

Telling the Same Story Differently...
Best practices for teaching a non-majors course
Brian M. Forster, Ph.D.

Summary of the Group Discussion Portion of the Workshop:
(June 5th, 2015 & September 24th, 2015)

SESSION #1 June 5th

Misconceptions that students have when they come into a course that has been identified as a “non-major” course	What teachers should do if they teach a course that is predominantly “non-major”
The course is B__s__	Teacher needs to be entertaining (be a ham in front of the class)
I will not have to work hard in this course	Write a story about myself as a writer
This is not relevant to the world/major.	Relate the course material to other majors
Why is this course/topic relevant?	Focus less on repeated topics and focus more on new material that students have not seen before
“I am not good at this.”	Define terms/vocabulary
The topic can’t be taught to me anyway	More emphasis on skills, rather than content.
Course will be too easy (“gut course”)	

SESSION #2 June 5th, 2015

Misconceptions that students have when they come into a course that has been identified as a “non-major” course	What teachers should do if they teach a course that is predominantly “non-major”
The topic is impossible for non-majors	Make content relatable to daily life / student’s major
Course will be easier than a majors-level course	Strengthen/practice verbal reasoning skills
Expectations will be lower	Show that skills being taught in the class are applicable to any major/field
There will not be a lot of work involved in the course	Terms need to be defined
There will be emphasis on just facts	Avoid too much jargon
Earlier schooling will shape my attitude towards this topic.	

SESSION #3 September 24th, 2015

Misconceptions that students have when they come into a course that has been identified as a “non-major” course	What teachers should do if they teach a course that is predominantly “non-major”
Class will be easy	Consider interests vs. “have to” teach certain material.
Class will be a blow-off course	Try to answer the question “what can you take away from this?”
Material will be watered down	Relate the material to their major / curriculum (relate to <i>all</i> their classes if possible)
Wrong idea of what the course is about/what the focus will be on.	Do nothing different from a majors – just make sure that the level of expectation is appropriate for non-majors and it is clearly explained.
Do not need to buy a book!	Hook student interests
	Relate to getting a job!
	Work with experts/multiple disciplines