

How do I use case studies for student learning?

Module focus

- use of case studies in class

Module outcomes

- you will recognise different types of case studies
- you will be familiar with how case studies support student learning

'Yes, we understand the theory or the problem, but how does this stuff work in real life?'

Take a moment to reflect on this issue.

What challenges does this pose for *your* teaching?

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Possible solutions

1. Think of a case study as either a 'real world' example which reflects the theory or as a problem solving exercise for students to grapple with.
2. You don't necessarily have to follow the formula of "here is the theory, now apply it to this case". Challenge students by starting with a case and have them come up with elements of it that they need to further investigate.
3. Many academic texts include case studies relevant to topics which may be used as learning activities in class.
4. With some imagination, case studies can be created to suit the topics you are covering in lectures and tutorials.
5. As an alternative, students can be asked to design particular cases (hypotheticals) which they feel reflect the problems being studied.
6. Case studies don't necessarily have to be detailed accounts - using something as simple as a newspaper article can be a stimulus to illustrating/applying theory.

More help

Here are some resources from which you may seek some advice. They are all annotated so as to assist you in making judgements about what might be useful advice for your particular teaching context. By exploring some or all of these resources, you may well be able to generate strategies to suit your particular circumstances.

1. <http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/projects/casemethod/intro.html> - from the University of California, Santa Barbara, Sociology Department, "the purpose is to facilitate for teachers around the world the use of the case method of learning as a pedagogy in their own teaching". This website contains a section on [teaching with cases](#), and [a set of cases](#) for classroom use. Teachers are encouraged to download and use cases in their teaching as long as authorship is acknowledged.
2. <http://www.materials.ac.uk/guides/casestudies.asp> - an informative discussion of why we should use case studies, including some examples, from a Materials Science and Engineering perspective.
3. <http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/cases/case.html> - home page for the National Centre for Case Study Teaching in Science.
4. <http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/cases/> - this site from Penn State University looks at using case studies across a range of disciplines.
5. <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/tac/toolbox/tips/cases1.html> - brief comments on planning case study use in class.
6. http://www.cba.bgsu.edu/faculty_staff/greenwald/casestudies.htm - contains a set of actual case studies which can be used in Management education.
7. <http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/handbook/casestudies/12.htm> - discusses the pedagogical benefits of using case studies from an Economics perspective.

8. <http://cstl-csm.semo.edu/waterman/CBL/index.html> - offers suggestions on the different types of case studies and how to use them in your classes.
9. <http://www.utc.edu/Administration/WalkerTeachingResourceCenter/FacultyDevelopment/CaseTeaching/index.html#a%20good%20case> - a practical discussion of the why and how of using cases, from the University of Tennessee.
10. http://cte.umdj.edu/active_learning/active_case.cfm - extensive site with many links to case study theory and practical examples.