Teaching the Global Classroom: Understanding your students’ perspectives

Valère Lambert, Geophysics, G2

Objectives: This document provides some basic tips to consider when preparing and teaching classes with international students who come from different educational systems.

The main goal to keep in mind is that students who come from different educational systems and cultures may have disparate perspectives on what is expected in the classroom (attendance, asking questions or participating in class, homework, etc.). It is therefore best to not assume that your expectations as an instructor are immediately clear to your students and also to reflect on what your expectations are for your students coming into the classroom.

Be explicit about what you expect of your students at the beginning and throughout the course and try to give examples of what you are talking about.

Provide clear instructions about policies, grading and all assignments both orally and in writing

- Expectations for in-class participation, attendance and asking questions
- Honor Code, collaboration policies, and plagiarism
- Consider posting lecture slides and notes

Try not to foster a fear in errors. Students who are concerned with their English may be less likely to participate or ask questions.

- Allow students a chance to finish their own sentences
- If a student makes unclear remarks, try paraphrasing their question to provide an opportunity for them to correct it
- Consider your pace of speech and writing on the board

Emphasize that students are welcome to come to office hours and recitations to ask questions or follow up on ideas from readings, assignments or lecture.

More resources:

Caltech International Student Office and Diversity Center
University of Denver: Office of Teaching & Learning
University of Michigan: Center for Research on Learning and Teaching