

John C. Bean, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. (Jossey-Bass, 2001).

Summary of Chapter 7: "Designing Tasks for Active Thinking and Learning"

Assignments to help students learn content:

1. Assign them a task linking course concepts to students' personal experience or previously existing knowledge.
2. Since teaching something is one of the best ways of learning it, assign students to explain course concepts to new learners.
3. Have them summarize or abstract articles or lectures.

Assignments that help students see knowledge as tentative and dialogic:

4. Give them a controversial thesis to defend or attack.
5. Give students a question they have to answer through a thesis-governed essay, through exploratory writing, or through group discussion.
6. Provide students data and require that they come up with a thesis to explain the data. This approach would be similar to giving them the research question and methodology of a report but then requiring them to write the "findings" and "discussion" sections.
7. Have students write dialogues between people holding differing viewpoints.
8. Give students an assignment where they must play the role of a specific person or where they must take on unfamiliar perspectives.
9. Use case studies to have students examine real-life situations with ambiguous outcomes.

Assignments that help students learn about organization and structure:

10. Frame assignment: Give students a topic sentence and several transitions for a paragraph; have them write the paragraph.