



The Last Day of Class: Reflecting Together on the Experience

During the final weeks of the semester students feel taxed by completing their course work, preparing for finals, getting ready for the holidays, and leaving campus. Plus, the general fatigue that follows the completion of courses that all of us experience. The final class provides a time for both students and faculty to ponder the overall learning experiences, personal growth, and appreciation for learning together. Ideally, the goals for the final class will be reflective of students' learning experience, demonstrative of growth, and celebratory of accomplishments. These goals lift the Augustinian tenant of each student's and faculty's journey of self-discovery: "Become what you are not yet."

We offer some instructional approaches designed to support an environment that encourages a reflective, demonstrative, celebratory final class experience:

- **Express the overall course themes through conversation.** Students write down the most important concepts/ideas/processes they learned in the course. Following, students share what they have written, build on each other's observations, add examples, ask questions of each other. Faculty guide the conversation to topics that personalize the learning experience such as "course experiences that were meaningful to them--why/how, what they learned from peers and about themselves."
- **Letter to Future Students.** Students write a letter to the students who will be taking the course in the next semester, giving them advice about how to do well in the course. Students discuss in small groups and groups present their advice and impact on learning visually via graphic organizers. Faculty obtain students' permission to share with future students.
- **Elevator speeches.** Students imagine being asked by a friend, family member, or job interviewer what the course was "all about" or what they took away from the course. They have to deliver their response in 1-2 minutes. If class size limits individual responses, students may deliver their "pitches" in pairs/small groups, receive feedback, and deliver their revised "pitches" in new pairs/small groups.
- **First Day/Last Day.** On the first day students identify what they hope to gain from the course, what topics they are curious about, what they look forward to. They write on an index card, sign their name, hand to faculty. On the last day, faculty return the cards and invite students to reflect on their initial writing. Students discuss their reflections, how they experienced their learning compared to their initial thoughts and expectations, what/who they are grateful for in this course.



Please let us know what you have found helpful/effective when conducting your final class by [emailing](#) your tips to VITAL.

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Adapted from [Finishing Strong](#), Lang, J. Chronicle of Higher Education, 11/2006 and [Activities for the Last Day of Class](#), Himelein, M., Brigham Young University, 08/2021 - Accessed 11/16/2021

You will find detailed strategies for facilitating a final class in the articles referenced.