Questions to Ask about the Assignments You Give

Questions about the purpose, goals, and sequence of assignments:
- How does the assignment further your course goals for the semester?
- What do you want students to demonstrate in this assignment, and why?
- What will students gain by doing this assignment?
- Have you included your goals on the assignment?
- Have you given class time to a discussion of all of the above?

Questions about the assignment sequences and timing:
- How does the assignment relate to what comes before and after in the course?
- Are you asking students to explore the subject matter in increasingly complex ways?
- Is the assignment sequenced to give students enough time to read, draft, write, and revise (i.e. if revision is an option)?
- Will students engage in peer review and revise/edit based on peer feedback?

Questions about the task:
- Is the language of the assignment appropriate for undergraduates? Can your assignment be reduced to one key sentence?
- Are the intellectual tasks clearly denoted, e.g., compare/contrast, define, analyze, etc.? (“Discuss” can be a vague term.)
- What specific guidelines do students need to perform to your expectations?
  - Documentation? Presentation? Due dates?
- Can the assignment be broken down into specific tasks or steps?
- Can you suggest useful strategies for approaching the paper? Are there helpful resources to which you can direct students? Do you have a model paper to show them?
- Can you draw attention to some common problems previous students have encountered with this assignment?
- May students include their own opinions, use “I,” support with personal experience?
- What kind of supporting evidence is appropriate? How much quoting, if any, is appropriate? How should sources be cited?

Questions about audience:
- If the students are writing primarily for you as the audience, do they know your preferences and expectations for writing in your course?
- Are there ways to expand the audience beyond the teacher, such as to peers or workplace audiences?

Questions about grading:
- What constitutes a successful response to this assignment?
- How will you explain a successful response to students (e.g. model paper, criteria or rubrics, description of A/B/C papers, etc.)?
- Will students have a chance to evaluate themselves?
- Will students be allowed to revise?