

All Together Now

Engaging Everyone in the Room in Class
Discussion

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Ground Rules for Class Discussion

- The importance of disagreement
- Clonethink
- Egothink

- Think of the best group discussions you've ever been involved in.
- What things happened that made them so satisfying?

- Think of the worst group discussions you've ever been involved in.
- What things happened that made them so unsatisfactory?

Small Group Activity

Creating ground rules for class discussion (15 minutes total)

1. Take turns sharing your answers for both the good and bad categories. Look for common themes and find things that you all agree that you'd like to see (or not see) in this course.
2. For each of the good discussion characteristics you agree on, suggest three things our class might do to ensure that they happen.
3. For each of the bad characteristics you agree on, suggest three things our class might do to ensure that they don't happen.

Suggestions

- Person A can express disagreement only if person A can accurately summarize person B's argument
- We attack ideas, not people

Small Group Activities

- Optimal group size for group presentation vs. class activity
- Notecard technique
- Assigning a recorder/speaker

Critical thinking & perspective taking

- Reading-based tasks
- Exploratory writing (graded/ungraded)
- Debate tasks

Reading-based task

Example:

10 minutes total

Working together as a group, discern a thesis statement for the Michelle Alexander reading.

Write down four major ideas that Alexander puts forth to support her thesis.

Exploratory writing (graded/ungraded)

Example:

5 minutes

- Imagine creating a work of art that came from your pain, innovation, and intelligence. What if someone copied your style?
- Would you be flattered?
- What if they made more money than you or got more recognition?

Debate tasks

Example:

15 minutes total

Working together as a group, write down answers to the following questions:

1. What is useful about art and culture in terms of identity?
(Why might some black artists make such a big deal about the black origins of jazz?)
2. Is it useful to try to determine what ethnic group came up with what artistic style?
 - Is it divisive to think about it this way?
 - To what degree can we assign credit?

Construct a convincing argument in defense of the following statement, whether or not you agree with it (write that down too):

A: It is not fair that white swing artists like Benny Goodman got more money and recognition for hot music than the black artists who invented it.

B: It is good that white swing artists like Benny Goodman brought hot music into mainstream white culture.

- *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrated Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom* by John C. Bean
- *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* by Stephen D. Brookfield & Stephen Preskill
- *When Race Breaks Out: Conversations about Race and Racism in College Classrooms*