



Teaching

Best Practices

Know your audience

- Email my students to get them excited about coming and establish my expectations
- Keep in mind what the skills and background knowledge of my audience are, why they might be taking the course, what they would hope to get out of it, and what is reasonable to ask of them
- Inform myself as best I can about the learners in the group
- Put myself in the position of the student so that the syllabus is logical and flows evenly

Use OAKS

- Check that all course materials and links are current and available to students
- Set a tone of seriousness and professionalism through the course's online pages because early impressions stick

Create Course Materials

- Create grading matrices for all projects
- Consider assignment structure and grading such as where I will find the time to grade this assignment
- Identify 1-2 overarching themes/narratives/questions that identify the stakes of the class
- Compose a syllabus with clear expectations, a flexible assignment schedule, a variety of teaching opportunities and multimodal learning (think-pair-share to promote peer learning; debates; community-mapping exercises; documentaries and videos followed by discussion)

Backup

- Make a Plan B or keep my lesson from being too scripted so that there's ample room for improvisation

Visualize

- Ensure that all information is easy to read from the back of the room
- Use color and highlighting, shaping fills on PowerPoint slides to highlight particularly important concepts

Mix it up!

- Include movement in each class with multiple activities per lesson (not just lecture for 75 minutes) by breaking up lectures with questions, short video clips, or group discussions to keep them engaged
- Keep lectures to 15' maximum before varying teaching style or including some element of active learning

Provide Examples

- Include or create examples so that students know at the end what the lesson product could look like
- Include audio-visual aids

Begin with the End

- Ask myself "What is the takeaway?" and then build in stages, starting with input to contextualize the object of analysis and ending with an output assignment (group exercise or question) where they generate an intellectual product (an analysis, compilation, outline, etc.)
- Communicate the takeaway at the beginning and end of class
- Generate a moment of genuine aporia early on (What is it about this performance/video/test that is confusing? What do we want to know more about?) so that the lesson can focus on filling in the blanks

Classroom Management

Regarding Myself

- Learn their names within the first week (one professor does this on the first day!)
- Respond to students in a way that allows them to figure out the answers themselves
- Connect with all students at least once per period
- Address inappropriate behavior in terms of what is in the student's best interests
- Maintain eye contact with students when talking to them
- Commit myself to earning student respect instead of feeling entitled to it

Regarding the Individual

- Set an example with my own behavior (greeting students individually, smile, be a calming influence)
- Model each activity very carefully

Regarding the Group

- Be consistent, benevolent, but STRICT
- Create small groups instead of letting students group themselves
- Engage everyone
- Keep class moving (multiple activities)
- Keep class focused on the day's goals
- Communicate expectations clearly in class and in the syllabus and be ready to reinforce as needed
- Choose my battles wisely with respect to disruptive behavior
- Walk in between the aisles as often as possible, make eye contact, let them know I am aware of their presence and their behavior
- Foster an environment of mutual respect so that students create a learning environment of their own volition

Electronic

- Use passive voice as much as possible in emails to alert them to concerns
- Ask about their well-being in writing
- Model appropriate methods (e.g., salutation, sign off)
- Maintain good humor where possible (try not to be overly formal)
- Communicate in bullet points, and bold/underline important information (dates, etc.)
- Keep a paper trail
- Include course title in all emails from OAKS
- Email announcements and post same information to OAKS
- Provide instruction on communicating with me in syllabus
- Keep it brief (send more emails as opposed to long, detailed emails with weeks' worth of information)

Face-to-Face

- Always make eye contact, give them my full attention, show that I am genuinely interested and invested in what they have to say
- Speak clearly so that students will be encouraged to do the same for me
- Listen, listen, listen → praise, praise, praise
- Give students ample time to think and answer, even if there is awkward silence
- Not interrupt students when they speak
- Show compassion
- Speak to them as mature adults
- Be polite and friendly and funny (I hope!)
- Be approachable by saying repeatedly that I am happy to meet with them in office hours (even incentivize them to come by offering participation credit)
- Ask them how they want to be addressed and then respect their wishes

Assigning Bulding

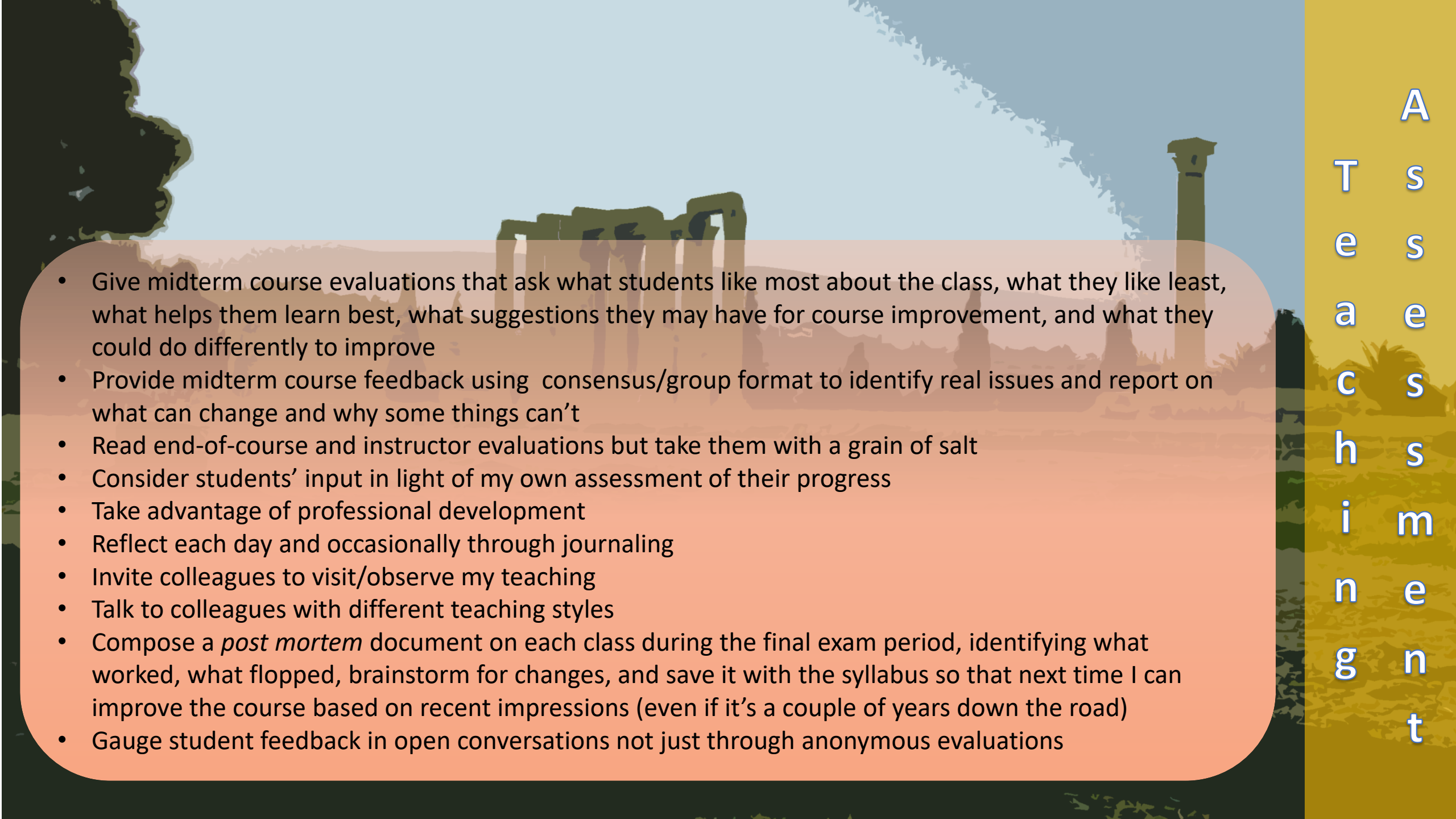
- Start with my final goal and design questions or prompts that will guide students to that goal
- Create a clear pathway to success
- Give explicit directions
- Communicate clear objectives using [Bloom's Revised Taxonomy of Action Verbs](#)
- Provide a grading rubric that identifies minimum, good, excellent, and unacceptable work (in that order)
- Emphasize process so that students have the opportunity to improve on a rough draft or presentation slides so that their final draft is their best work
- Give options for writing prompts
- Explain to students not just what we're doing but why
- Provide different modalities in which students can demonstrate/apply their knowledge: research paper, documentary, podcast, performance, etc.
- Identify citation guidelines to follow
- Stress quality over quantity
- Make sure the rubric accurately measures learning related to course objectives

On Written Compositions

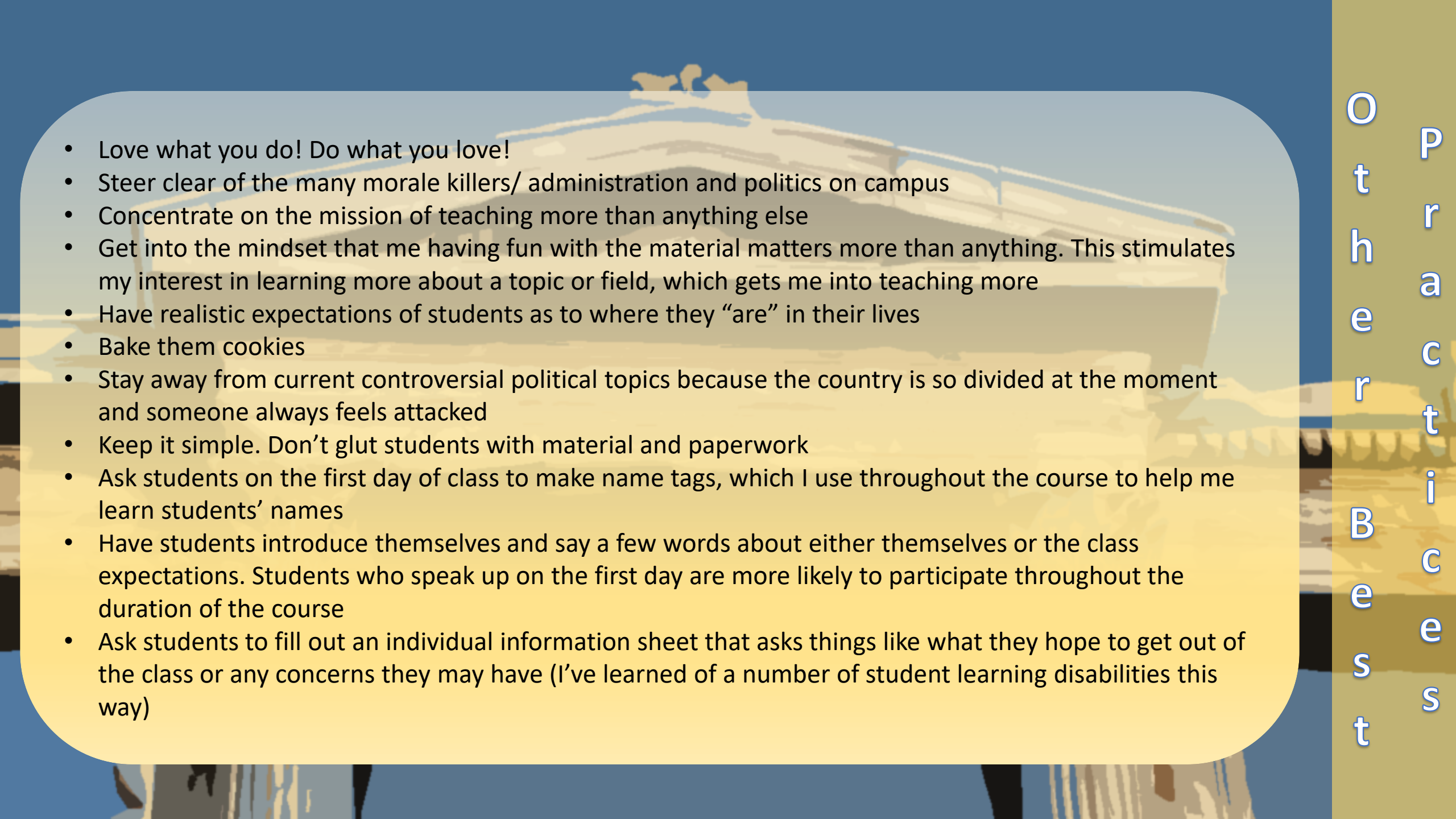
- Give feedback on an early draft so that students can apply my feedback and I can simply put a grade on the final draft
- Give positive feedback first, and never use “but” before introducing things that might be changed.

In General

- Include a variety of frequent, low-stakes assessments so that less than stellar grades can be counterbalanced by good ones and so no one type of student (e.g., talkative students, good/weaker students) is disproportionately disadvantaged
- Give a “one-minute paper” in which I pose a question and give students a minute or two to respond to (1) one thing new they learned and (2) what they’re unclear about
- Keep grades on OAKS
- Grade pass/fail and use revisions to encourage learning
- Use a standardized rubric
- Give constant feedback
- Grade on improvement where possible
- Ask “Did the student demonstrate their ability to perform a certain form of analysis or apply a particular theory we have been studying, rather than repeat or memorize content information?”

- 
- Give midterm course evaluations that ask what students like most about the class, what they like least, what helps them learn best, what suggestions they may have for course improvement, and what they could do differently to improve
 - Provide midterm course feedback using consensus/group format to identify real issues and report on what can change and why some things can't
 - Read end-of-course and instructor evaluations but take them with a grain of salt
 - Consider students' input in light of my own assessment of their progress
 - Take advantage of professional development
 - Reflect each day and occasionally through journaling
 - Invite colleagues to visit/observe my teaching
 - Talk to colleagues with different teaching styles
 - Compose a *post mortem* document on each class during the final exam period, identifying what worked, what flopped, brainstorm for changes, and save it with the syllabus so that next time I can improve the course based on recent impressions (even if it's a couple of years down the road)
 - Gauge student feedback in open conversations not just through anonymous evaluations

A
s
s
e
s
s
m
e
n
t
s
h
i
n
g
t
h
e
m

- 
- Love what you do! Do what you love!
 - Steer clear of the many morale killers/ administration and politics on campus
 - Concentrate on the mission of teaching more than anything else
 - Get into the mindset that me having fun with the material matters more than anything. This stimulates my interest in learning more about a topic or field, which gets me into teaching more
 - Have realistic expectations of students as to where they “are” in their lives
 - Bake them cookies
 - Stay away from current controversial political topics because the country is so divided at the moment and someone always feels attacked
 - Keep it simple. Don’t glut students with material and paperwork
 - Ask students on the first day of class to make name tags, which I use throughout the course to help me learn students’ names
 - Have students introduce themselves and say a few words about either themselves or the class expectations. Students who speak up on the first day are more likely to participate throughout the duration of the course
 - Ask students to fill out an individual information sheet that asks things like what they hope to get out of the class or any concerns they may have (I’ve learned of a number of student learning disabilities this way)