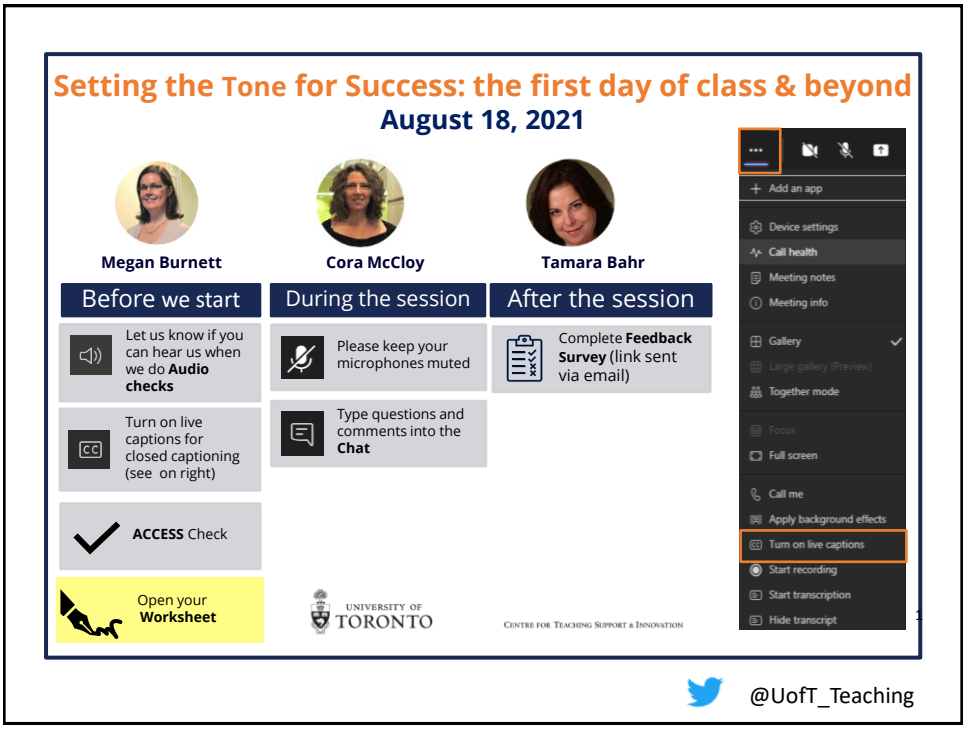
CTSI Tune Into Teaching Workshop Series



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CTSI Tune Into Teaching Workshop Series

Land Acknowledgment

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

- Revised by the First Nations House Elders Circle (2021)

https://indigenous.utoronto.ca/about/land-acknowledgement/

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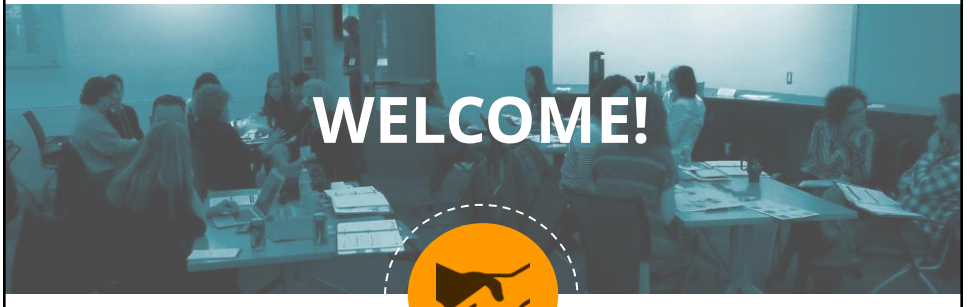

What excites you about your upcoming teaching term?

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Today's Session

Getting your course off to a great start - strategies for:

- Setting the tone
- Building a classroom community
- Introducing students to the big ideas of the course
- Introducing the course outline
- Getting student feedback and assessing prior knowledge

Planning for first class success:

- Considering goals and approaches
- Generating a plan for your first class

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SETTING THE TONE

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Setting the Tone

Students with positive first-day experiences report higher levels of motivation and achieve higher grades than students with negative first-day experiences.

(Wilson & Wilson, 2007)

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Setting the Tone

Developing and delivering first-day activities that build community, engage students in relevant course material, establish course expectations, and effectively model an active learning environment positively impact students' motivation, expectations and grades.

(Bain, 2004; Lang, 2008; Nilson, 2010)

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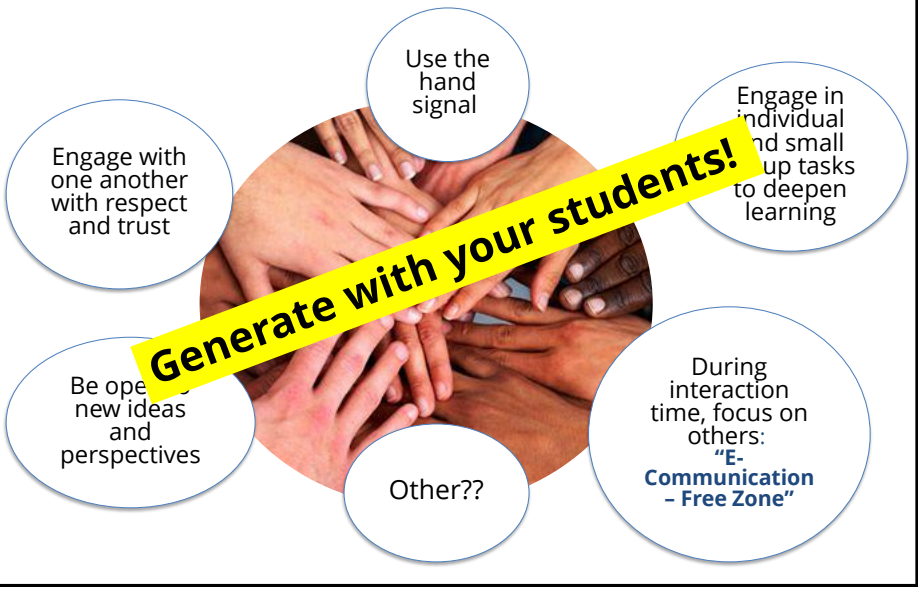
Norms for Working Together



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DRAFT PLAN: FIRST CLASS

Areas to Consider:	Possible Actions:
Before the class…	
Introducing myself…	
Norms/expectations in my course	
Community building and student engagement	
Introducing big ideas of my course	
Introduction to the course syllabus/outline…	
Closing the first class & next steps	

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BUILDING A CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

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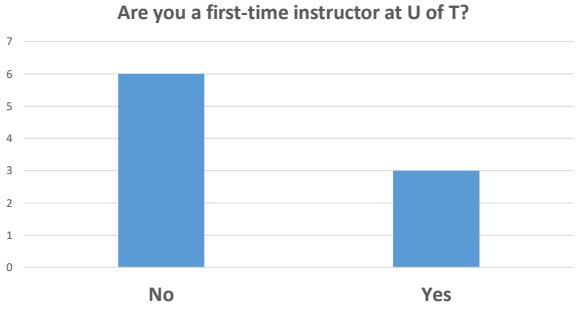
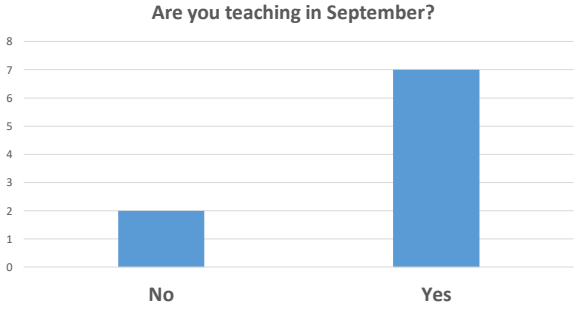
Pre-Webinar Survey: Who are we? (n=9)





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My largest class size:

More Details

500+ students	0
200-500 students	0
100-200 students	3
40-100 students	0
1-40 students	6

I teach (check all that apply):

More Details

Undergraduate students	3
Graduate students	5
Mixed class of UG & Grad stu...	1

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Social Presence

Create a sense of community

How instructors and learners see each other as "real people" in [all learning] environments. Social presence is important to... learners as it combats feelings of isolation and gives learners a sense of community.

(Lehman and Conceicao, 2010)

Establish a culture of learning

Take intentional steps to establish a strong, supportive culture of learning in your course to ensure you are designing a meaningful learning experience for your students.

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Pre-Course Steps

Create a sense of community

- pre-course survey
- share key themes in the first class – students will see others with similar questions, concerns, and motivations
- Inform students when the survey is anonymous or not

Set up a welcoming home page

Key tips:

- ensure your course navigation is clear: focus on the **home page** as students learn about you, how the course works, what to do first, etc.
- **introduce yourself** as part of this process, along with anyone else on your teaching team (co-facilitators, teaching assistants, librarians, etc.)

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Quercus

Welcoming students in Quercus

Publish your home page, Syllabus and Introduction ahead of the course start date

Use Announcements feature to post a message to welcome students
Create an audio or video message and include your photo and profile in advance of the first class

Create a course tour try using the **integrated recording tool** in Quercus to record audio or audio and video from your webcam to create a quick welcome video.

Office Hours consider setting up automated sign-up for **virtual or f2f office hours using Quercus or MS Bookings**

Discussion Forums & Other Tools

Multiple tools available at UofT via Quercus (Q, PeppeR, Ed, Piazza)
Students can post questions about the course using a discussion forum
Post a personal introduction that may include your own areas of interest – link to QSR Discussion boards
* Students can also share one "fun fact" about themselves

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Breakout Room: (15 mins)

In Groups of Three:

- select a timekeeper: person whose last name is last in the alphabet
- share one idea for building community with students – record ideas on your Draft Plan worksheet (3mins each)
- collectively identify one takeaway to share in the large group debrief chat.

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INTRODUCTING STUDENTS TO THE BIG IDEAS OF THE COURSE

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Introducing Students to the Big Ideas of Your Course

Engage your students with the discipline in your first class:

- **Identify** key problems/issues
- **Discuss the relevance** of the discipline /course topic
- Bring in **current research findings** (including your own)
- **Reference current events** or the impact of your discipline on these events

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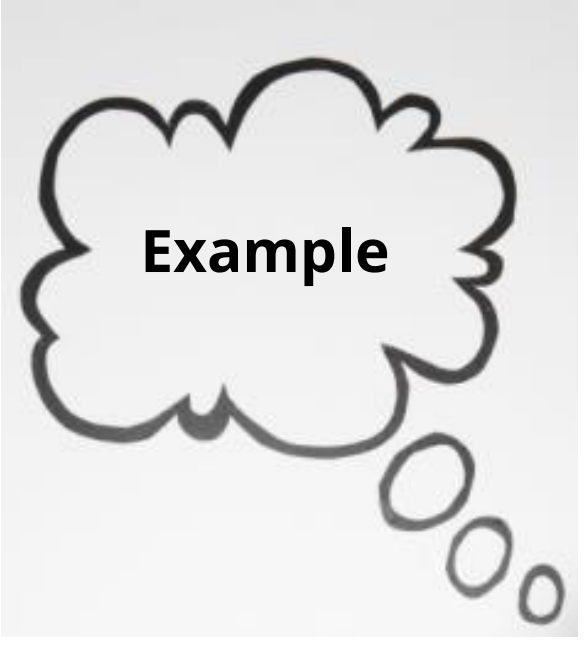

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GETTING YOUR STUDENTS INTO THE COURSE SYLLABUS

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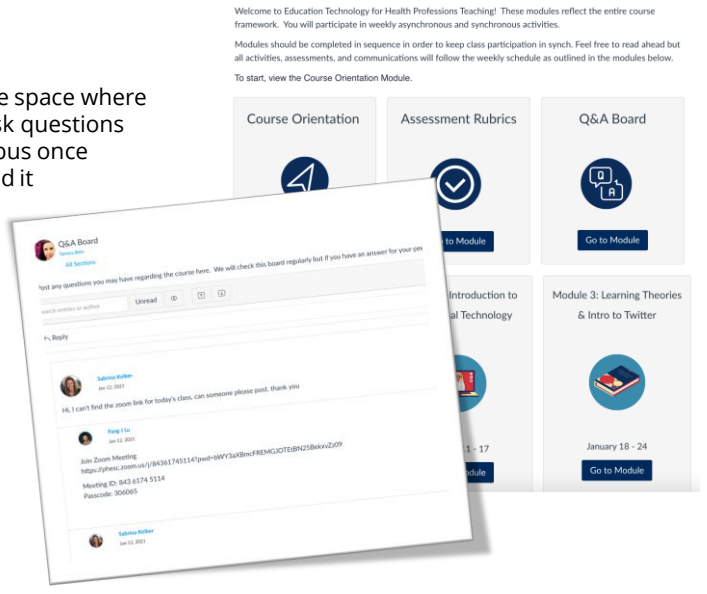
Example activity: Syllabus Reconnaissance

Set up an online space where students can ask questions about the syllabus once they've reviewed it



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Syllabus Reconnaissance

Students (individually):

- Place a ★ next to at least 5 important details
- Place a ! next to items you are excited about
- Place a ? next to questions that remain

Students discuss (in pairs) their annotations:

- What important details did you place a ★ next to?
- What items are you so excited about that you placed a ! next to?
- What questions remain?

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"Say Something"

" 'Say Something' is a paired reading strategy designed to increase individual and shared understanding of concepts and foster conversation to deepen understanding between two participants who are working collaboratively."

(Harste, Gnagey Short & Burke, 1995)

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Using the "Say Something" Strategy to Introduce the Course

1. Distribute the syllabus
2. Ask students to review specified portions
3. Ask students to pair with a partner to discuss the syllabus
4. Provide an opportunity for students to raise questions or comment on the course

Students may:

- ✓ Identify a question about the course or course policies
- ✓ Identify sections that are of particular interest to them
- ✓ Identify topics or assignments that they anticipate to be challenging
- ✓ Make a connection to previous course work or personal interests

- J. Paterson & C. Rolheiser, *13 Parameters: A Literacy Leadership Toolkit*, 2009, p. 43

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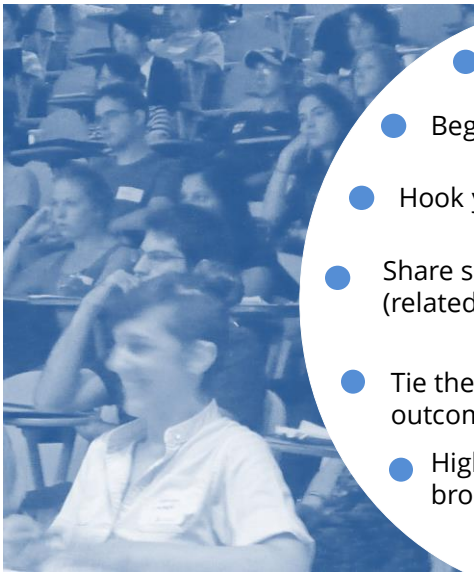
6 KEY CONSIDERATIONS for the 1st class



- The first five minutes
- Begin as you mean to go on
- Hook your students on the discipline
- Share something about yourself (related to discipline and/or course)
- Tie the end to the beginning: outcomes!
- Highlight your course goals and the broader context of the course

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CLOSING THE FIRST CLASS

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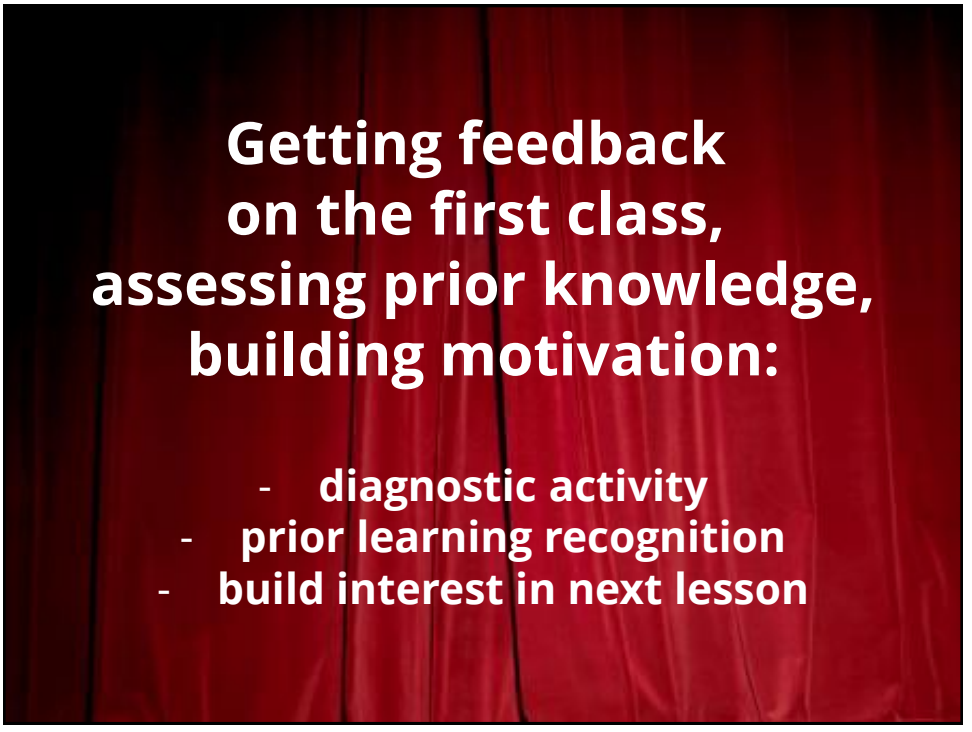

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Closing check-in

Ask students to…

- Complete a 2-minute anonymous written reaction to the first class…what was helpful? What questions do they still have?
- Respond to a few questions about their prior course work/knowledge base, or about what helps them to learn.
- Identify personal interests or professional goals.
- Share their learning goals for the course.

e.g., TICKET-OUT-THE-DOOR:
"What I hope to get out of this course is…"

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Option: Microsoft Forms (Office 365)

All instructors have access to the **Microsoft Forms** tool, which is a simple survey tool with an anonymous capability:

https://easi.its.utoronto.ca/shared-services/office365/forms/

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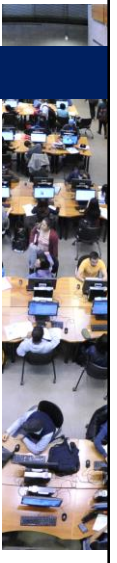
Leveraging the Library



1. Syllabus Service & Course Reading: Use the Course Reserves and Syllabus Service! Our staff will provide durable links, retrieve and scan your readings, even purchase eBooks if available. https://uoft.me/5M1
2. Take advantage of your Liaison Librarian: Ask about collections, workshops, research support and all other library services. https://uoft.me/5M4
3. Benefit from Library Instruction: Request an assignment specific, collaboratively developed workshop or take advantage of one of our many specialist or open workshops. Contact your liaison to learn more. https://uoft.me/5M6

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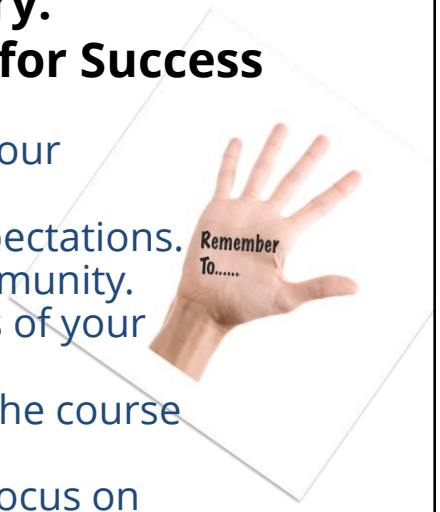
Summary: Setting the Tone for Success

1. Introduce yourself to your students.
2. Outline norms and expectations.
3. Build a classroom community.
4. Introduce the big ideas of your course.
5. Engage students with the course syllabus.
6. Close the class with a focus on the students: get feedback, assess prior knowledge, build interest.



- Barbara Gross Davis (2009), *Tools for Teaching*, p. 37.

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Summary: Setting the Tone for Success

7. Use ALL the time! Communicate to your students that you take class periods seriously.

8. Share your enthusiasm – students should leave feeling this will be an exciting course!

- Wilbert J. McKeachie (2006), *McKeachie's Teaching Tips*, p. 28.
- Barbara Gross Davis (2009), *Tools for Teaching*, 37-46.

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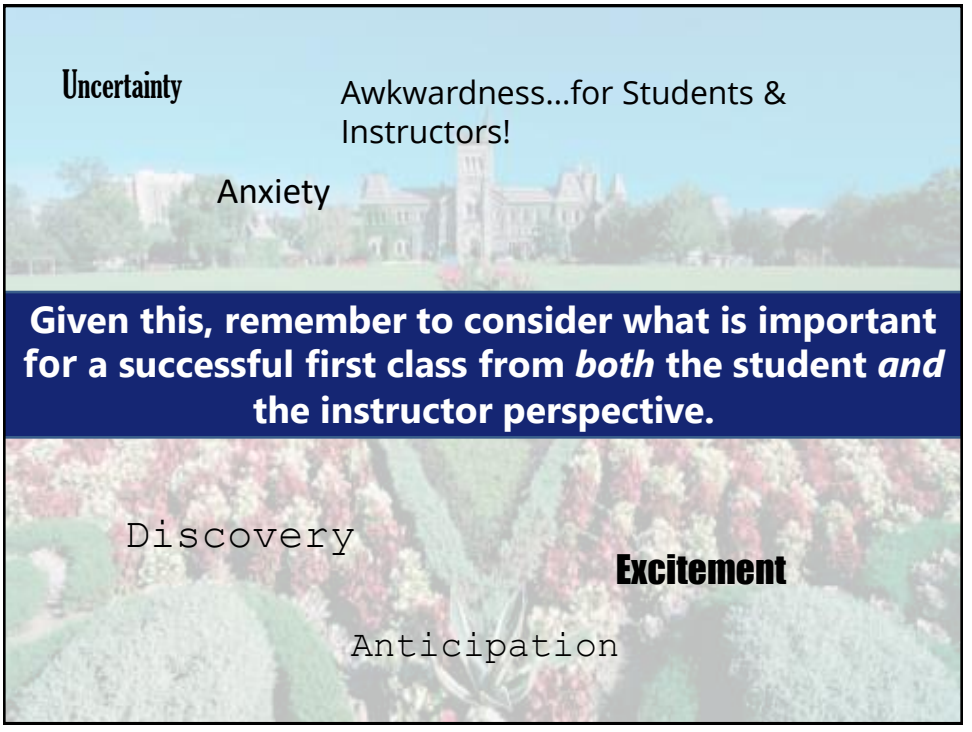
Uncertainty
Awkwardness…for Students & Instructors!
Anxiety
Given this, remember to consider what is important for a successful first class from *both* the student *and* the instructor perspective.
Discovery
Excitement
Anticipation

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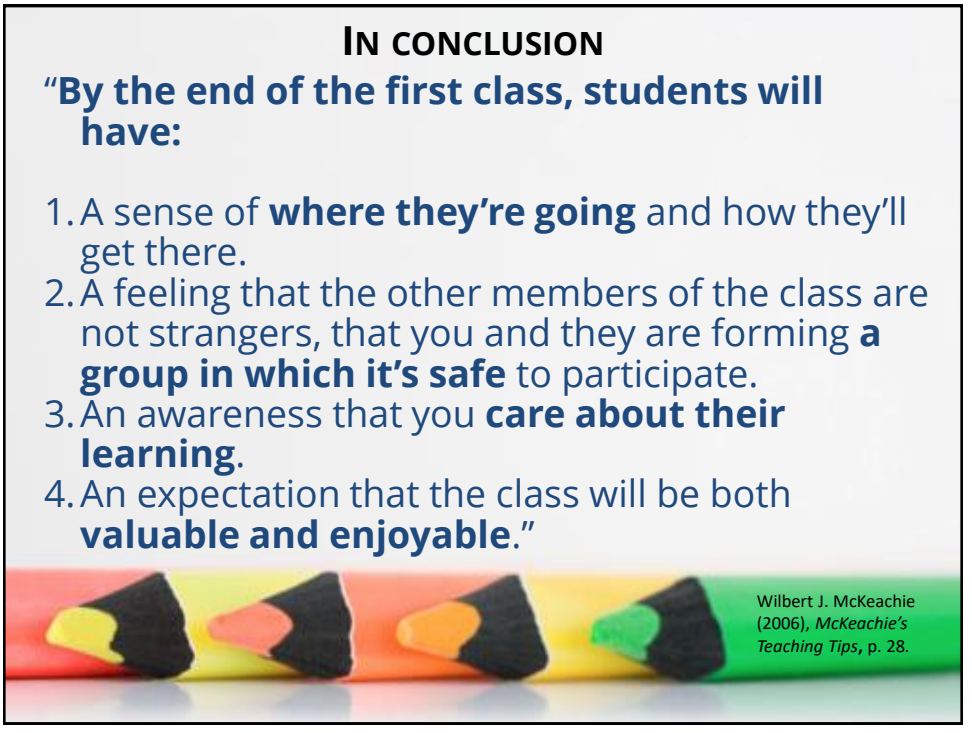
IN CONCLUSION
"By the end of the first class, students will have:
1. A sense of **where they're going** and how they'll get there.
2. A feeling that the other members of the class are not strangers, that you and they are forming **a group in which it's safe** to participate.
3. An awareness that you **care about their learning**.
4. An expectation that the class will be both **valuable and enjoyable**."
Wilbert J. McKeachie (2006), *McKeachie's Teaching Tips*, p. 28.

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The seeds you plant in the first class…

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…bear fruit throughout the term!

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Thank you
…and best wishes for the year ahead!
ctsi.teaching@utoronto.ca
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