Ideas for a Learner-Centered Classroom:

Adapted from “Learner-centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice,” by Maryellen Weimar, 2002

The five key changes are:

1. Shift the balance of power in the classroom, to give some of the power and decision-making, to the students. You decide how to limit the scope of their contributions.
2. Adjust the function of course content so that it supports deeper learning, and becomes a vehicle on which to develop learning skills and awareness
3. Move the role of the teacher from exclusive content expert and presenter to one who supports systems for students and their learning
4. Shift the responsibility for learning onto the students, they will need this to become life-long learners
5. Use evaluation in a formative way, and to help students develop self-assessment skills

Things to try in the classroom:

- Create a student textbook review committee, where they review 5 texts and recommend one for the class
- Let your student choose from a list of assignments to complete. They are assigned possible scores, and definite due dates. Students track their own progress on points for the class
- Have them keep log entries where they reflect on the class and the assignments
- Let students set up the class participation policy. Small groups answer what counts and does not count towards participation, it is reported, then drafted and voted upon.
- Assign readings from the text to “cover” the course content, then students determine what will be discussed in more depth in class.
- Allow students to help draft the syllabus. Start the day with a draft, then have them ask each other what they want to learn, take notes, then revise.
- Use the course content to teach them strategies on note-taking, study skills, and an understanding of how they themselves approach learning. You can devote short amounts of time to this.
- Use supplemental materials to showcase ideas on learning strategies, note-taking, and forming study groups. Give credit for functional study groups.
- In the beginning of the course, ask them to check in on what they found most important in their notes or in the reading. Or at the end of class ask them to summarize the learning, or what they think they are most likely to see on the exam.
- Have students who had done well on exams in the class the previous semester write a set of study suggestions for students in the next class. Or have one class write letters to the next class on how to do well in the class, you can summarize them. Or have 5 students come back and address the next class.
- Have someone from the Learning Connection present material (on study habits for example) while students take notes on it. Later (s)he returns, to review the note-taking strategies.

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• Have students write a short paper identifying their favorite learning strategies as they relate to this course. Or have them keep a learning log on what were the most important points they learned.

• When you debrief after an exam, go over the standard missed items. But also have students identify which questions they missed were from days they were not in class. Have them determine if they missed more questions from the reading or their lecture notes. Ask the students who missed less of the reading questions to share how they study the reading. Ask how many overall waited until the night before the exam to do the reading. Ask them on the questions where they changed the answers, did they get it wrong. Have them determine if it is worthwhile to them to change answers. Finally have them write a note to themselves for 5 minutes on what they learned from taking this exam that they would like to remember when preparing for the 2nd exam. Collect, and return them to them to read at the start of the review session for the 2nd exam.

• To prepare students to work in groups, have them take a Classroom work-style inventory, and write their reflections on the results in their logs. See: [http://www.tss.uoguelph.ca/resources/idres/packagels.html#anchor338227](http://www.tss.uoguelph.ca/resources/idres/packagels.html#anchor338227)

• Ask students in study groups discuss their best and worst study group experiences. They write memo on how they plan to work together constructively, address it to the teacher, and sign it.

• When cutting content, move cautiously, but ask yourself, what is it my students need to know and be able to do in their professional lives? What skills and knowledge will stand the test of time, given the dynamic nature of knowledge and information?