

Being Strategic About Discussion

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“Education is what survives when
what has been learned has been
forgotten.” BF Skinner 1964

1.0 Workshop Overview



1.1 Role of Discussion in College Classroom

2.0 Three Discussion Activities:

2.1 Avoiding the Pitfalls of Discussion

2.2 What to Do When Students Don't Prepare

2.3 Dealing with Incivility

3.0 Q & A

4.0 Workshop Evaluations



1.1 Some Roles of Discussion in the College Classroom

- Advance students toward learning goals.
- Hear and honor the student voice.
- Unpack complex/difficult ideas or concepts.
- Explore and test new or undeveloped ideas.

2.1 Affinity Map Activity

Step 1

- Receive 3 post-it notes.
- On each note, write a word or phrase that indicates a reason why classroom discussions can be ineffective or fail. (2 mins.)
- When complete, randomly place the post-its on the wall or sheet corresponding to your birth month. (1 min.)

2.1 Affinity Map Activity

Step 2:

- Gather round the post-it area according to birth month.
- **Silently** categorize the post-its, moving post-its as necessary to form sensible groupings. (5 mins.)

2.1 Affinity Map Activity

Step 3:

- When the facilitator gives the word, discuss each post-it grouping, giving each an appropriate name. (3 min.)

2.1 Affinity Map Activity

Step 4:

- Be prepared to share your named groupings with the whole class and, if called upon, to explain your choices. (5 mins.)

2.1 Affinity Map Activity

Step 5:

- Process debrief. (5 mins.)
 - How did this process work for you?
 - What would you do differently next time?
 - When might you use this process in your class?

2.1 Affinity Map Activity

- Why debrief?
 - Gives learners opportunity to synthesize.
 - Helps learners see what other learners think.
 - Connects activity to course goals.
 - Provides learners with a satisfying ending.

Processing Content in Qualitative Courses: Microlab

Preparation:

- Read the excerpt of “Sunday Morning” by Wallace Stevens, paying attention to the images that emerge in the stanzas.

Processing Content in Qualitative Courses: Microlab

Step 1:

- Identify an image that strikes you and write for 2 minutes about what you find striking about that image. (2 mins.)

Processing Content in Qualitative Courses: Microlab

Step 2:

- Get into groups of 3
- Read what you wrote about a striking image in “Sunday Morning.” Others listen silently.
- When complete, next person reads while others listen silently. (2 mins.)

Processing Content in Qualitative Courses: Microlab

Step 3:

- In trios, identify commonalities and/or divergences among the written responses. Prepare to report these to the plenary class. (3 mins. to discuss; 3 mins. to report)

Processing Content in Qualitative Courses: Microlab

Repeat the process with two additional questions:

- Questions one and two are “warm ups”
- Question three is more substantive.

Example of progression of questions:

1. Identify a striking image.
2. Relate striking image to other images.
3. Explain how images work together to suggest a main idea or theme in the poem.

Processing Content in Qualitative Courses: Microlab

When all rounds are complete –

Debrief the process:

- How did the microlab work for your group?
- What would you do differently next time?
- For what learning goals might you use this procedure?

2.2 When Students Don't Do the Reading: Save the Last Word

Preparation:

Skim “Three Keys” by Michaelson.

Identify two significant passages (a phrase, sentence or a couple of sentences – no more) (3 mins.)

2.2 When Students Don't Do the Reading: Save the Last Word

In groups of 3:

Who	Description	Time
Person 1	Reads passage of choice aloud. Others listen <u>silently</u> .	0:30
Person 2	Responds to passage. Others listen <u>silently</u> .	1:00
Person 3	Responds to passage. Others listen <u>silently</u> .	1:00
Person 1	Connects or responds to colleagues' remarks and describes why he or she picked the passage. Others listen <u>silently</u> .	1:30
Repeat process until each person "has the last word."		

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Person 3	Responds to passage. Others listen <u>silently</u> .	1:00
Person 1	Responds to passage. Others listen <u>silently</u> .	1:00
Person 2	Connects or responds to colleagues' remarks and describes why he or she picked the passage. Others listen <u>silently</u> .	1:30

2.2 When Students Don't Do the Reading: Save the Last Word

In groups of 3:

Who	Description	Time
Person 3	Reads passage of choice aloud. Others listen <u>silently</u> .	0:30
Person 1	Responds to passage. Others listen <u>silently</u> .	1:00
Person 2	Responds to passage. Others listen <u>silently</u> .	1:00
Person 3	Connects or responds to colleagues' remarks and describes why he or she picked the passage. Others listen <u>silently</u> .	1:30

2.2 When Students Don't Do the Reading: Save the Last Word

Debrief the process:

- What worked for you about the process?
- What didn't work for you?
- When might you use this process in your own teaching?

2.3 Dealing with Incivility: Speed Dating (Adaptation of Wagon Wheels)

Stand up and move around!

Pair up with someone you don't know and share for 1 1/2 minutes:

When was a time you experienced incivility in the classroom?

2.3 Dealing with Incivility: Speed Dating

Pair up with another person you don't know and share for 1 1/2 minutes:

What type of instructor behavior do you think students see as uncivil?

2.3 Dealing with Incivility: Speed Dating

Pair up with another person you don't know and share for 2 minutes:

What type of incivility is scariest to you as an instructor?

Please take your seat.

2.3 Dealing with Incivility: Speed Dating

Debrief content:

- Scary incivilities that surfaced
- How one might handle them – BUY TIME
 - Move physically away
 - Ask other students
 - Bring it back to the discipline
 - Postpone to office hours or next class
 - Use humor (but cautiously)

2.3 Dealing with Incivility: Speed Dating

Debrief process:

What are the strengths of the speed date?

What are the weaknesses?

For what purposes might you use it?

3.0 Q & A

4.0 Evaluation

- Please fill out the half sheet for us; your feedback is very important to us.

More on Discussion Strategies

At IU Bloomington:

- Team-based Learning: Larry Michaelsen (U of Oklahoma) Nov 11-12, 2009
- Eric Mazur (Physics, Harvard) Peer Learning March 3, 2010