



**INTERNATIONAL BALKAN UNIVERSITY**  
**TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER**

**Guidelines for IBU Teaching and Research Assistants**

## CONTENT

INTRODUCTION .....	4
TEACHING AND RESEARCH ASSISTANT DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES .....	4
ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED.....	5
THE ROLE OF THE TEACHING ASSISTANT .....	6
LEARNING .....	7
TEACHING.....	9
BEFORE STUDENT REGISTRATION OPENS.....	9
BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS.....	9
DURING THE TERM.....	10
END OF THE TERM .....	10
FIRST DAY IN CLASS .....	10
THE FIRST CLASS .....	12
IDEAL CLASSROOM .....	14
KEY PRINCIPLES .....	16

## **INTRODUCTION**

As an instructor or Teaching Assistant, you have numerous responsibilities beyond your students. You are also accountable to other members of the teaching team, the department or program in which you are teaching, and administrative units like the Registrar. Your work may include setting goals and planning for the term, creating lesson plans and teaching each week, providing and receiving feedback, grading final projects or exams, and debriefing with the teaching team at the end of the term. To help you navigate all teaching stages, from pre-term to after the course ends, you can use this step-by-step guide with additional resources.

## **TEACHING AND RESEARCH ASSISTANT DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. To be present in scientific research and activities and to assist in their realization.
2. To engage in scientific research and activities and to make publications.
3. Assisting faculty members in student counseling services.
4. To carry out the duties regarding the university promotion program, opening and graduation ceremonies, and orientation program.
5. Participating in the preparation of course and exam programs.
6. To act as an invigilator in semester and final exams by the exam regulations.
7. To support the administrators in all academic and administrative activities to be carried out in the Department and the Dean's Office.
8. To prepare meeting minutes of department boards.
9. Assisting with the studies that are required to be prepared every year, such as the Department's education and training activities, Strategic Plan, Performance indicators, Accreditation, and Quality Certificates.
10. Providing support for student exchange programs such as ERASMUS and MEVLANA.
11. Contributing to faculty-related meetings and representations.
12. Assisting relevant faculty members with applied courses in the Department.
13. Attending practice classes for up to 6 hours.
14. To raise the level of education by participating in master's and doctoral programs.
15. Leading the student groups which are representing the faculty in various events.
16. To support the administrators in all academic and administrative activities to be carried out in the Department and the Dean's Office.
17. Participating in faculty-related meetings and representations.
18. To fulfill other duties assigned by the faculty administration and faculty members.

## **ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED**

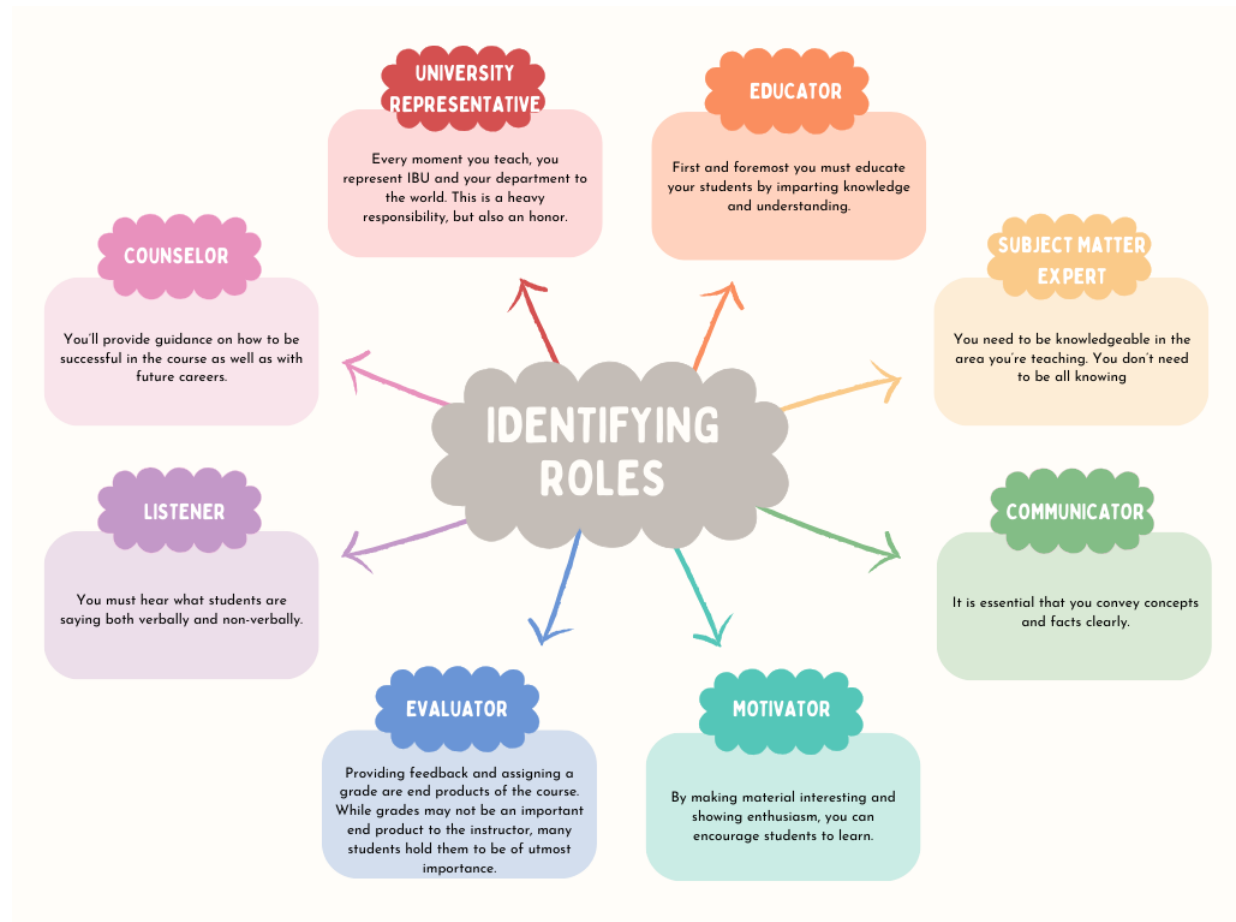
1. Teaching and research assistants who are in the course period submit the master's or doctoral program to the department head with the signature of the advisor every semester.
2. Teaching and research assistants who are in the thesis study period submit the advisor's signature and the advisor's meeting time to the department head every term.
3. She/he meets with his thesis advisor only at the time specified by his thesis advisor and returns to his place of duty.
4. To take leave outside of his weekly routine, he fills out the leave form and submits it to the department head.
5. Obtain permission from the Department Head and inform the Dean's Office.
6. If she/he is on leave, the replacement staff follows up on her/his work without any problems.
7. Pay attention to communication with academic staff, other colleagues, and students.
8. Students do not engage in any arguments with faculty members or students' parents.
9. Transfers such requests to the Department Head without being party to the questions of the student or the student's parents.

## THE ROLE OF THE TEACHING ASSISTANT

As a teaching assistant, you play a vital role in providing effective classroom instruction at IBU. You will assist students and professors. You will direct some learning activities yourself and you will be providing support to others.

“The function of college is transportation. Its function is to help the student get from where he is to where he wants to be.”

As a teaching assistant, you will have many roles:



# LEARNING

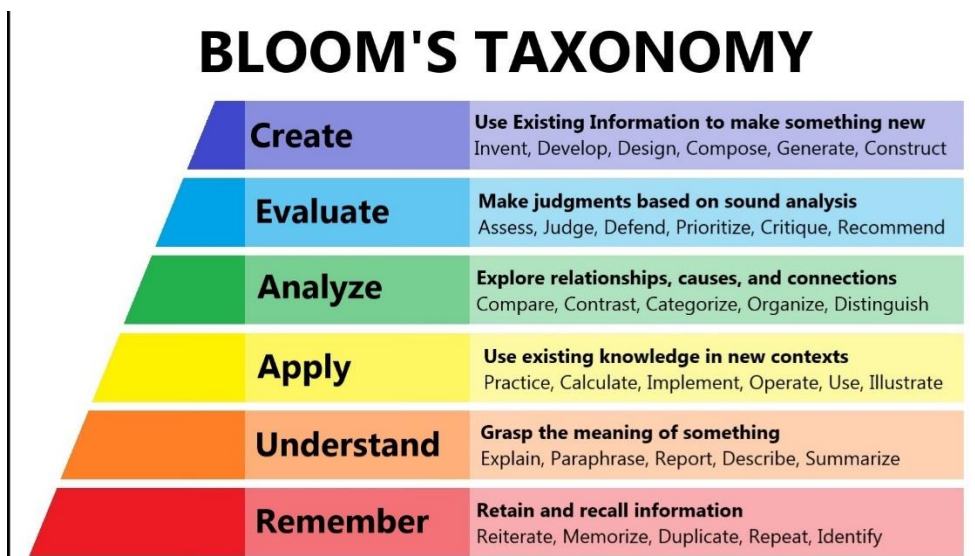
## a) Learning Principles

Learning Principles Learning principles are ideas about how the human mind works and about how information can best be presented to take advantage of people's natural ways of thinking. To teach effectively, it will help you to have some understanding of some generally accepted learning principles:

- All human beings can learn
- Individuals must be motivated to learn
- Learning is an active process
- Proper guidance can help promote learning
- Materials must be provided
- Learning requires time
- Learning styles vary so teaching methods should be varied
- Learning should provide satisfaction
- Reinforcement should follow correct behavior
- Standards of performance should be set for learners so they can measure progress

## b) Learning Categories

The system, developed by Benjamin Bloom is one of the most widely used and is based on the notion of a hierarchy of thought processes. Each category requires more complex thinking than the one preceding it and builds on or incorporates the preceding types of thought. That is, one needs the capacity for "lower" levels of thought to proceed to the "higher" levels.



*c) Learning Styles*

The term “learning styles” is used to refer to several ways in which people learn most easily. Most people who are involved with college-level teaching can learn well by reading, listening to lectures and taking and reviewing notes on complicated subjects. However, Some people learn best by hearing instruction (auditory learners); others learn best by seeing (visual learners); and still others learn best by manipulating objects (kinesthetic learners).

*d) Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*

The seven principles state that good practice in undergraduate education:

1. Encourages contact between students and faculty
2. Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students
3. Encourages active learning
4. Gives prompt feedback
5. Emphasizes time on task
6. Communicates high expectations
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning

## TEACHING

### BEFORE STUDENT REGISTRATION OPENS

Before student registration opens, there are a few things you should do to prepare for the upcoming semester:

1. Reflect on what motivates and energizes you about teaching. Clarify your goals for the course and your students and your own goals for your teaching and learning this term.
2. Schedule a consultation with the [IBU TLC](#) to review any questions or ideas about the design of your syllabus or assignments, or request support for a specific area of teaching Assistant training.
3. Talk with your department administrator about departmental procedures for things like printing, scanning, copying, reserving classrooms, or office space controlled by the department.
4. Make plans for managing the course [HELLO](#) site.
5. Obtain an example of an [academic calendar](#).
6. Complete and publish your syllabus on your [HELLO](#) site. Make sure that, in addition to information about assignments and the course's assessment scheme, your syllabus includes information about *Basic Course Information, Instructor Information, Course Description/Objectives, Teaching Methods, Course Objectives, Course Objectives, Weekly Course Schedule, Student Responsibilities, Important Dates, Required and Additional Materials/Resources, Grading Policy, Teaching Philosophy, Disability*

### BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS

1. Meet with your teaching team to discuss roles and responsibilities. Use a pre-term planner or something to make sure everyone understands the goals of the course as well as their specific roles and responsibilities.
2. Visit your classroom(s) to familiarize yourself with the layout and technology. If you have specific audio-visual needs or questions, contact the Head of your Department.
3. Plan for the first day of class, and how you will create a welcoming and inclusive environment for student learning.



## **DURING THE TERM**

1. Schedule regular meetings with your teaching team to discuss any issues that arise during classes and plan for upcoming classes and sections.
2. Ensure that you have clear guidelines and expectations for managing grading and feedback, not only for the teaching staff but also for students.
3. Determine the types of exams and assessments you will be using.
4. Obtain the exam files for the open-ended question-type exams ahead of time.
5. Collect feedback from students regularly, including mid-term feedback. Develop a plan to review the midterm feedback with the teaching team, address it with students, and make any necessary mid-term course adjustments.
6. Consider scheduling a midterm feedback consultation with the [IBU TLC](#) and/or requesting to have your class observed or videotaped to gain a better understanding of how your course is progressing.

## **END OF THE TERM**

1. Review the deadlines by which students must submit their work if you have a final project.
2. Review the deadlines for scores and student attendance to be entered into the system.
3. Review the procedures for administering/proctoring the final exam as applicable.
4. Plan how students' final exams/projects will be graded.
5. Plan for a final teaching staff meeting where you will sign off on any unfinished business of the course, determine students' final grades, and discuss how the course went, as well as any feedback from the teaching team for the next time it is offered.

## **FIRST DAY IN CLASS**

Many teaching assistants are particularly apprehensive about the first day of class, imagining everything that could go wrong when they walk into the classroom.

Although most assistants recognize that they do have the necessary background knowledge in a subject many of them panic at the idea of conveying this knowledge to a group of students. The transition from the passive receiver of knowledge to the active center of the class can be unnerving. Do not forget that it is natural to be nervous on the first day; even experienced teachers may feel anxious about facing a new course, a new class, new students, and a new semester. Preparing well beforehand will help ensure that the first class will go smoothly, and it may even be fun.

As you prepare your course materials, it is important to consider what kind of environment you want to create on the first day of class. The first day as a teaching assistant in higher education is crucial for setting the tone and establishing a positive learning environment. Proper preparation can help alleviate nervousness and ensure a smooth start to the semester. In this guide, some important keys will help you prepare for the first day of class.

First of all, the basics you need to remember about the first day of class are building rapport and creating a positive learning environment. These components are two of the most crucial elements of your success as a teacher.

First impressions are essential when it comes to teaching. Your actions, words, and even attire can convey messages to your students. During the first week of school, undergraduate students tend to explore various classes. Therefore, it's crucial to provide them with an accurate depiction of what they can expect throughout the semester.

Teachers can establish a specific tone for the semester through their conduct and appearance. For instance, if a teacher is not punctual, it sends a clear message to the students. However, Teaching Assistants (TAs) shouldn't worry about latecomers during the first week. Students may have registration issues, difficulty finding classrooms, or may not have calculated the time it takes to move from class to class. Hence, it's essential to be understanding and empathetic.

Throughout the semester, be careful to arrive on time and begin class promptly. Some instructors arrive to class 10 to 15 minutes early every day. This provides them with enough time to collect their thoughts and focus on the class better. Additionally, it allows them to assist the shy students who may not feel comfortable asking questions during the class.

While you are free to dress in any way you deem appropriate, it's important to keep in mind that your attire will have an impact on your students' perception of you. Dressing slightly more formally

than your students, who may be close to you in age, will help establish proper authority. A more conservative or formal jacket, tie or dress can make you feel more comfortable as you take on the role of a teacher. This doesn't mean that you should purchase a new wardrobe or try to be someone you're not. It's just a friendly reminder to be mindful of the powerful messages that your clothing conveys.

## **THE FIRST CLASS**

If students know you and believe that you care about their learning, they are more likely to forgive you for any missteps. If you make an effort to get to know your students and show that you are invested in their learning, they will be more understanding if you make mistakes. Familiarizing yourself with your students also helps you create a positive and successful learning environment. By getting to know your students, you are conveying that you care about their well-being and academic progress. Furthermore, learning about their backgrounds and interests enables you to customize your teaching approach. For instance, if you notice that there is a significant variation in the students' prior knowledge, you could group them to help each other. If you are aware of your students' interests and backgrounds, you can select examples that are more relatable to them.

There are numerous ways for students to acquire knowledge - they can read, watch educational videos, or go on field trips to museums and other educational institutions. So, what makes your class unique and why should students choose to learn from you? To begin, it is important to create a positive and welcoming environment for your students.

*How can you achieve that?*

To start, it's essential to introduce yourself and provide some background information. Tell your students what you find genuinely interesting about the course and share some of your other interests. The more you can connect with your students, the easier your job will be. Moreover, it's crucial to get to know your students and understand why they're taking the course and what they hope to learn from it. You can even have the students do a study activity in the first lesson about what they expect from this lesson. Find out about their previous experience with the subject and learn their names. To encourage interaction, make at least one consultation hour visit mandatory in the first month. As a teacher, you may be nervous, but remember that your students may also be

anxious about a new class, new teacher, and new material. Breaking the tension right away can help put everyone at ease.

To build a good rapport among the group, it is important to give your students opportunities to work with each other. You can ask them to move around and work with different partners throughout a session, especially for discussion classes or sessions that require a lot of participation. To make things comfortable, start with icebreaker activities. It can be as simple as having students introduce themselves to a partner and then introduce their partner to the larger group.

## FIRST DAY IN CLASS



One of the simplest ways to inform students about what they can expect during the upcoming semester is to provide them with a syllabus that outlines the entire semester's plan (obtain more information about the Syllabus from IBU TLC). The syllabus acts as a trailer for the course and gives students an overview of what to expect.

Another important thing is taking attendance. According to university regulations, 60% attendance in classes is mandatory. Therefore, do not forget to make a signature list of the course via the [HELLO](#) system before the lesson. Furthermore, taking attendance is an absolute necessity to help to establish an accurate class roster. Monitoring student attendance not only helps to keep track of student attendance but also aids in quickly learning their names. Making an effort to match faces with names demonstrates that each student is valued as an individual in the class. Getting to know the names of your students is an effective way of showing them that their ideas and personal development will be encouraged in the classroom. This may not be possible in large lecture classes, but in most lab sections, recitations, and smaller classes, it is achievable.

After you have taken attendance, handed out your syllabus, and introduced yourself, it's important to have a well-planned activity to engage your students. Being organized and prepared will help your students feel more confident. In the first class, you will probably review the syllabus, clarify points about grading and attendance policy, and answer any questions that arise. It's essential to inform the students about what they can expect from the course in terms of workload, grading, and other relevant matters. **If you are a lab instructor, you should start the first class by discussing lab protocol and safety procedures.**

It is possible that these introductory activities will not take up the entire class period. Some teachers like to take the time to get to know their students and learn about their background information, which may be helpful later in the semester. For instance, some instructors distribute index cards and ask the students to respond to a series of questions designed to allow them to describe the range of their knowledge in the subject and their interests in the subject. Others may opt to have their students orally introduce themselves to the class, which can help break the ice and get them used to speaking in front of others.

## **IDEAL CLASSROOM**

The ideal classroom would be a space without any physical barriers, where students and the outer world could interact without any restrictions. This would help students to realize how the subject matter they are learning is connected to the world outside the classroom. Although such a classroom may not be practical in reality, it is the responsibility of instructors to break down

barriers that separate knowledge and help their students become well-informed and intelligent citizens. Instructors should not limit themselves to teaching only the course material, but they should also help their students understand the world beyond the classroom and learn about real-life problems and histories.

As an instructor, it's important to set expectations in the classroom as it helps to build rapport and set the tone for the class. It is also one of the most inclusive moves that you can make. To do this, think about what students need to know to understand how to be successful in your course. You can convey your expectations and the expectations of the course as a whole by addressing questions like these:

- What approach does the course take to the subject?
- What kind of preparation is expected?
- In what ways will students be expected to participate?
- How can they best listen to and speak with each other and with you?
- How much time and effort will the course require?
- How will their work be graded?

By answering these questions clearly, you can help your students understand what is expected of them and how they can succeed in your course.

It's important to be clear when setting expectations. Don't assume that everyone understands what you're doing. Explain why you're doing it and what you hope to achieve. Your students should know the goals of specific activities and parts of your course. You can state these goals explicitly or discuss them afterward. Consider your expectations as a classroom contract. Every classroom has contracts, whether they are clearly stated or not. Think about how much you have explained to your students, and what they might be assuming.

Explicit contracts in a course are easy to find as they are usually outlined in the syllabus. The syllabus includes details such as the course content, deadlines for papers or exams, and grading criteria. However, there are also many implicit contracts at play, which are not always obvious. These include who gets to speak, for how long, and who sets the agenda. Additionally, the kind of learning expected and how success is measured may not be explicitly stated. Some of these implicit contracts may be based on the norms of a particular discipline. Bringing these hidden features of

a class to light can help students succeed, as it is difficult to do well in a game if you don't know the rules. The teacher's behavior also plays a role in the implicit contract, as they should model the behavior they expect from students. When students begin a class, they work to understand both the explicit and implicit contracts. Teachers who take the time to think carefully about these contracts in advance can be more transparent about classroom dynamics and expectations. This can help make the implicit more explicit and lead to more successful learning outcomes.

## KEY PRINCIPLES

To make the first lesson process easier, you need to consider these 4 principles that can help you decide which activities and approaches will best draw your students into the course and prepare them to learn:

### *1. Curiosity*

The conventional approach involves walking into the classroom on the first day, unveiling this box of knowledge, handing it over to the students, and anticipating its return in the form of a final exam three months later. This method is typically reaffirmed during the initial class meeting, where we outline the course content for the entire semester, although students might lack a specific or prior interest in the subject matter. Contrastingly, the first day offers a prime opportunity to ignite students' curiosity. Instead of following the traditional pattern, consider the first day as a golden chance to stimulate curiosity and entice students into an intellectually engaging journey. Effective instructors recall what initially captivated them about their discipline, identify current areas of fascination for students, and establish a connection with these topics at the outset of the semester. These instructors ponder the course's relevance and endeavour to communicate the significance of its content to students and their world beyond the classroom. Hence, the first day of the semester should start with the prompt distribution of the syllabus. Instead, kindle their curiosity about the content first, and subsequently illustrate—through a comprehensive review of the syllabus—how the course material can satiate that curiosity.

### *2. Community*

We don't teach disembodied minds; our students are human beings fuelled by curiosity, drawn to community, grappling with fears and anxieties, and shaped by various facets of their lives beyond

mere cognition. These emotions are heightened on the first day of the semester and can significantly impact the dynamics of your classroom. To support and enhance these emotions on the first day, it's essential to cultivate a sense of community, even in a room filled with several hundred students. Although you may be the guide on this intellectual journey, the goal is to encourage all students to contribute to the learning experiences. Here's how you can convey that:

- Personalize your interactions with students. Engage in one-on-one conversations with as many of them as possible, providing opportunities for them to connect with each other. Personalization could include humor, occasional self-disclosure, or a more structured sharing of your intellectual journey.
- If possible, greet each student individually. While challenging in larger classes with 200 students, it's easily manageable in smaller groups of 20 or 30. Rather than standing at the front and reading names from a roster, arrive early, circulate, and ask students for their names along with a bit about themselves, such as class year, major, or hometown. Express your appreciation for their presence in the semester.
- Facilitate student communication without resorting to traditional icebreakers. Instead, create pairs or small groups, assign a simple task, and encourage them to introduce themselves before diving into the task.
- Fostering a comfortable environment from the start ensures that students feel at ease with you and their peers, promoting active participation throughout the semester.

### *3. Learning*

You don't have to wait until the second-class meeting for students to initiate their learning journey in your course. However, it's not necessary to dive straight into content delivery on the first day. Here are two effective ways to facilitate learning from the outset:

- Encourage Attempting Cognitive Tasks Before Readiness:

Instead of waiting for students to feel fully prepared, prompt them to undertake a cognitive task early on. This could involve tackling a problem before acquiring all the necessary skills for success or attempting a challenging task they will encounter later in the course. This approach compels students to draw upon their existing knowledge, creating fertile ground for new knowledge and skill acquisition. Additionally, observing their partial or unsuccessful attempts provides valuable



insights into their current understanding, which can inform your approach in the initial weeks of the course.

- Prompt Metacognitive Reflection without Overwhelming Terminology:

Invite students to reflect on the course from a metacognitive perspective, avoiding intimidating terms. Encourage them to consider the learning strategies essential for success, the support they may require, and the effectiveness of past strategies. For instance, on the first day, have students reflect on their best and worst experiences in related courses, describing the factors that contributed to success or challenges. Compile their responses on the board and then have each student outline individual actions needed for success and actions they'd like from you and their peers. These lists can be shared and discussed in class or through the learning management system.

Remember, teaching and learning go beyond content delivery. Incorporate activities that prompt reflection and processing to truly engage students. Regardless of the chosen approach, dedicate a portion of the first class for students to actively participate in some form of cognitive work, aligning with the nature of your course (e.g., writing, problem-solving, discussion). Actively involving students in learning on the first day sets the tone for engagement throughout the semester.

#### *4. Expectations*

It's crucial not to overlook the myriad expectations students bring with them on the first day. They seek immediate answers to questions such as the course structure, required materials, assessment methods, and details of tests, projects, and other assignments. Additionally, they may inquire about any distinctive aspects like field trips or community service that set your course apart.

Allocate a portion of Day 1 to elucidate the course parameters beyond the subject matter. Cover aspects such as materials, assessments, policies, and key dates, drawing from the comprehensive syllabus you have meticulously crafted. Rather than reading the entire syllabus aloud, provide printed and online copies to students, emphasizing essential elements. Create space for questions and discussions. Some instructors even administer a no-point or low-stakes syllabus quiz either on the first day or immediately afterward, ensuring that students familiarize themselves with critical aspects of the course.

