

# University of Redlands

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Curriculum for a Workshop Titled:  
“Increasing Instructor Effectiveness in the Classroom”  
for Adjunct Faculty Teaching in  
the Undergraduate and Graduate Business School

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A booklet containing material for adjunct faculty to increase their effectiveness and instruction in the classroom. To optimize student retention of content, illustrate immediate application of material learned, meaningful participation and sustained engagement with students, suggestions are offered to modify delivery of content and instructional methods. Additional material reviewed includes what students expect from their instructors, strategies to pull for the best in students and for creating a meaningful learning environment, how to incorporate critical thinking into classroom discussion, and the benefits of incorporating group exercises into instruction. Course specific resource materials are also included for the following courses: MGMT 604: Managerial Assessment and Development, BUSB 485: Analysis and Integration in Business and Management (Capstone) and the undergraduate business elective courses The Stress of Living, Death and Bereavement and The American Family.

## Tips For The First Class

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Instructors should remember that first impressions can be the most lasting and the first class session is very important in showing instructor preparedness in delivering a meaningful learning experience for all students. Instructors who make time for student introductions convey their interest in the accumulated wealth of knowledge students bring to the classroom. One method is to ask each student to introduce themselves by responding to these questions:

- place of employment, job title, previous titles with current or past employers
- description of what they actually do at work, and previous work history
- length of service with current employer
- any recent promotions, anticipated promotions
- why they are pursuing an academic degree

Additional questions for graduate students:

- \* what their undergraduate degree is in
- \* reason for enrolling in graduate school

A final opening question for students in the first class explores what they expect to learn from the class. A statement regarding additional resources available to students (writing tutor, math tutor, library access, etc.) can be helpful in reducing anxiety brought to the class. Taking the 15-20 minutes to complete introductions conveys to students that the instructor is interested in their experiences and it allows them to make immediate connections with each other and the instructor. In addition, the instructor can use information from the introductions to tailor/incorporate material into the content immediately on the first night and throughout the course. Introductions like these have proven to be an informal way to create a friendly and safe environment where each student feels like they belong. Occasionally, a student shares that they are returning to school after a long absence, and is worried about their ability to perform satisfactorily. So, instructors should be prepared to help any student overcome their concern by being available and supportive.

The instructor should also introduce themselves and include the following information:

- How long you have been teaching for the university.
- The courses you teach-- undergraduate and graduate.
- Instructor's occupation and academic background.
- Instructor expectations of students.
- Explain what students should expect from you as an instructor; turn around time for returning graded papers, your teaching style, etc.
- Review of the syllabus.

Remember—as the instructor, your name, degree (s) and occupational title will not necessarily impress students as much as your accumulated experience in the field and your ability to convey this knowledge and needed skills through your instruction. Students are aware that you possess knowledge they can benefit from to solve problems at work, add to their accumulated fund of knowledge and skills, or enable them to earn a promotion. A self-serving assumption some instructors make is that knowing the content means they automatically become effective teachers. Tragically—instructors learn in their evaluations that students experienced them as ineffective in delivering the content. Again, knowing content doesn't translate to effectively delivering it. It takes creative planning and organization of your content to deliver a meaningful, engaging and active learning experience.

*Remember— please have your students complete the following form in the first class “Hi—This is Me” and submit it to you.*

## Why Our Students are in the Classroom

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The following are what motivates our students to engage in formal learning:

1. To increase their cultural literacy and be a better informed individual
2. For future professional advancement opportunities in or outside of their company
3. To escape the ordinary routine of their lives; learning for the sake of intellectual stimulation and the new social networks developed by meeting others

## What Instructors Should Not Do

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The following is a list of items that represents the most frequently cited concerns of students and classroom observers:

1. On some occasions, instructors have felt it necessary to share their displeasure and criticisms of the University with their students. Firstly, the classroom is not the appropriate setting for instructors to share their displeasure with the University. Students cannot do anything with this information except disseminate it to other students and allow it to raise unnecessary concern about the University's image.
2. At other times instructors deviate from policy by scheduling class at Starbucks or other locations outside of the campus classroom. Obviously, meeting for class outside of the classroom seriously compromises the quality of instruction and conveys to students that their instructor is willing to compromise instruction for their self-serving convenience. There is no acceptable justification for scheduling class at any location other than the campus classroom.
3. There have been times when faculty members meet with students away from the campus to discuss non-course related issues. If a student is currently enrolled in an instructor's course, the instructor should not meet him/her at any location other than the campus site to discuss non-course related items. An instructor has no legitimate reason to ever meet a student while enrolled in their course, at a location other than the regional center to discuss non-course related items.
4. Students and observers have reported that class dismissals frequently occur before 10:00 PM. Students pay for and expect to receive high quality instruction in our accelerated program. Ending class early undermines the integrity of instruction when material is not completely reviewed in class or not enough time is spent in discussion. There are no circumstances where early dismissal is authorized (other than an emergency).
5. Students have often complained of not getting their final writing assignments returned from instructors. Instructors can submit final writing assignments to the CSA or administrative assistant at the campus locations and they will return the papers to students. Providing our students with feedback on their assignments in a timely way is our responsibility as adjunct faculty.
6. Students report that instructors occasionally forget to post the syllabi for their course, on Blackboard, which complicates matters for students. The University policy indicates that a syllabus needs to be available to students, via Blackboard two weeks before the start of their course so they can order their textbook (s) and prepare for their first class. The syllabus must contain instructor contact information including an email address for students to contact you with questions regarding the syllabus, in addition to a phone number. The syllabus also needs to be emailed to the Administrative Assistant at the center you are teaching the course at.

## Adult Learner Characteristics

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In general, adult learners arrive in the classroom desiring clear expectations and want to be treated with respect. The following characteristics apply to the adult learner:

1. Adult students are pragmatic learners; they need the content they are learning to be relevant and applicable to work; they are goal oriented.
2. Students expect class time to be used effectively, productively and in meaningful ways.
3. Our students possess personal experiences which can be resources to learning; they represent a diverse group with varied interests and knowledge; they favor practical learning exercises that enable them to draw of previous skills and knowledge; they are mature and know what will and will not work when applying theoretical material to current situations.
4. Adult learners see their commitment to return to school as very important.
5. Students know education is valuable and worthwhile; they are usually intrinsically motivated to learn and when engaged by the content in class they will generate more effort to learn and apply relevant material.
6. Adult learners prefer a classroom environment which is non-threatening, informal, welcoming and supportive and responsive; as much as possible instructors must create a participatory and collaborative environment where students offer suggestions on how they learn and how they can apply content.
7. Remember—our adult learners may be returning to college after a long absence and may have irrational anxiety and fear related to their ability to complete college level work. Students may feel insufficiently prepared or lack self-confidence they can perform satisfactorily in your class.
8. Adult learners value opportunities for cooperative/group learning.
9. Adult learners want to be competent and able to effectively apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom.
10. Our students must be treated with respect.
11. Adult learners want their learning experience to translate into how they can immediately apply skills and knowledge in practical ways that benefit them.
12. The integrative component includes adult learners using what they already know and integrating new material taught in the classroom into their accumulated fund of knowledge and skill set.
13. Adult learners want to be understood as whole individuals— they have multiple identities which include the following:
  - a. Parent
  - b. Student
  - c. Professional (employee)
  - d. Son, daughter, sibling, aunt, uncle
  - e. Hobbyist

Our students are typically tired when they arrive in class because they are coming from work and balancing their jobs, family and other responsibilities. Once class begins, they expect their instructor to use time productively; to be engaged through various teaching methods such as interactive lectures, group exercises, role play, and perhaps powerpoint presentations.

## What Adult Learners Expect From Their Instructors

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In general, adult learners expect their instructors to teach using a variety of learning methods that fit their learning styles. Lecturing for several hours is experienced as dull, ineffective and stupefying by students. A capable, effective instructor takes time to create engaging, thought provoking content delivered in various ways to maximize student learning. Incorporating 20-30 minute lectures followed by a reflection exercise or group activity to summarize and apply knowledge/skills learned optimizes cooperative learning. Further, graded writing assignments and exams should vary to accommodate diverse student strengths and weaknesses. The more these objectives are honored the more likely students will appreciate and respect their instructors because they will perceive them as being responsive to their particular learning needs.

The following represent expectations adult learners have of their instructors:

1. Instructors are content experts and are knowledgeable.
2. Instructors demonstrate how the learned material can be used by students in their personal and professional lives.
3. Instructors are well organized—as reflected in their weekly assignments and course objectives in the syllabus.
4. Instructors don't waste time-- students are busy and expect quality instruction delivered by instructors who arrive on time and use class time in a meaningful, productive way.
5. Instructors must clarify the learning goals for the class—outlining an agenda for each class meeting; what students will learn by the end of class and how it is relevant to their work.
6. Instructors should be open to the possibility of modifying the learning objectives contingent on student needs and interests. Following a discussion of student goals an instructor should consider incorporating student requests for additional learning. By doing so students perceive the instructor as respectful of their learning needs.
7. Instructors need to be enthusiastic to motivate students.
8. Students expect instructors to show a concern for their learning by offering timely, relevant and meaningful feedback on their work. Assigning a grade with one sentence for feedback on a paper is unacceptable.
9. Adult learners, like all of us, insist on being treated with respect.



## Strategies To Pull For The Best In Your Students

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By identifying some characteristics of adult learners, we can match the most effective teaching strategies to create an optimal learning environment.

**Characteristic:** Professional experience and fund of knowledge

**Matching Teaching Strategy:** Since adults have many years of professional work and personal experiences, in addition to a large fund of knowledge, they can be used as resources by classmates. To capitalize on these elements, instructors should use open-ended questions to draw out their student's thoughts and experiences which will undoubtedly create opportunities for other students to find relevant to their work and life. Students present in class from many industries and their accumulated knowledge and skill set needs to be illuminated through class discussion.

**Characteristic:** Adult students expect to be treated as adults

**Matching Teaching Strategy:** Instructors need to welcome questions and comments—and treat students with respect. Remember— you set the tempo, model respectful behavior through your words which are reflected by your actions in class. If appropriate, instructors should acknowledge meaningful, insightful contributions made by students which deepen thinking and invite additional critical inquiry.

**Characteristic:** Adult learners expect to apply learned skills to solve problems or improve work conditions.

**Matching Teaching Strategy:** Instructors should demonstrate how new knowledge, technology or skills can be applied to work related problems. Activities such as group exercises to solve business or work related problems to case analysis achieve these outcomes. Instructors can ask students to describe work process problems, issues related to quality assurance, inefficient use of employee time to production and performance issues. For these exercises to be effective learning tools, instructors must plan ahead and organize ahead of class by reviewing the content to be covered in class and understanding how concepts will be illuminated in the problems being discussed in student group exercises.

## Establishing A Meaningful Learning Environment

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It is the instructors responsibility to create an optimal learning climate characterized by mutual student support, equality, belongingness and respect. Unless students feel safe in class—in terms of not being embarrassed by the instructor or classmates, they will not risk sharing their thoughts. Undoubtedly, the instructor needs to model respectful behavior and demonstrate how to manage a diverse student population. Mature instructors know how to leverage diversity and treat it as a strength. Instructors who welcome divergent thinking reflected by student cultural and ethnic backgrounds show how diversity can be valued and leveraged to illuminate creative and innovative thinking. Finally—adult students expect their instructors to draw on their varied life experiences so each can learn from their various perspectives.

One of the most critical ingredients for maximizing cooperative and individual learning in the classroom is attained through instructor respect for students. Instructors who demonstrate the following behaviors in turn earn their student's respect:

1. Paying full attention to their students when they speak—not being on the computer keyboard when the student speaks.
2. Capitalizing on opportunities to empower students by giving students enough information so they make their own, well informed decisions; which invariably increases their self-confidence and reliance on self to learn how to ask the right questions and identify the best solution to the problem (critical thinking).
3. For the instructor to be honest, authentic and truthful; giving students opportunities to freely express themselves; understanding their viewpoint and when necessary, asking students to inquire further with more illuminating questions that may alter their position.

Remember—instructors who are disrespectful to students in the classroom will cause students to distance themselves from you and negatively contaminate the learning relationship. Establishing and honoring that students demand respect is a pre-requisite to creating a safe, mutually respectful learning environment.

### Contextual Learning:

We need to create activities that engage our students with material in authentic ways so that they make connection between the material learned and application to their lives. The more students are engaged with content in an applied way, the more likely they are meaningfully engaged and taking responsibility for their learning outcome.

### Incorporating Critical Thinking into Instruction:

Since students present in the classroom from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, opportunities to deepen their understanding of the influences of socio-cultural factors is essential as an exercise in critical thinking. As instructors, we need to engage students in a process that makes explicit their assumptions about self, society, culture and how they gain knowledge. To illuminate these assumptions, instructors need to weave critical thinking into class material so that students question the sources of their assumptions and critically think through and weigh the validity and reliability of their assertions. In sum, students need to be taught how to ask the right questions to deepen their understanding of material.

Summary: Instructors need to create an environment that is psychologically conducive to learning; relaxed, safe and one that nurtures mutual respect among students. The instructor needs to facilitate and be supportive, allowing students to collaborate whenever possible (group activities).



## Teaching Strategies

Effective teaching means instructors know when to use certain learning strategies such as active lecturing, case analysis, group activities, etc. In general, a lecture is appropriate for summarizing reading material or presenting material not available to students. It is easy and familiar to all of us—convenient and easy to prepare. The assumption instructors make is that the traditional lecture format is a good fit for every student. To increase your understanding of your student’s learning needs, rely on the information they provided you in the “Hi-- This is Me” form they completed the first night of class. Instructors can use this information to customize learning and application of material in classroom group activities—selecting techniques and cases that have clear and direct relevance to their work or industry. Creating this type of learning environment will gain your students attention. To maximize student responsiveness, include at some point in the evening a time for reflection—asking students to evaluate your teaching effectiveness in terms of:

1. What needs to be modified?
2. What content students found valuable and meaningful.
3. Was class time used effectively?
4. Did the class ask all the right questions to deepen understanding of the content?

Ideally, instructors deliver active, engaging lectures that provoke student thinking. The most effective method is to deliver no more than a 20-30 minute lecture incorporating exercises for students to participate through small group discussions. In this way, students assume responsibility for their learning—and the instructor facilitates the learning process. These breaks in an active, engaging lecture allow for instructors to do learning checks. In general, for students to activate their full learning potential, instructors must be creative in how they deliver material. Often times, instructors have an over reliance on powerpoint presentations—clicking slide after slide and not incorporating actual cases demonstrating how procedures, principles, policies and theory is applied. It is incumbent on the instructor to find innovative ways to illustrate and explain concepts to students. If you want to increase attention, retention and participation by your students, deliver a well organized, creative and engaging learning experience.

For example, when I plan to deliver a 20-30 minute interactive lecture, the week before I assign a few students the duty of facilitating the reviews of the most salient, relevant content in the reading assignment. I also ask students to identify if gaps in content were in the reading material, and whether the author asked all the right questions to fully explain the material. Finally, I ask the students facilitating the active lecture the following questions:

1. What content was most valuable in the reading?
2. What could they immediately apply to work related issues/problems?
3. If they can’t immediately apply any of the content/skills, why can’t they and what workplace systems/processes need to be modified for them to apply the content/skills?
4. What qualifiers are operating here for the workplace problem to be effectively resolved? In other words, what does the effective resolution of the workplace problem depend on?

Again, in general the lecture format tends to produce the following:

1. Provides a dry summary, a reiteration of material from a textbook.
2. It tends to de-motivate students to complete the reading assignments if they know the instructor will review the material in class.
3. Lectures tend to cause students to rely or depend on the instructor to convey all the material.

The value of group or team learning is effective and memorable, increases retention and leads to discovery learning. Asking your students how they learn best, and about prior learning experiences will guide how you instruct class. In general, students learn through auditory, visual and hand-on experiences and

instruction incorporating these three learning styles will optimize student learning. Obviously, the 20 minute lecture satisfies the auditory piece. Creating a hands-on learning experience can be difficult, but a simple suggestion is to assign three or four students to a group and ask them to respond to a “What would happen if…” simulation. The simulation should be a problem and its analysis and resolution should be anchored in content delivered in the lecture. For example, ask one student to describe a problem from their workplace and how using concepts learned in the lecture could be implemented to deepen their understanding of the problem and its resolution. Allow about 10 minutes for this exercise before asking students to report on their case. Students can assign a reporter who outlines/writes their findings on the greaseboard. After each group completes this exercise, have the class vote on which group performed the best—also asking for reasons why they voted for the winning group.

Another group exercise to incorporate after your 20-30 minute interactive lecture is to ask students to rank the most important concepts/content you introduced them to in the lecture. Remember to ask students to justify why they selected concepts as important and how they can apply them to their work environments.



## How to Respond to Student Answers/Comments

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Instructors interested in creating collaborative learning in their classroom need to capitalize on such opportunities by engaging all students when they are responding to instructor questions. If managed effectively by instructors, question and answer opportunities enable students to debate and further explore and deepen their thinking on concepts. Again, it is the instructors responsibility to create a climate where students feel safe in sharing their thoughts—and not fearful of being ridiculed.

Techniques for how to ask students questions and how to effectively respond to student responses:

1. Remember to look and establish eye contact when interacting with students
2. Focus on what students are saying to you—listen to the content more than to how they express it
3. Remember—do not interrupt the student when he/she is talking.
4. Do not respond to a student by being disrespectful—by embarrassing him/her
5. If you disagree with a student's response, attempt to deepen their thinking by suggesting they consider other pieces of information that may change their response
6. If the student's response is incorrect or partly correct, consider asking another student to build on their classmate's response to arrive at the correct response.
7. Encourage students to ask the right questions (critical thinking)

## Benefits of Incorporating Group Activities into Class Time

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Incorporating group exercises into the course gives students an opportunity to work closely with classmates to complete some of the following activities:

1. Solve a problem
2. Perform a task
3. Debate a topic

The benefits of assigning a group activity include the following:

1. Promotes student exchange of ideas
2. Facilitates team work; helps develop positive peer relationships
3. Develops leadership skills
4. Promotes development of collaborative, participative learning
5. Demonstrates why the exchange of ideas and opinions is meaningful and valuable
6. Compels students to identify and manage conflicting ideas and how to resolve disagreements
7. Enables students of varying ability to observe and interact with each other
8. Allows students an opportunity to delegate tasks
9. Encourages students who are shy about doing an oral presentation to practice and express their thoughts in a group setting

## How to Organize Groups

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### Random Assignment

The most beneficial way to assign students to groups is to randomly select students to groups. Doing so will ensure that students have an opportunity to work with classmates they may not ordinarily interact with in class. Depending on the class size, instructors can have students count off from 1-5 and have all the one's form a group, all the two's etc.

### Self-Selection

In this way, students organize themselves into groups. Obviously, this allows students who are friends to work together and a more safe, harmonious atmosphere develops where like minded thinking emerges. The disadvantage here is that an emphasis on sameness in thinking is emphasized and divergent thinking maybe discouraged. Remember, a more diverse group in terms of variables such as age, gender, culture and type of work/industry will pull for a more broader discussion based on differing perspectives.

### Clearly Stated Objectives of Group Activity

Prior to creating a group activity, the instructor needs to clearly articulate to students the purpose of the activity, the desired outcome, the length of time the group will meet and if necessary how students will be evaluated—in terms of individual or group performance.

What does the instructor do while students are in a group activity?

Instructors should observe student interactions while performing their tasks in group. For example, meaningful observations include the following:

1. Who is leading the activity?
2. Is a student being excluded from the interaction and why?
3. Is one or more of the students being difficult and unable to integrate into the activity?
4. How does the group manage the difficulties?

## Course Specific: Adjunct Faculty Resources

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I have been teaching at the university since 1990, and over the years have written curriculum such as booklets and review notes to enrich student learning. The following are courses I teach in the undergraduate and graduate business school, in addition to undergraduate elective courses and the available resources I have written for each course. The resources/booklets I have written are available to you today.

### Undergraduate BSB program:

Course: BUSB 485: Analysis and Integration in Business and Management (Capstone)

In this final course of the BSB program, students are required to demonstrate the inter-relatedness of artifact courses toward a carefully chosen work/business related problem, industry related topic or an innovation.

### Resources:

1. In addition to the student guide which serves as the text for the capstone course, I have developed resource materials to enrich student learning. These materials include the following:

For class #4 of the capstone, the syllabus includes reviewing reading from Ch. 19 of the text *Contemporary Management, Third Edition* by Gareth R. Jones and Jennifer M. George. Instructors could review the following lecture notes in a document I have written that summarizes the key concepts in the chapter:

Document Title: *Class Exercise on Management of Innovation and Product Development (3 page document)*

2. In the first night of the capstone course, I have students do a 10 minute oral presentation of their capstone topic while their classmates complete a document eliciting meaningful feedback for the student. The document asks classmates to offer feedback on the following items:

- a. Did the student select relevant artifact papers to support their capstone topic?
- b. Did the student ask all the right questions to deepen their understanding of their chosen topic? (critical thinking)
- c. Has the student convinced everyone that their chosen topic/workplace problem they intend to study is important and worthy of study?
- d. Did the student convince everyone what the benefits are to their organization if they study this problem?

Document Title: *485 Oral Presentation Form*

After each student completes their oral presentation, they collect the document from their classmates with feedback for them to consider.

## Graduate MAM program:

Course: MGMT 604: Managerial Assessment and Development

1. In this course, students complete four on-line assessments, one of which is an assessment on cultural proficiency and whether their employer implements culturally proficient practices. In addition, students are required to read an article in the course reader on cultural competency. The booklet I have written which complements this learning covers intercultural awareness, how to manage diversity and how to become tolerant of otherness.

### Resources:

A booklet on intercultural awareness, how to manage diversity and cultural competency titled “You, Me and Them: Reaching for Common Ground” The last few pages of this booklet are exercises instructors can use to teach about the effects of cultural programming and how we develop cultural assumptions.

*Document title: You, me and them: Reaching for common ground*

2. Another feature of this course is students reading various articles in the course reader and selected chapters from textbooks utilized in this course. I have read and summarized the key concepts in many of the articles/chapters and created a packet of my notes instructors can use to deliver the material.

The cover for this booklet lists the title of the article/chapter, the authors name followed by the course number in parenthesis (the course number indicates which course the article/chapter is required for). For example, an article is listed as follows:

*Document title: Instructor Review Notes for MAM Courses: 604, 632 and 699*

3. Finally, the articles and book chapters students read in this course refer to the modern malaise of living in America—the potential stress induced conditions associated with being unhappily employed, not knowing how to use leisure time, being addicted to the clock and driven by urgency, etc. I have written two booklets containing material on the following which complements learning in this course:

1. How to identify values that drive our lives, personal mastery
2. The pursuit of happiness, contentment and purpose in life
3. How to develop resilience, how and why we develop emotional intelligence
4. How to identify leisure activities, searching for something more
5. How to develop self awareness and insight, integrating thinking with doing
6. What is work—instrumental and sacred work, deeper issues for leaders
7. The search for more in the second half of life, moral development
8. What are management skills, definition of a competency, goal setting theory
9. Integrating theory and experience

For this feature of the course, there are two booklets I have written which examine the sociocultural correlates of stress and how we can initiate healthy lifestyle modifications to lead value driven lives. These booklets are titled:

*Document titles:*

1. The Sociocultural Correlates of Stress
2. Tired of Pushing Big Gears? Just Gear Down and Enjoy the Ride



Courses:       MGMT 624: Communication and Conflict  
                  MGMT 632: Management of Self  
                  MGMT 699: The Reflective Manager

For the above listed courses, the same, previously listed resources (booklets) are available for you to supplement your classes.

Elective Courses:

For the following elective courses, please contact me by email to receive the resource materials to supplement them:

The American Family  
The Stress of Living  
Death and Bereavement

For additional resources/articles that may be applicable to your courses, please go to my website at:

[www.thinkingonthings.com](http://www.thinkingonthings.com)

On the left of the home page, click on the link titled "Dr. Levy's articles" and you'll find a listing of 40 articles that may serve as reading for your courses in the MAM, MBA and undergraduate BSB program.