

Learning by Listening, Thinking Critically, and Asking Questions. (A01-nelson160538-Oral)

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Abstract:

In a one-credit course on Orientation to the Plant Sciences, we emphasize communication skills and the disciplines. There are no exams, with grades based on two written reports, three faculty interviews, an oral presentation and, since 1995, submission of a question on a 3x5 card after each class. Our goal is to improve listening skill and encourage discussion. Questions are graded (1-5 points) for depth and concept integration, and answered in writing on the same card. A few questions are discussed at the beginning of the next class to give feedback to students as good examples and to embellish the previous presentation. Students from several semesters were surveyed about learning and retention values of the question-asking exercise. Students warm slowly to the idea, as the process is unique, but during the semester they grow to appreciate its value. Students acknowledge they improve listening skills, increase listening focus on relationships, and make it easier to contribute to oral discussions and overall learning. Feedback at the next class is important. We note student discussion after lectures has improved considerably. The question card also encourages attendance.

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analytical reasoning, critical thinking, listening skill, asking questions