Teaching for Learning in Large Classes

1. Invite a few students to stand and introduce themselves at the beginning of each class period. [Name, hometown, major or career goal, something unusual –like “At home, I have a cat named ‘Glass’.”]


3. Ask students to form pairs (tripos or quartets). Then, give the groups one of the following instructions:
   A. “In the next three minutes, in your group, summarize the main point or concept I’ve just covered.”
   B. “What connections have you found between the material I’ve just covered and topics discussed previously? You have four minutes for this activity.”
   C. “See if your group can discover direct or indirect links between this material and our lives today. Five minutes for this activity.”
      [Obviously, there are many variations of #3. Also, if you can’t find time during the lecture session to ask a few groups to share insights with the entire class, start the next section discussion with a few reports.]

4. Arrive early to chat with students as they enter the lecture hall.

5. Occasionally, ask students to stand, shake hands, and introduce themselves to three or four people nearby—even if they already know each other.

6. Change student seating periodically.

7. Avoid using the lectern whenever possible.

8. Lecture from different locations in the hall [including the aisles].

9. Learn at least a few names of students not in your section. Occasionally, punctuate your lecture with a student name while making eye contact with him/her. Examples:
   A. “Sarah, in your next section meeting, you may want to take the lead in sharing your viewpoint about X with your section friends.”
   B. “Am I making any sense? I’d like Charles to let me know after class or by email if he thinks I need to clarify anything the next time we meet.”

10. Include five to seven minute writing assignments in class. Example:
    A. “In the next seven minutes, construct an argument designed to convince Socrates that he should take the offer to escape prison.”
    B. As a follow-up assignment, ask students to write a short critique of their own argument as basis for discussion in their section.