

Classroom Discussion InstructionsObjective:

To have you lead a class discussion centered on the reading assignments and to have active discussions of the reading assignments by the whole class.

Rationale:

To make use of insights of both you and your classmates to bring out the relevant aspects of the reading assignments.

Description:

Several class meetings will have a discussion centered on a reading. During these discussions, you will either be a class leader or a participant. Every student in the class will have an opportunity to be a class leader (there will be a sign-up sheet so you can pick the day in advance). Below are the responsibilities of the participants and leaders for each discussion.

As a discussion participant you will:

1. Complete the reading assignment prior to the class where the discussion will occur.
2. Come to class having written down 3-5 items from the reading assignment on a 5 x 7 card that you would like to become part of the discussion. These ideas need to be your own. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - A point or idea that you found to be very interesting or relevant
 - An idea that you haven't encountered elsewhere (not encountered in another course or something that is an issue that arises when teaching science)
 - A idea that is so important that it needs to be emphasized and shared with the group
 - Something that you didn't understand
 - Something that concerns you
 - Something that you don't agree with
 - An additional idea that you think would add to the discussion
 - Etc.
3. At the beginning of class, hand in your 5 x 7 card to the discussion leaders for that day.

As a discussion leader you will:

1. Do all of the items above listed for a participant.
2. Prior to the start of the discussion, obtain the 5 x 7 cards that were produced by your classmates. If there is more than one discussion leader, then split the cards among each leader.
3. Quickly review the cards and pick out important ideas, common ideas, etc. Then, lead a discussion centered on both your comments and those of your classmates. For most discussions there probably will be several leaders, so each leader only needs to focus on a few ideas, while coordinating with the other leaders to avoid repetition.

When leading the discussion, you will have the names of your classmates on the cards, therefore, you can call on individuals to have them elaborate on things that they have written. However, in the case of a student writing about something that they don't understand, it is probably advisable to address this type of item in a general fashion. Try to be an effective discussion leader by keeping the discussion lively and on track. If the discussion appears to be getting bogged down, then don't hesitate to choose a new topic.

At the end of the discussion, the 5 x 7 cards will be collected by your instructor. Evaluation for this element of the course will be based on completeness of assignments, the quality of your written comments, your class participation, and your ability to lead a fruitful discussion.