How Can I Plan an Effective Course?
New York University Center for the Advancement of Teaching

Begin course planning by asking yourself the following questions:

1. What big questions will the course help students answer? What reasoning abilities do students need to answer these questions?

2. What kinds of information do students need to understand and answer the big questions of the course? How will they obtain that information?

3. What abilities will the course help students develop? How can you help students improve these abilities?

4. What paradigms and preconceptions are students likely to bring to the course? How will you help them to challenge those paradigms and to modify those preconceptions?

5. How will you enable students to read more actively, analytically, and deeply? How will you assist students who demonstrate difficulties with understanding?

6. How do you plan to encourage and enable students to do their own thinking? How will you help students assess their own thinking and learning?

7. How will you find out what students are learning before testing them for a grade? How will you provide feedback for them and course correction for yourself?

8. How will you create an environment conducive to thinking and learning, one in which students’ curiosity is aroused, their assumptions challenged, and their mental models developed? An environment in which students are comfortable asking questions, making mistakes, and collaborating with you and with one another?

9. How will you develop and apply the standards by which they will be evaluated? How will you know when students can do what you expect from them?