Tips for Your First Class

The first day of class is important on many levels: It affords you the opportunity to introduce yourself and the course, to get a sense of your students, and to set the tone for the semester. It also gives students a chance to try the course out—to get a sense of who you are and what your course will be like. Prepare to meet your needs and the needs of your students by planning ahead:

Preparing for the First Class:
1. It is very important that you know the academic Rules and Regulations before your first day in the classroom. Find them at http://policy.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/SenateByLaws20130712.pdf.

2. View your class roster in the Student Administration System to ensure that you know the dates, times and meeting place of your class. Sign in at https://student.studentadmin.uconn.edu, and click on "Self-Service" and the "Faculty Center." From this system, also called Peoplesoft, you can peruse your class roster to get a sense of the student makeup of the class. You can also contact your students before the course begins by using the "Notify Students" option.

3. You can also order a class HuskyCT site from the Student Administration System (once you locate your class, click on "Huskyct Sections" at the bottom of the page). HuskyCT is UConn's online classroom management system, which is powered by Blackboard Learn. Use of this tool is optional. Note that it takes up to 24 hours for a HuskyCT site to be created once requested and that students gain access to HuskyCT sites the first official day of classes unless this date is modified by the instructor. Visit the Instructional Resource Center (IRC) for information on using this tool: irc.uconn.edu.

4. Check out your room and experiment with its technology, lighting, boards, etc. You may visit the room virtually from the University Classrooms website, http://classrooms.uconn.edu/, but it's always best to go to the room and get a feel for the space. If you plan on using a white board, you need to bring your own markers; erasers are provided. If you have questions about the technology in your room, contact the audiovisual technologies (AVT) group—860-486-1774 or avt@uconn.edu— or visit avt.uconn.edu.

5. If you are teaching in a large lecture hall, experiment with the space:
   - Will you need to use a microphone? If so, you will need to bring your own batteries (usually 9 volt).
   - Will you remain behind the podium or will you meander among the students? If you plan to leave the podium, will you need a remote for the computer system? If so, contact the AVT group.

- How do you intend to communicate with your students? Will you ask for questions or comments? Do you prefer to use a classroom response system (clickers)? If so, contact IRC or visit http://clickers.uconn.edu.

6. If the class is small, acknowledge and attempt to learn students' names. The Student Administration System includes students' pictures with the roster; this tool can help you put a face to a name.

Interacting with Students:
1. Decide what you intend to achieve during the first class beyond housekeeping. You may want to get to know something about your students while moving into an introduction to course content. How much time you devote to each is up to you and depends on your approach to the class.

2. At the beginning of the first class, introduce yourself to establish your chosen level of familiarity. Tell students what to call you (Professor, Doctor, Joe) and decide whether to tell them anything about yourself and whether to solicit information from them.

3. Remember that students may need basic course information to determine if the course is right for them; the sooner students understand course expectations, the more informed they'll be to make speedy schedule changes, if necessary, within the add/drop timeframe:
   - Present a course content overview, or a mini-lecture, providing a broad look at the subject. This gives students an idea of what to expect from the content of the course.
   - Consider handing out the syllabus or, if it is on line, bringing it up on the overhead and reading through it with the students. This may be the only time they go over it. Highlight expectations for class behavior. Explain why you chose your textbook and readings, and discuss how they relate to each other and to the course content. Students typically look to the syllabus for due dates, but they may not look at the rest beyond this first opportunity.

4. Ask questions. Establish a give-and-take atmosphere the first day when content knowledge is not being tested. Students will be more at ease and that comfort will continue into subsequent classes.

5. Save time for student questions. Students may still be wondering why they are in this class. Give them a chance to ask questions and make their own connections on this first day.

Links:
- UConn's Faculty and Staff Resource Guide: www.guide.uconn.edu
- Teaching Strategies for the First Day of Class, University of Michigan, Center for Research on Teaching and Learning