

## INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE



Teaching Technique 36

# Class Book

### ACTIVITY TYPE

- Active/Engaged Learning
- Writing

### TEACHING PROBLEM ADDRESSED

- Low Motivation/Engagement

### LEARNING TAXONOMIC LEVEL

- Foundational Knowledge
- Application: Creative Thinking
- Integration & Synthesis
- Caring

# Class Book

For a *Class Book*, individual students work together to plan and ultimately submit a scholarly essay or research paper. Then all students' papers are published together.

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- 1** Clarify your teaching purpose and learning goals for the *Class Book*
  - 2** Identify the learning task's underlying problem and craft the prompt
  - 3** Set assignment parameters
  - 4** Develop a plan for learning assessment or grading
  - 5** Communicate assignment instructions to students
  - 6** Implement the technique
  - 7** Reflect upon the activity and evaluate its effectiveness

# Step-By-Step Instructions

In this section we provide you with guidance on each of the seven steps involved as you consider this technique.

## **STEP 1: CLARIFY YOUR TEACHING PURPOSE AND LEARNING GOALS**

Because a *Class Book* is a compilation of original student essays or research papers devoted to the course subject, it a flexible active and engaged learning technique that can be used across many different disciplines and fields. It is appropriate for humanities, social sciences, and the professions. It is also well-suited to courses in the visual and performing arts, with students submitting film clips, images, or music compositions that are compiled on a class CD or DVD. Students can complete the work in or out of class, which adds to its flexibility.

*Class Book* can help students achieve several learning goals. The technique helps students develop foundational knowledge in a discipline or field. It also helps with integration and synthesis of ideas and information. This technique motivates students to strive for personal excellence and to care about the course subject. It also provides students in subsequent classes with models of quality work done by their peers. Consider your learning goals for the course and the assignment.

Because students compile individual assignments into a *Class Book*, this technique provides a way to gauge individual work as well as the class level of achievement. In addition, it offers students an opportunity to create a record of their cumulative course experience so that they can see for themselves what they have accomplished.

## **STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE LEARNING TASK'S UNDERLYING PROBLEM AND PROMPT**

In clarifying your goals for the assignment, consider whether you want to showcase existing student work or whether you want students to develop new work for the book. Then, determine the topic of the book. Is it simply anything to do with the course subject, or do you want to choose a narrower/more focused topic for the work?

## **STEP 3: SET ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS**

- Choose what kinds of assignments will be used in the *Class Book* and develop guidelines or rules for submission that specify topics, format, length, style guidelines, and quality expectations.
- Decide on the scope and quality of the final product (for example, simple stapled copies or a more elaborate, bound document using desktop publishing software) and whether or not you will be producing it yourself or assigning production to students.

# Step-By-Step Instructions (CON'T)



- Determine a production schedule that is late enough in the term so that students have time to complete their papers, yet that also provides sufficient time to produce the *Class Book*.
- Consider whether you want any intervening submissions, like a project proposal or a rough draft.

## STEP 4: DEVELOP A PLAN FOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT OR GRADING

- Develop a rubric by which you will assess the individual contributions. You might consider categories like the following:
  - › Topic/content
  - › Organization
  - › Logic/argumentation
  - › Support of ideas/use of evidence
  - › Written expression (style, diction, grammar)
- Consider developing a second rubric by which you will assess the full book. You might consider categories like the following:
  - › Clarity of central theme
  - › Coverage of central content and concepts
  - › Links between ideas in papers
  - › Quality of individual contributions
  - › Appropriate formatting
- Consider who else might be involved in an assessment. Peer review, in which peers exchange papers and give each other feedback, is a useful approach for this technique. Students may self assess as well, for example, by writing a few paragraphs that comment or explain the submission (for instance, the challenges they faced and overcame as they created the work, analysis and interpretation of the work, how much time and effort they put into the work, and so forth). Moreover, having an external reader/evaluator can provide additional insight and add a feeling of authenticity.

# Step-By-Step Instructions (CON'T)



## **STEP 5: COMMUNICATE ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS TO STUDENTS**

Create a handout that provides assignment instructions, along with the rubric(s) if you are using them. Let them know whether or how the final products will factor into their grades.

## **STEP 6: IMPLEMENT THE TECHNIQUE**

- Announce the assignment, explaining that the goal is to produce a book that demonstrates intellectual excellence.
- Provide students with time to brainstorm ideas.
- Provide time for students to present their planned topics to each other, so that all students know what everyone is working on.
- Provide students with sufficient time for any intervening assignments, such as drafts and class discussions.
- Collect the final papers and bind the book.

## **STEP 7: REFLECT UPON THE ACTIVITY AND EVALUATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS**

When reflecting on the activity and how effective it was, consider the following questions:

- Did the technique match the course learning goals and objectives?
- Did it meet my goals for this learning module?
- Was it appropriate for the students?
- Did the technique keep the students engaged?
- Did it promote student learning?
- Did it provide me with information about student understanding?

If you answer yes to all or most of these questions, next consider how you might improve the activity for the next use.

# Support Materials

The materials in this section are intended to help you with the process of implementing this technique. For *Class Book*, we share two sample rubrics and ideas for varying this technique.

## SAMPLE RUBRICS

Consider the following sample scoring rubrics on page 7 to help you review and assess individual student papers as well as the complete *Class Book*.

## VARIATIONS

- Ask students to volunteer or call on a group of in-class peers to serve as an editorial board responsible for vetting what goes into the class book
- Have students develop a class memoir that is included as the preface or introduction to the book. This memoir can encourage students to reflect on their learning experiences, build class community, and offer advice to subsequent students on how to learn the most and be successful in the course.
- Instead of a hard-copy class book, create a web-based magazine, with each class creating the next edition of the online publication
- In addition to selecting and submitting the assignment, ask students to write a few paragraphs that comment or explain the submission
- Have students create individual portfolios out of which they select their best work for the course portfolio.
- Consider having students develop a Class Memoir that is included as the Preface or Introduction to the book. This memoir can be an effective activity to encourage students to reflect on their learning experiences, build class community, and offer advice to subsequent students on how to learn the most and be successful in the course.

## SAMPLE SCORING RUBRIC 1

For Individual Papers in the *Class Book*

	EXCELLENT	ABOVE AVERAGE	AVERAGE/ ACCEPTABLE	BELOW AVERAGE	POOR
TOPIC/CONTENT	5	4	3	2	1
ORGANIZATION	5	4	3	2	1
LOGIC/ ARGUMENTATION	5	4	3	2	1
SUPPORT OF IDEAS	5	4	3	2	1
WRITTEN EXPRESSION	5	4	3	2	1

## SAMPLE SCORING RUBRIC 2

For the Completed *Class Book*

	EXCELLENT	ABOVE AVERAGE	AVERAGE/ ACCEPTABLE	BELOW AVERAGE	POOR
CLARITY OF CENTRAL THEME	5	4	3	2	1
COVERAGE OF CENTRAL CONTENT & CONCEPTS	5	4	3	2	1
LINKS BETWEEN IDEAS IN PAPERS	5	4	3	2	1
QUALITY OF INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS	5	4	3	2	1
APPROPRIATE FORMATTING	5	4	3	2	1

# Technique Template

Following are two templates to assist you as you think through how you might implement this technique in your own class. The first is a completed template, providing an example of how Claire Major adapted *Class Book* in her course, *History of American Higher Education*. The second is a blank template for you to fill out to tailor this technique for your course.



# Technique Template

Sample *Class Book* Completed Technique Template:

Content from Claire Major

*History of American Higher Education*

Course Name

## COURSE CHARACTERISTICS

What are the situational factors that impact this course? For example, is it on campus or online? How many students? Is it lower division or graduate? Are there student attributes such as attitudes, prior knowledge, reasons for enrolling, and so forth that should be taken into account as you consider this technique?

*I have used this book when teaching History of American Higher Education. The course is a doctoral level course, but masters level students also take the course. It meets once per week for three hours, in the evening. Typical class enrollment is approximately 15.*

## STEP 1: CLARIFY YOUR TEACHING PURPOSE AND LEARNING GOALS

Why are you choosing this technique? What do you hope to accomplish?

*When I taught this course and had students do individual papers, I was always impressed with them and wanted them to be able to see each other's work. I also thought it was a shame that they spent so much time on historical work without realizing when others were working on related issues. I decided to use Class Book so that students worked together to create a work anchored around a similar theme, that allowed them to produce something bigger than any of them could have done alone. I have used it many times since the first*

## **STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE LEARNING TASK'S UNDERLYING PROBLEM AND PROMPT**

What is the question you want learners to address, or problem you want them to solve?

*To implement this technique, I simply announce that each individual student will be doing original research related to the history of higher education and that they should work together to create a larger book. That is, they should determine the topic and chapters and make chapter assignments as appropriate.*

## **STEP 3: SET ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS**

What are the assignment logistics? For example, will this be assigned individually or is it group work? How long will the assignment take? Will students be submitting a product? What materials, resources, or additional information do you anticipate needing?

*For this assignment, I set the parameters for the individual papers (e.g. 15-20 pages, archival work, APA format, and so forth). I give students latitude to determine the particular focus of the book and the particular focus of their individual chapters.*

## **STEP 4: DEVELOP A PLAN FOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT OR GRADING**

If you decide to assess learning, how will you determine that learning has occurred? For example, will you use a simple +/check/- grading system? If you use a rubric, will you use an existing one or create one? What will be your criteria and standards?

*I use rubrics similar to the one we have shared above to assess this work. For grading purposes, I typically assign 30% of the final grade to this project; 20% is for the individual work, and 10% is for the group product.*

## **STEP 5: COMMUNICATE ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS TO STUDENTS**

How will you communicate assignment parameters to students? For example, through a handout? A prompt on a presentation slide? Assignment instructions in your online course?

*I share information about the assignment in the course syllabus. I also discuss the project with the students orally in class. I give students time to work on the project in class as a group and answer questions about the project as appropriate.*

## STEP 6: IMPLEMENT THE TECHNIQUE

How will you adapt steps/procedures for your students? Are there any additional logistical aspects to consider?

*While some professors use Class Book to compile students' best papers for the term, I use the technique for new, original research. So I explain at the start of the term that they will each be contributing chapters to a class book. I give them time to brainstorm, share ideas, carry out archival research, and even peer review and proof. Students are responsible for choosing the final form of the book.*

## STEP 7: REFLECT UPON THE ACTIVITY AND EVALUATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS

Note: This step will be completed after you have implemented the technique.

Did this technique help you accomplish your goals? What worked well? What could have been improved? What might you change if you decide to implement the activity again?

*This is an activity I return to time and time again. I have not tired of reading what students produce or seeing the energy they invest in it. When students turn in the final project, I write notes to myself in a course file that I keep about what worked well and what I can improve for next time.*

# Technique Template

This template is intended for use when planning to implement **Class Book** in your class. Fill in the blanks below, and use the information provided elsewhere in the Instructor’s Guide to assist you in your thinking.

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**Course Name**

## **COURSE CHARACTERISTICS**

What are the situational factors that impact this course? For example, is it on campus or online? How many students? Is it lower division or graduate? Are there student attributes such as attitudes, prior knowledge, reasons for enrolling, and so forth that should be taken into account as you consider this technique?

## **STEP 1: CLARIFY YOUR TEACHING PURPOSE AND LEARNING GOALS**

Why are you choosing this technique? What do you hope to accomplish?

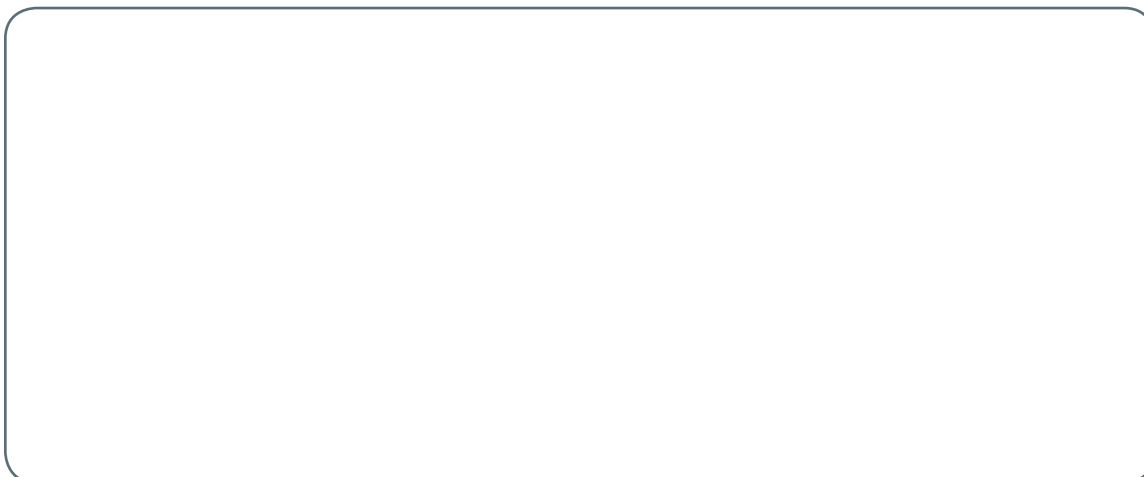
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## **STEP 3: SET ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS**

What are the assignment logistics? For example, will this be assigned individually or is it group work? How long will the assignment take? Will students be submitting a product? What materials, resources, or additional information do you anticipate needing?



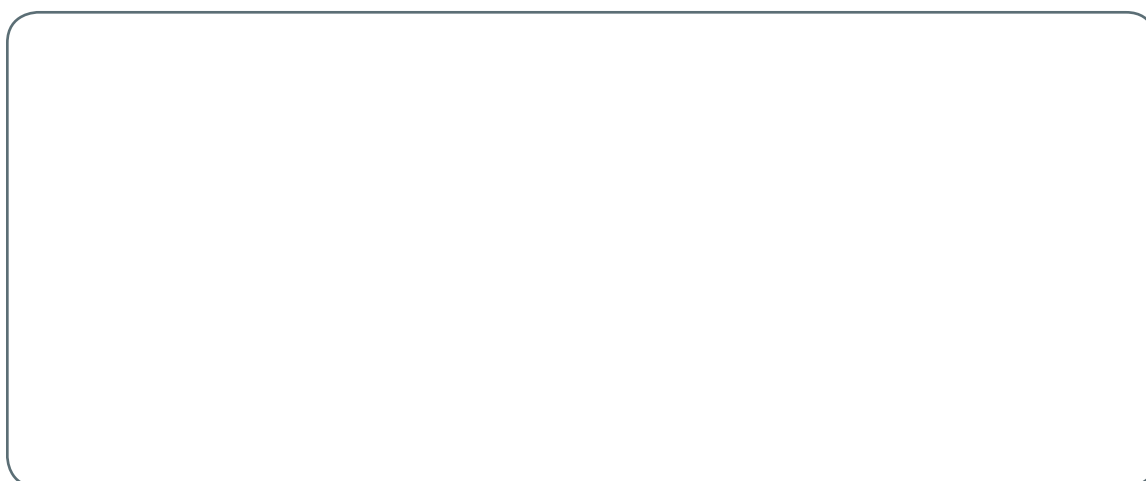
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If you decide to assess learning, how will you determine that learning has occurred? For example, will you use a simple +/check/- grading system? If you use a rubric, will you use an existing one or create one? What will be your criteria and standards?



#### **STEP 5: COMMUNICATE ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS TO STUDENTS**

How will you communicate assignment parameters to students? For example, through a handout? A prompt on a presentation slide? Assignment instructions in your online course?



## **STEP 6: IMPLEMENT THE TECHNIQUE**

How will you adapt steps/procedures for your students? Are there any additional logistical aspects to consider?



## **STEP 7: REFLECT UPON THE ACTIVITY AND EVALUATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS**

*Note: This step will be completed after you have implemented the technique.*

Did this technique help you accomplish your goals? What worked well? What could have been improved? What might you change if you decide to implement the activity again?





# References and Resources

## PRIMARY SOURCE

Content for this download was drawn primarily from “Student Engagement Technique 21: Class Book” in *Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty* (Barkley, 2010), pp. 243–245 and “Learning Assessment Technique 28: Class Book” in *Learning Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty* (Barkley & Major, 2016), pp. 248–254. It includes material that was adapted or reproduced with permission. For further information about this technique, including examples in both on campus and online courses, see the primary source:

Barkley, E. F. (2010). *Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Barkley, E. F., Major, C. H. (2016). *Learning Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

## CITATIONS AND ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Watkins, R. (2005). *75 e-Learning activities: Making online learning interactive*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer, pp. 198–200.

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