



Teaching with Your Mouth Shut

In his book of the same title, Donald Finkel challenges the model of teaching as transmission or telling students what they should know. Without discounting the importance of the captivating lecture, he offers other images of good teaching. Finkel identifies activities by which we can deepen our students' learning with our mouths shut.

Let the books or articles you assign do the talking:

- ◆ Raise provocative questions you don't have an answer to or solicit the students' questions about the reading
- ◆ Ask students to formulate and test hypotheses about the reading in class, precept, or lab

Make your process of thinking available to your students:

- ◆ Design in-class activities and assignments that make that process evident and get students to engage in it. For instance, how do you formulate a research question? How can you get your students to practice that process?
- ◆ Design an experience that teaches; for example, pose an open-ended problem and ask students to work together or independently to solve it

Center your course on inquiry:

- ◆ Organize your course around a question or set of questions
- ◆ Carefully sequence your reading assignments or topics—and discuss alternate sequences with your students
- ◆ Design assignments that require a reasoned response, not a correct answer
- ◆ Give feedback on lab reports, essays, etc. that engages with the students' ideas, not simply their prose style

Teach a course or single class with a colleague. To make the point that disciplinary knowledge is contested,

- ◆ Stage a debate with a colleague during lecture and, during class or precept, ask students to come to a decision about the most persuasive argument
- ◆ Start a public dialogue with a colleague during lecture and ask students to participate by asking questions or asserting counterarguments