Teaching Toolbox: Increasing Reading Compliance
by Emily O. Gravett

Welcome back! I hope you all had a restful winter break and a wonderful start to the spring semester.

As the results of a recent reader survey from Magna Publication's Faculty Focus indicated, one of the biggest day-to-day challenges faculty face is students who show up to class unprepared. You may have experienced this challenge already! Faculty often wonder how to motivate students to bring the required materials to class, submit the homework problems on time, or simply get the reading assignment done.

Some researchers have actually asked students themselves. Consider, for instance, Hatteberg and Steffy's report, "Increasing Reading Compliance of Undergraduates: An Evaluation of Compliance Methods" (2013). These two scholars collected survey data from 438 students in eight large introductory sociology courses to evaluate several common techniques for promoting "reading compliance" (i.e., getting students to do the reading). On average, students rated the following techniques most effective:

- announced reading quizzes

- mandatory reading guides or questions

- required short writing assignments

These three were rated as significantly more effective than any of the unannounced or non-required techniques (such as unannounced quizzes). Optional reading guides were rated the least effective.

One limitation of the Hatteberg and Steffy study is that it focuses solely on students' perceptions of effectiveness, which may be different than what really works to motivate them to prepare. Another is that the study focused solely on reading *compliance*. But some scholars have expressed concern that such "a cost/benefit coercion of reading does not necessarily enhance construction of meaning or deep-learning; indeed, it may reward minimalist or surface reading" (Roberts and Roberts, 2008, 125). So the real question is: How can we encourage students to move beyond simply getting the reading (or any other type of assignment) done and more toward deep or higher-level engagement?

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