help?
  - Will you respect me?

How should we answer these?

- Explicitly when appropriate
- With our actions
- Allow the students to introduce themselves to you (what if a large class?)
- Mistakes:
  - False bravado; lack of humility – or – Overt insecurity
  - Distance/ coldness– or – -over-familiarity
  - Coming off so that students expect failure – or – expect an easy A
  - Lack of passion for the subject
  - Lack of interest in /availability to the students

### **Student-Student Relationship**

- Allow for introductions (what if it is a large class?)
- Explain how the students should interact

## **Student-Subject Relationship**

Too often a first class goes one of two ways

- Introductions, overview of syllabus, dismissed early
- Introductions, overview of syllabus, lecture 1

Researchers are reminding us that:

- We have a unique opportunity to get students excited about our class on the first day, an opportunity that we will not get again.
- Students often go through an entire course without really knowing what the course was about

Thus, it is important to attempt to introduce the students to the course's subject in a way that invites them interact with the subject, frames every experience they will have in your class, and fosters intrinsic enthusiasm for the course.

Three ways to think about introducing your subject on DAY ONE:

- What are the big questions? Ken Bain, author of *What the Best College Teachers Do*, says that the best teachers engage students in the “big questions” of the discipline, helping them integrate smaller lessons into a framework of the discipline. The first day is the time to begin that conversation.
- What is this course about in a nutshell? Write one sentence describing what the course is about. Be careful not to over simplify. What is it really about? This nutshell can be shared with students on DAY ONE and then used as a reference point throughout. (You can also share with them the questions it raised for you as you struggled to get it to a nutshell; that introduces them to the big questions of the discipline).
- Joining the Conversation: Students are joining conversations of the discipline. You are an insider; you know the conversations in progress and are a part of them. Students must listen, figure out what conversations interest them, imagine where they might jump in, and eventually speak. How can you prepare them for this? How can the first day be an introduction to the conversation?