Group Discussion Facilitation



Collaboration is one of the most beneficial aspects of in-person classes! And teaching others is one of the best ways to deepen your own learning; therefore, we will be practicing both this semester through group led discussions. The class will be divided into 4-5 groups. Your group will be your team this semester, collaborating with you as you pursue your personal interests in this course on your papers and a Capstone project. Your group will also facilitate two class discussions on content specific topics.

Getting Started

- Say hi! Introduce yourself!
- What are your strengths in a group atmosphere? Are you good at keeping everyone on task, holding people accountable or taking notes on discussions?
- Then, exchange phone numbers, emails, or however your group wants to stay in touch.
- Create a Google doc to document your group's work
- Create a plan! Divide up the responsibilities to ensure everyone in your group contributes

Group Led Discussions

Each group will facilitate a discussion two times during the semester. These discussions should foster meaningful academic conversations about the current paper topics. Your job is to ask thoughtful questions, listen carefully, encourage others to participate, make connections between ideas, and help your peers think more deeply about the readings and topics we are studying.

Discussion Facilitation #1: Small Group Guidelines

Each group will have a designated group of reading materials. After reading the assigned articles, your group will develop a small group discussion through a set of 5 questions, one question written by each group member. Your group should discuss the questions, revise them, and determine the order in which they will be used. Your goal is not to create five unrelated questions. Your goal is to create a coherent conversation that helps your classmates move from understanding the reading to analyzing, evaluating, and applying its ideas.

Group Responsibilities: The designated member of your group will email me your set of questions by 8am on the day of your facilitation. This is in addition to access to your group's working google doc.

- Consider follow up questions and how you will guide your small group as you focus on your question.
    - What responses do you expect? How will you respond?
- After your small-group discussion, your group will briefly report to the class. Your share-out should identify:
    - An important idea that emerged from your discussion.
    - A disagreement, question, or tension that came up.
    - Something your group found particularly interesting or surprising.
    - A connection between your discussion and the larger course topic.
    - The purpose is not to report everything your group said. Instead, share something that helps the entire class continue thinking about the reading.

Discussion Facilitation #2: Large Group/Class Guidelines

The group's second facilitation will take a little bit more planning than the first. Your group will select an outside article connected to the topic we are currently studying. It should contribute something meaningful to our understanding of the topic. For example, it might:

- Offer a perspective that differs or is missing from our assigned readings.
- Challenge an assumption or argument we have encountered.
- Provide additional evidence or context.
- Present a contemporary application of an issue we have discussed.
- Complicate or deepen our understanding of the topic.

Group Responsibilities:

- The group's article and corresponding questions will need to be assigned one class period before the group's discussion facilitation.

- The designated member of your group will email me your set of questions by 8am on the day of your facilitation. This is in addition to access to your group's working google doc.

Group Google Doc: Use your shared Google Doc to document your process. I will look at the document when evaluating your group's preparation and collaboration. Your contributions might include:

- Brainstorming ideas
- Finding and annotating evidence/articles
- Drafting & revising questions
- Developing follow-up question
- Planning the discussion
- Recording ideas from group meetings
- Reflecting on the effectiveness of your facilitation

Discussion Question Guidelines

Preparation

- Figure out how each group member will actively participate in the facilitation. You don't want to have one of your members standing there looking lost while the others are engaged. Support each other and find what strengths each person has that can contribute to the group.
- Use your group's Google doc! This is a collaboration project; therefore, I should see contributions from each member of your group documented on your Google doc.
- I strongly encourage you to meet with me a couple of days prior to your group's first facilitation to go over your questions and facilitation plan.
- You are facilitators, not lecturers. Your job is to guide the conversation, not to do all of the talking.

Question Types

- Each question should:
    - Identify or explore an important idea, argument, or tension in the reading.
    - Encourage interpretation, analysis, evaluation, or application.
    - Be specific enough to generate meaningful responses.
    - Allow for multiple reasonable answers or perspectives.
    - Connect clearly to the assigned reading.
- Use Costa's Level of Inquiry to develop your questions
- At least one question should reference a specific quote and page number(s) in the reading. This serves to keep the discussion grounded in the text.
- Be sure 75% of the questions create "open-ended" questions that don't have a factual or a "right vs. wrong" answer. A successful question will provoke a range of interpretations

and thoughtful discussion. A good question is also one about which the students in the class may sincerely and enthusiastically disagree.

- Avoid questions such as: "What is the author's main point?" "Do you agree with the author?" "Was the author's argument effective?"
- Make sure the questions all vary. This is where the collaboration comes in! Work together and help each other to create the most thoughtful questions, considering the order and how they build off of one another as well.
- You should consider preparing some follow-up questions for each of the larger questions to ensure that the class discussion flows, but you may also need to craft them on the spot during the discussion based upon the direction the conversation is taking.

Submission

- The group should decide together on the main ideas to be discussed, but each member of the group must write at least one question. The member's name should be indicated in parentheses following their question
- Submitted questions must be typed and in MLA format, including double-spacing.

Your Responsibilities as a Class Participant: When another group facilitates, you are responsible for contributing to the discussion.

- Complete the assigned reading material before class
- Come prepared with notes and annotations on the materials
- 5 minutes prior to the discussion, the discussion questions will be posted on the board. Jot down notes and responses to the questions and consider the following:
    - Make connections to other reading material from the unit
    - Make connections to another group's presentations.
    - What real world applications are there?
    - What associations can you make?

Grading Criteria

Each group facilitation is worth 4 points. The two facilitations together are worth 8% of your overall course grade. Your grade will consider both the group's work and your individual contribution.

Grading (No-shows receive an automatic "0")

1. **The quality of the questions developed (1 pt)**
    a. Demonstrate understanding of the reading/article.
    b. Identify meaningful themes, arguments, or tensions.
    c. Encourage critical thinking.
    d. Are sufficiently open-ended.

   e. Use specific textual evidence when appropriate.
   f. Vary in type and level of inquiry.
2. **The Discussion Plan (1 pt)**
   a. The cohesiveness between the questions, including a clear plan to the discussion;
   b. Demonstrates that members collaborated rather than simply combining five independent questions.
3. **Each individual's participation in the facilitation:(1 pt)**
   a. Is prepared and organized.
   b. Actively facilitates rather than simply presenting.
   c. Encourages participation.
   d. Listens and responds to classmates.
   e. Uses follow-up questions effectively.
   f. Keeps the conversation focused and productive.
4. **Group Members Assessment (1 pt)**

A Final Reminder

The purpose of this assignment is not to see which group can ask the most questions or give the best presentation. The purpose is to practice something much more difficult– How do we create a space where people can think together?

Come prepared. Ask questions worth answering. Listen to the answers. Be willing to change your mind. Challenge ideas respectfully. Use evidence. Build on what others say.

If your group can help the class leave the room thinking about the reading in a new way, you have succeeded.