

Lessons from Humor In the *In-Person* Classroom



Play

stress-free play → open cognitive pathways → authentic learning

- Actual games are fun, from Kahoots to semester-long role-plays. Team competitions provide the most energy in the room.



- Physical play with coloring/clay/manipulatable objects or body movement
(candy is a double win)
- “Speed Dating” instead of think-pair-share
- Ask for outrageous solutions, terrible ideas

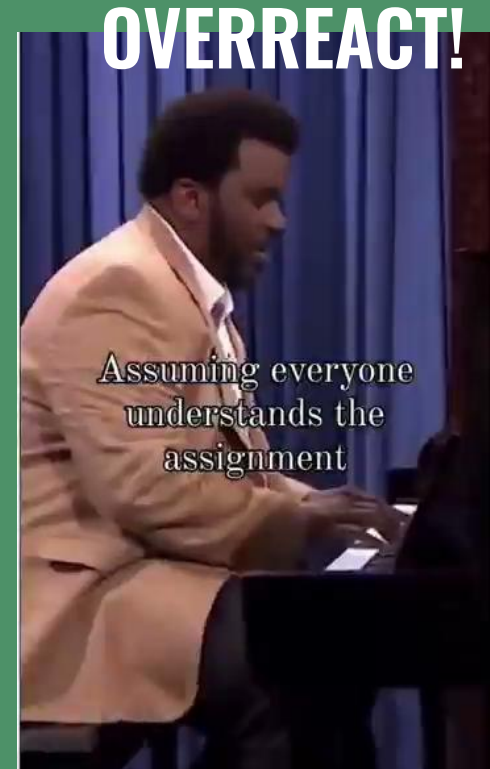
- Make concepts playful:

“Aliens zap away your pancreas... what will be the first life-threatening problem that occurs?”



Engagement

- Quick yes/no calling on people isn't too stressful and adds energy
- Teams, temporary or permanent, engage
- Pre-work before class increases engagement
- Pause!
- “Element of Surprise” known to be useful for learning
 - Humor = surprising statements
- Remember, this IS crowd work!



Humor

- Memes before or during class
- Never punch down
- Self-deprecation, breaking out of the norm of professor-student expectation
- Don't feel funny? Use AI to come with silly examples, games, questions, etc.!

Taylor series



$$\begin{aligned} &f(a) + f'(a)(x-a) \\ &+ (1/2!)f''(a)(x-a)^2 \\ &+ (1/3!)f'''(a)(x-a)^3 \\ &+ \dots \end{aligned}$$

imgPlay

Biologists are just
a bunch of cells
that talk about
other cells



HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER: THAT WON'T SLIDE IN COLLEGE

COLLEGE PROFESSOR:



What others see...



(Potato chips)


What I see...

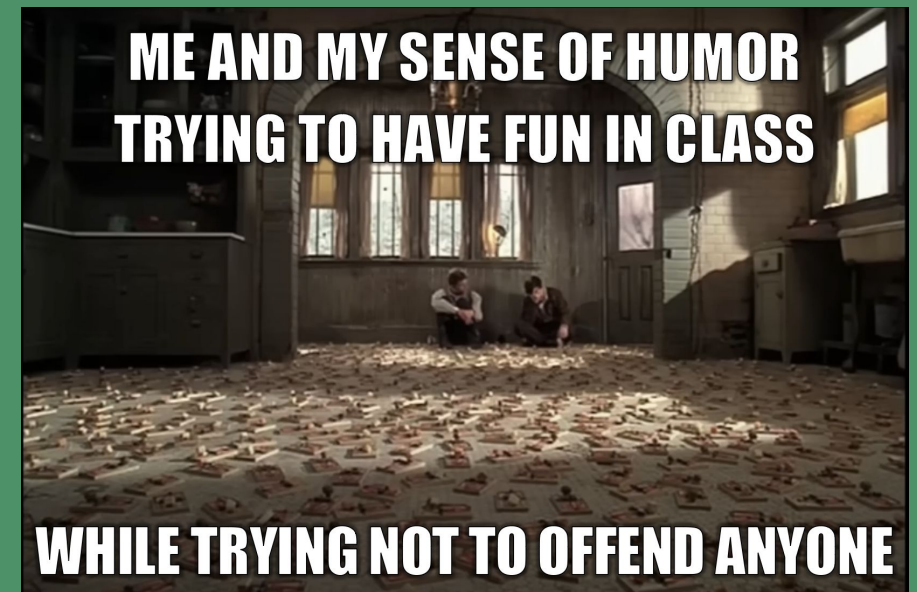


(Hyperbolic
paraboloid)

$$\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = cz$$

Cautions & Considerations

- Remember:  No. Punching. Down.
- Establish clear rules about not taking everything in a class discussion personally
- Avoid political humor even when you think everyone agrees with you (or make fun of all sides)
- Pay attention to nonverbal cues
- A little goes a long way



Summary!

We'll say it ONE.MORE.TIME.



HUMOR = making unexpected connections = more
LEARNING

Silliness lowers stress (yours too!)

