**Case Studies**

Case studies are stories that are used as a teaching tool to show the application of a theory or concept to real situations. Dependent on the goal they are meant to fulfill, cases can be fact-driven and deductive where there is a correct answer, or they can be context driven where multiple solutions are possible. Various disciplines have employed case studies, including humanities, social sciences, sciences, engineering, law, business, and medicine. Good cases generally have the following features: they tell a good story, are recent, include dialogue, create empathy with the main characters, are relevant to the reader, serve a teaching function, require a dilemma to be solved, and have generality.

Instructors can create their own cases or can find cases that already exist. The following are some things to keep in mind when creating a case:

* What do you want students to learn from the discussion of the case?
* What do they already know that applies to the case?
* What are the issues that may be raised in discussion?
* How will the case and discussion be introduced?
* What preparation is expected of students? (Do they need to read the case ahead of time? Do research? Write anything?)
* What directions do you need to provide students regarding what they are supposed to do and accomplish?
* Do you need to divide students into groups or will they discuss as the whole class?
* Are you going to use role-playing or facilitators or record keepers? If so, how?
* What are the opening questions?
* How much time is needed for students to discuss the case?
* What concepts are to be applied/extracted during the discussion?
* How will you evaluate students?

[POD Cases](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/pod-cases/): A POD workshop session in Fall 2002 provides one example of the use of case studies, together with three case studies developed especially for that workshop.

To find other cases that already exist, try the following websites:

* [The National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science](http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/cases/ubcase.htm), University of Buffalo. SUNY-Buffalo maintains this set of links to other case studies on the web in disciplines ranging from engineering and ethics to sociology and business
* [A Journal of Teaching Cases in Public Administration and Public Policy](https://hallway.org/index.php?PHPSESSID=p384h7ec1fr12rurmv8olk3he6), University of Washington

For more information:

* [Tip sheet on teaching with cases](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/tac/toolbox/tips/cases1.html), Cornell University
* [World Association for Case Method Research and Application](http://www.wacra.org/)

**Book Review**: [*Teaching and the Case Method*](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/docs/notes-from-the-cft-library-teaching-and-the-case-method/), 3rd ed., vols. 1 and 2, by Louis Barnes, C. Roland (Chris) Christensen, and Abby Hansen. Harvard Business School Press, 1994; 333 pp. (vol 1), 412 pp. (vol 2).


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