CS 301, September 20, 2004: evaluation

- how many of you think that, so far, you're helping your students learn?
- of those that answered yes, why do you think that?
  - answers expected
    - good things are happening in discussion section and lab
    - I asked them
    - visiting t.a./instructor said things were OK
    - how might this evidence present a misleading picture of how well you're helping your students learn?
    - what else could you try?

things to make sure get mentioned

- evaluating the students
  - this is difficult, yet crucial; anecdotes
  - quizzes (e.g. peer instruction)
  - have students ask questions, either in class or on index cards as they leave
    - why does this need encouraging?
      - shyness or fear of looking stupid
      - reluctance to disrupt instructor
      - not enough time to think of questions
      - not knowing what they don't know
    - wait long enough for questions
    - collect questions without answering at the start of class
    - form groups to devise questions
  - call on students
    - anecdote about tic-tac-toe
    - borrow their notes
    - interview them in office hours or lab
- evaluating the t.a.
- variables
  - who does the evaluation?
    - instructor
    - fellow t.a.s in the same course
    - fellow t.a.s or veteran t.a.s in other courses
    - students
    - yourself!
  - what kind of evaluation?
    - borrow student notes
    - questionnaire (often done at first exam)
    - interview
    - videotape
    - journal
- things to focus on
• content
• style

▼ what information do you get from the various kinds of evaluator? (ask)
• students: most relevant, but they may not know what they want
• fellow t.a.s: know what’s needed, may not perceive explanations that aren’t clear
to learners, may not know context of what you’re teaching
• instructor: same as fellow t.a.s, plus possible intimidation

▼ what information do you get from the various types of evaluation?

▼ questionnaire: it depends what you ask
• lots of work to get big picture (anecdote about terrible comment on first
  questionnaire)
• how much focus? need some open-ended questions
• how long? don’t want burnout
• need also to know how to interpret the answers
• be sure to report results to the students!

▼ interview: point of view, focus
• pre-interview is useful so that evaluator knows what to look for
• another technique: bring in an outsider to interview the class

▼ videotape
• objective since it’s all there on tape
• hard to avoid details that might not be significant
• tends to be good to verify things noticed in other ways
• doesn’t bother the students
• videotaper should tape students as well as you

▼ journal
• reflection on and corroboration of what went right and wrong