

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

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# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Tip 1

### Aim high, but be patient.

- Your proficiency will continue to evolve as you gain experience and insights from others.
- Some insights will come from role models, but early on many will come from colleagues who share your challenges.

**Marva Collins**



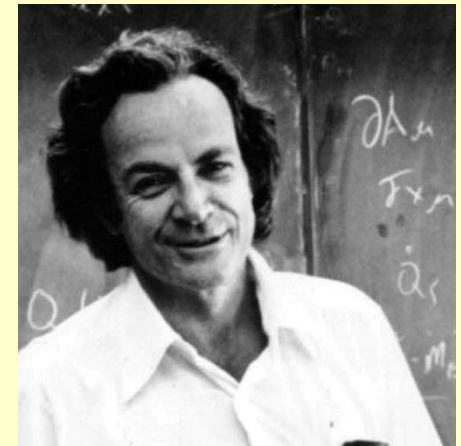
<http://www.marvacollins.com/biography.html>

**Eric Mazur**



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwsIBPj8Ggl>

**Richard Feynman**



<http://uweanimation.blogspot.com/2011/03/interesting-scientist-richard-feynman.html>

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

Why don't students prepare and participate adequately?

- **Knowledge and Skills**

- Students don't know how to prepare or participate.

- **Motivation**

**TODAY'S FOCUS**

- They aren't sufficiently motivated to prepare or participate.

- **Resource constraints**

- They don't have access to the resources needed to prepare or don't know about available resources.

- **Strategies**

- They don't have effective strategies to use resources.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Why aren't students motivated?

- Why aren't students motivated to prepare and participate?
  - Don't know what they are missing
  - Don't know how to prepare or participate
  - Aren't sufficiently interested in the course or topic
  - Have competing interests
  - Ineffective incentives
  - Other
- How can we mitigate these factors?

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Don't know what they are missing

### The problem

- Students haven't internalized the benefits of preparation and participation sufficiently:
  - They haven't been held adequately accountable for preparation and participation in the past.
  - They don't realize how stimulating and effective classes can be when everyone comes to class highly prepared and is actively engaged in the discussion.
  - They don't realize how much easier it is to follow class discussions when they are well prepared.
  - They don't realize how better they will understand something when they can explain it to others.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

Don't know what they are missing

## Mitigating the problem

- Hold students accountable for a high level of preparation during class discussions (more later).
- When excellent preparation leads to exceptional discussions, reinforce the connection at the end of class:
  - Why was today's discussion so thought provoking?
- Similarly, let the class know when poor preparation leads to shallow discussions:
  - Why was today's class not nearly as stimulating as Monday's class?
- During office visits, use specific examples to help students recognize poor preparation is leading to poor performance

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

Don't know what they are missing

## Excerpt from course map (syllabus) for core course

- The homework assignments are very demanding and we fully expect most of you to come to class still struggling to gain closure and some of you to come totally confused.
- If you come to class prepared but confused, you may not feel comfortable, but there is a good chance you will leave with closure on most of the session learning objectives.
- By contrast, if you come feeling comfortable but not prepared, you will surely leave totally confused.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Don't know what they are missing

### Tip 2

#### **Help students internalize the benefits of preparation and participation.**

- Continuously seek ways to credibly communicate and reinforce the benefits of rigorous preparation and enthusiastic participation.

### Getting Started

- Show students the benefits the first day.
- Ask colleagues to share first-day activities that stimulate broad insightful participation and preview course concepts relevant to students.



# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Don't know how to prepare or participate

### **Problem**

- Students don't know how to use available resources effectively to prepare for class or don't know how to contribute effectively to class discussions.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Don't know how to prepare or participate

### **Mitigating the problem.**

- The syllabus should provide clear expectations and guidance regarding preparation:
  - “The session maps are highly detailed navigation aids that will help you lay out step-by-step directions to locate, prioritize, and use the related resources. Trying to find your way through the course without using the session maps is like trying to find a street in a major city without directions: you will soon be hopelessly lost!”
- The syllabus should clearly distinguish things students need to do to prepare for class from things they need to ultimately do to meet the learning objectives.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Don't know how to prepare or participate

### Tip 3

**Organization is indispensable: Help students determine where they are going and alternative ways they can get there.**

- Expectations regarding course goals, session learning objectives, responsibilities, and grading should be stated clearly in the syllabus.
- Guidance regarding alternative ways to use available resources to meet these expectations should also be stated clearly in the syllabus.

### Getting Started

- Don't reinvent the wheel.
- Colleagues at BC and elsewhere are almost always willing to share their syllabi and policies.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Don't know how to prepare or participate

### Mitigating the problem

- Help the class increase the depth of the discussions as the course progresses by continually raising the bar.
- Probe deeply and frequently:
  - Reward students for offering alternative hypotheses and for providing facts, theories and compelling logic that refutes or supports them.
  - Reward students for connecting their points to those raised earlier in the discussion by others (promotes listening).
  - Ask students to present the strongest counter arguments to their arguments.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Don't know how to prepare or participate

### Tip 4

#### **What you do in class today will affect future preparation.**

- Probing deeper today motivates better preparation for the next class.
- When students don't participate for a few days, they are less inclined to prepare in the future.

### Getting Started

- Develop a series of questions prior to class that will progressively allow you to probe deeper into the topics you will be covering.
- Develop a few questions that are highly effective in most contexts and use them repeatedly so students will anticipate them when preparing for class: Why? Why not? What are alternative explanations?

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Insufficient interest in the course or topic

### **Problem**

- Students find the course or a topic far too boring and largely irrelevant to their future interests.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Insufficient interest in the course or topic

### Potential root causes of the problem

- Students are correct:
  - The course is boring and largely irrelevant to their futures.
- They are wrong but we are not much wiser:
  - We fail to fully grasp how critically important our courses or topics are to society and to our students' futures.
- We get it but we don't communicate it effectively:
  - We appreciate how vital our courses or topics are but fail to convey our enthusiasm and insights in ways students find relevant to their current and future endeavors.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Insufficient interest in the course or topic

### Mitigating the problem

- Develop and share a deep passion for the course or topic:
  - Continually seek a broader understanding of the role of your discipline in society and share what you learn with your students enthusiastically.
- Repeatedly emphasize relevance:
  - Continually motivate the relevance of the course goals, daily learning objectives and assignments to practice settings students find relevant and to their careers and personal finances.



# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Insufficient interest in the course or topic

### **Excerpt from assigned reading for core course**

- By the time you complete this course, you will likely have a much different image of accountants than you started with, and hopefully you will begin to entertain the idea that you should learn to think like an accountant, even if you choose not to become one.
- You will learn that accounting is the language of business and that the public's image of record keeping and other procedures associated with accounting is only the grammar. In particular, a subtle aspect of accounting, like nuances in other languages, is that it both depicts and influences business reality and culture.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Insufficient interest in the course or topic

### Tip 5

#### **Continually motivate the course content**

- Enthusiasm is contagious.
- Relevance to students is essential.

### Getting Started

- Ask colleagues how they get themselves and students enthusiastic about your discipline, courses, and topics therein.
- Ask colleagues to share activities students find highly relevant that help them internalize important concepts.
- Introduce robust concepts in simple contexts students have experienced and then progress to more complex settings.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Competing interests

### The problem

- Your course is a low priority relative to:
  - Social or leisure activities
  - Family obligations
  - Job obligations
  - Other courses
  - Other interests

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Competing interests

### Mitigating the problem

- Elevate students' enthusiasm for your course.
  - As discussed earlier
- Seek synergies with students' other interests:
  - Connect assignments to their work, other courses, personal finances, or social and leisure activities.
  - Promote curriculum changes to these ends.
- Promote more effective use of time and other resources.
- Manage course incentives more effectively.
  - As discussed next

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Ineffective incentives

### The problem

- The point system used to determine course grades and the standards to earn grades could be more effective at promoting preparation and participation.
- The things we do to foster ownership of the course and loyalty to the course could be more effective.
- The things we do to promote striving for the personal satisfaction that is gained from learning for learning's sake could be more effective.
- The things we do to encourage students to help build a learning community could be more effective.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Ineffective incentives

### Mitigating the problem

- Raise the grading standards and consider using relative rather than absolute standards for the higher grades.
- Grade preparation and participation:
  - Test students on lower level knowledge and skills they learn on their own that are not discussed in class but are essential for class discussions.
  - Grade participation discriminately and competitively.
- Encourage group work and take other steps to ensure a healthy balance between cooperation and competition.
  - Mitigate “free rider” and “divide and conquer” problems.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Ineffective incentives

### **The incentives must fit the context**

- Introductory course:
  - 30% of grade is based on group assignments.
  - 10% is based on other class participation.
  - 60% is based on exams.
  - The process used to award grades has incentives to both compete and cooperate.
- Advanced course:
  - 100% of grade is based on weekly group assignments.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Ineffective incentives

### Tip 6

**Grading policies profoundly affect student behavior, for better or worse, so be sure they are aligned with your goals.**

- Continually emphasize that learning is more important than grades. But recognize grades are very important to students and are performance metrics that can only motivate progress towards goals when they reflect this progress.
- Designing grading policies that motivate students to work harder to attain goals, provide valuable feedback on their progress, faithfully signal performance to prospective employers and graduate schools, give students a sense of fulfillment and balance cooperation and competition is exceptionally challenging.

### Getting Started

- Adopt colleagues' policies and standards.



# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Ineffective incentives

### **Minimize free rider and divide and conquer problems**

- Undergrad introductory course:
  - Group selection:
    - Initially students can form their own groups or be assigned to groups randomly.
    - They have the option to reform groups at midpoint.
  - Two 360 evaluations that can significantly affect the scores group members receive on assignments.
  - A group is randomly selected to present and defend its response to assigned questions. A randomly selected member represents the group. Everyone in the group gets this person's participation score.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Ineffective incentives

### **Grade participation discriminately**

- Provide alternative forums: class versus on-line blog.
- Cold call and/or use clickers to keep students engaged.
- Probe deeply and frequently (see earlier discussion).

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Ineffective incentives

### Enhancing course ownership and loyalty

- Share personal motivations, commitment and enthusiasm about the course.
- Share responsibility and accountability for the course's success.
- Set high, relevant, and achievable goals and help students connect them to their personal goals, current events, and other courses.
- Establish trust through leadership and caring.
- Let students know when they are not meeting their responsibilities and encourage them to let you know when you are not meeting yours.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Ineffective incentives

### Promote learning for learning's sake

- Don't allow "What is on the exam?" questions.
- Continually remind students that learning is more important than grades.
- Continually remind them that you are motivated to put more effort into teaching when you think they are in class to learn to become better managers and that you would be repulsed to learn they were simply there to pass exams.
- Create stimulating discussions that have "after burn."
- Frequently ask in class, "What did you learn today?"

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Wrap Up

- The two biggest success factors for a great learning experience are preparation and a positive attitude on the part of all involved.
- Students will under prepare and not succeed to the extent:
  - They don't fully comprehend their responsibilities.
  - They aren't sufficiently motivated to meet them.
  - They are motivated to meet them but don't have the resources to succeed.
  - They are motivated and have the resources but don't have strategies to succeed.

# Motivating Preparation and Participation

## Wrap Up

- Our challenge is to understand the root causes behind these factors and identify ways to mitigate them.
- These challenges are often contextual, depending on:
  - Our courses.
  - Our students' goals, experience, aptitudes, and aspirations.
- My primary goal today has been to illustrate ways to identify and mitigate these problems.