

Learning in the Large Lecture Hall

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“All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts...”

---*William Shakespeare (1564-1616)*

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to help students leverage the best possible learning strategies when enrolled in a class taught in a large lecture hall.

Differences due to the number of students:

Because there are so many students, it can be difficult to ask deep or individual questions. Occasionally, the question is too individualistic (such as “can you re-score my exam question 2, sub-part B?”) and sometimes the question is too broad (“what is management again?”). The questions are fine and welcome, but office hours might be a better place to ask them. Students need to respect the valuable time of both the instructor and other students.

Differences due to the limitations of faculty:

Frankly, faculty tend to be neither great actors nor great communicators (despite Shakespeare’s quote), especially to large, synchronous audiences. While faculty can certainly improve, this improvement may take longer than a single course in a single semester. To succeed, students may need to become highly adept at active listening.

Differences due to the physical design of the facility:

No two large lecture halls, even on a single campus, are the same. While architects, engineers, and contractors have certainly done their best, often compromises and trade-off’s must be made. Some large lecture halls are wider (or shorter) than they should be and therefore, students have to turn your head to see the screen. Some large lecture halls are narrower (or longer) than they should be and therefore, students have to squint to see the screen. You may wish to adjust your seating early in the semester to optimize the visual and aural settings that best complement your learning style.

Differences due to the acoustical design of the facility:

Although it may not be readily apparent at first, most large lecture halls have been designed to amplify sound somewhat (e.g., that is what the serrated wall in the back of the Noski Auditorium is responsible for). Even though a large lecture hall is “larger” than a small lecture classroom, students still need to be relatively quiet or at least, talk softly. The sound will carry farther than one might think. This phenomenon can be valuable when a student is speaking to the instructor or addressing to entire class, but for the same reason, can limit the ability of others to hear (especially the instructor’s voice) when the level of “background noise” is too high.