Class Notes: Active Learning & Making Thinking Visible

Active Learning

Active learning refers to instructional methods that engage learners in meaningful activities and prompt them to think about what they are doing. It shifts the focus from passive reception of information to active participation in the learning process.

Key Characteristics:

- Involves learners in doing something and thinking about it.
- Moves beyond passive listening to active engagement with content, peers, and tasks.
- Encourages questioning, exploration, problem-solving, and collaboration.
- Supports deeper understanding and retention by involving learners cognitively and behaviorally.

Make Thinking Visible

Making thinking visible is about encouraging learners to externalize their thought processes so instructors can better assess understanding and guide learning. One of the most effective tools for this is Bloom's Taxonomy.

Use tools like Bloom's Taxonomy to:

- Prompt learners to reflect on their understanding.
- Guide them to analyze and evaluate ideas.
- Move beyond basic recall toward deeper comprehension and application.
- Ask targeted questions that activate different levels of cognitive processing.

Why It Matters

These practices encourage learners to become metacognitive—aware of their own thinking. They support retention, transfer, and the ability to apply knowledge in complex, real-world situations.