

Weekly Two-Hour Session Outline Template

Companion planning tool for OLLI seminar moderators

Purpose: Use this template to plan a clear, engaging, well-paced two-hour seminar session. The goal is to help moderators move beyond simply covering content and toward intentionally facilitating a satisfying learning experience.

Session Information

Seminar Title	[Insert seminar title]
Moderator	[Insert moderator name]
Session / Week	[Week 1 / Week 2 / Week 3 / etc.]
Session Date	[Insert date]
Session Topic	[Insert weekly topic or theme]
Location / Format	[Room / Zoom / hybrid details]

Core Planning Questions

Before building slides or gathering materials, answer these questions. They will help you make intentional choices about content, pacing, and participant engagement.

- **Main idea:** What is the one most important idea participants should remember from this session?
- **Participant experience:** What should participants do during the session besides listen?
- **Discussion focus:** Where will participant voices, questions, or examples strengthen the seminar?
- **Pacing risk:** Where are you most likely to run long, rush, or lose focus?
- **Closing point:** What should participants leave thinking about, understanding, or wanting to explore next?

Planning reminder: A two-hour seminar usually works best when it includes several smaller segments. Build in transitions, questions, discussion, and a closing summary rather than planning one uninterrupted lecture.

Basic Two-Hour Session Outline

This basic outline is a reliable starting structure. Use it when you want a simple plan that balances presentation, discussion, and closure.

Time	Segment	Purpose	Moderator Notes
0-10 min	Welcome and orientation	Greet participants, review the topic, name the session goal, and preview the plan.	[Opening remarks / announcements / first question]
10-35 min	Content Segment 1	Introduce the first major idea, context, story, example, image, or concept.	[Key points / slides / examples]

Time	Segment	Purpose	Moderator Notes
35-50 min	Participant engagement	Invite questions, discussion, reflection, or a brief pair/share activity.	[Prompt or activity]
50-60 min	Break or transition	Provide a pause, answer clarifying questions, or shift to the next section.	[Break timing / transition note]
60-90 min	Content Segment 2	Develop the topic with deeper examples, case studies, demonstration, or analysis.	[Key points / slides / examples]
90-110 min	Discussion or application	Help participants process, apply, compare, evaluate, or connect the ideas.	[Engagement technique / discussion question]
110-120 min	Closing	Summarize key takeaways, preview next week, and name any follow-up materials.	[Closing question / next week preparation]

Detailed Facilitation Outline

Use this more detailed version when you want to plan not only what you will cover, but how participants will stay engaged throughout the two-hour session.

Time	Facilitation Move	What Happens	Engagement Options	Preparation / Materials
0-5 min	Settle and welcome	Welcome participants, check technology, and create a comfortable starting point.	Warm greeting; opening slide; simple question on screen.	[Opening slide / room setup / tech check]
5-10 min	Frame the session	State the session goal, agenda, and why the topic matters.	Ask: "What are you most curious about today?"	[Agenda slide / learning goals]
10-25 min	Short content block	Present the first core idea. Keep the segment focused and avoid overloading details.	Show an image, timeline, object, short quotation, map, chart, or story.	[Slides / handout / object / example]
25-35 min	Check for understanding	Pause to help participants process the first idea before moving forward.	Quick poll; show of hands; one-minute reflection; clarifying questions.	[Prompt / poll question]
35-50 min	Discussion or paired exchange	Give participants a structured opportunity to speak and make meaning.	Think-pair-share; neighbor discussion; table prompt; "What surprised you?"	[Discussion prompt]

Time	Facilitation Move	What Happens	Engagement Options	Preparation / Materials
50-60 min	Break or reset	Give participants time to stretch, ask informal questions, or transition.	Optional informal question on screen for those who stay seated.	[Break slide / timer optional]
60-75 min	Second content block	Introduce a second major idea, case, example, or contrasting perspective.	Case study; comparison; before/after example; “notice and wonder.”	[Slides / sample / media clip]
75-90 min	Guided analysis	Help participants apply the idea rather than only hear about it.	Small-group analysis; guided worksheet; scenario; image or text analysis.	[Worksheet / handout / prompt]
90-105 min	Whole-group synthesis	Bring the room back together and surface key insights.	Report out; moderator captures themes; “What patterns do we see?”	[Whiteboard / slide / summary notes]
105-115 min	Takeaways and next steps	Identify the most important ideas from the session and connect to the next class.	Three takeaways; muddiest point; one question for next week.	[Closing slide / next week preview]
115-120 min	Close with clarity	Thank participants and clarify preparation, materials, or announcements.	Exit question; final reflection; reminder of next meeting.	[Follow-up notes / materials to send]

Engagement Menu for Moderators

Choose one or two engagement techniques per session. More is not always better. The best technique is the one that supports the learning goal and fits the group, topic, and time available.

Audience engagement resource: For additional examples and facilitation guidance, refer to the Audience Engagement Techniques document provided by OLLI staff. [Insert link or file name when available.]

Technique Type	When to Use It	Examples
Opening engagement	Use at the beginning to activate curiosity and prior knowledge.	Opening question; show of hands; “What brought you here?”; word association; image prompt.
Processing pause	Use after a content-heavy section to help participants absorb information.	One-minute reflection; jot one question; pair summary; pause for clarifying questions.
Pair or table discussion	Use when participants need a lower-pressure way to talk before whole-group sharing.	Think-pair-share; discuss with a neighbor; table prompt; compare notes.

Technique Type	When to Use It	Examples
Whole-group discussion	Use when multiple perspectives will deepen the topic.	Guided question; open discussion; “What do you notice?”; “Where do you agree or disagree?”
Case or example analysis	Use when participants can apply ideas to a concrete situation.	Short scenario; image analysis; document excerpt; historical case; current event.
Poll or quick check	Use to quickly gauge experience, opinion, understanding, or interest.	Show of hands; yes/no; ranking; “Which option seems most likely?”
Reflection and synthesis	Use near the end to help participants name what they learned.	Three takeaways; one lingering question; “I used to think / now I think”; exit prompt.

Detailed Planning Worksheet

Use this section to plan one specific week or session. Duplicate this section for each week of your seminar.

This week's focus	[Insert the main topic, question, or theme for this session.]
Session goal	[By the end of this session, participants will understand, discuss, or experience...]
Key terms / names / ideas	[List important concepts, people, dates, examples, or vocabulary.]
Materials needed	[Slides, handouts, video clip, object, reading, worksheet, whiteboard, etc.]
Preparation for participants	[Reading, video, reflection question, or “No preparation needed.”]

Session Flow Planner

Time	Topic / Activity	Moderator Action	Participant Action	Materials / Notes
0-10 min	[Opening]	[Welcome / frame / preview]	[Listen / respond / reflect]	[Opening slide]
10-35 min	[Content block 1]	[Present / demonstrate / tell story]	[Listen / ask questions]	[Slides / handout]
35-50 min	[Engagement]	[Prompt / facilitate]	[Discuss / write / share]	[Prompt / worksheet]
50-60 min	[Break or transition]	[Pause / reset]	[Break / ask questions]	[Timer / transition slide]
60-90 min	[Content block 2]	[Present / analyze / compare]	[Listen / participate]	[Slides / example]
90-110 min	[Engagement]	[Guide discussion / activity]	[Discuss / apply / report out]	[Whiteboard / worksheet]

Time	Topic / Activity	Moderator Action	Participant Action	Materials / Notes
110-120 min	[Closing]	[Summarize / preview]	[Ask final questions]	[Next week reminder]

Discussion Prompt Planning

Strong questions are specific enough to focus the conversation but open enough to invite more than one response.

- **Opening question:** [What question will help participants connect to the session topic?]
- **Clarifying question:** [What question will help identify confusion or misunderstanding?]
- **Deeper thinking question:** [What question invites interpretation, comparison, or judgment?]
- **Application question:** [How might participants connect the topic to current events, experience, or future learning?]
- **Closing question:** [What should participants reflect on as they leave?]

Facilitation and Pacing Notes

Where might I run long?	[Insert likely trouble spot.]
What can I skip if time is short?	[Insert optional content.]
Where do I need participant interaction?	[Insert key moment for engagement.]
What transition will I use?	[Insert phrase, slide, or activity to move between segments.]
How will I close clearly?	[Insert final summary, question, or preview.]

Accessibility and Participant Support Checks

Use these checks before presenting or sharing materials.

- Slide text is large enough to read from the back of the room.
- Slides use strong contrast and avoid clutter.
- Images, charts, maps, or screenshots are explained verbally.
- Handouts are readable and not overloaded with tiny text.
- Videos are audible and, when possible, captioned.
- Materials shared by email are clearly named and directly related to the seminar.
- Discussion activities include options for participants who prefer to listen rather than speak publicly.

After-Session Reflection

After each class, take a few minutes to note what worked and what should change next week.

What worked well?	[Participant engagement, pacing, slides, examples, discussion, room setup, etc.]
What confused participants?	[Questions, unclear instructions, difficult transition, too much content, etc.]
What should I adjust next time?	[Timing, slide order, discussion prompt, handout, activity, explanation, etc.]
What follow-up should I send?	[Slides, handout, links, answers to questions, reminders, etc.]

What worked well?	[Participant engagement, pacing, slides, examples, discussion, room setup, etc.]
What should I preview next week?	[Topic, preparation, reading, material to bring, etc.]

Sample Fully Planned Session

This sample shows how a two-hour session might balance content, discussion, and participant engagement. Adapt the timing and techniques to your topic.

Time	Segment	Sample Moderator Plan	Engagement Choice
0-10	Welcome	Welcome participants, introduce the session question, and preview three main parts of the day.	Opening question: "What is one thing you already know or wonder about this topic?"
10-30	Foundation	Present background, key vocabulary, and one concrete example.	Show of hands or quick poll to connect prior experience.
30-45	Meaning-making	Ask participants to discuss the first example and identify what stands out.	Think-pair-share with one whole-group report out.
45-60	Break / transition	Take a short break and display the question for the second half.	Optional reflection question on screen.
60-85	Application	Introduce a case study, article excerpt, image, object, or short video clip.	Guided analysis: "What do you notice? What questions does this raise?"
85-105	Discussion	Facilitate whole-group discussion, connecting participant comments to the seminar goal.	Moderator captures three themes on board or slide.
105-120	Closing	Summarize key points, answer final questions, preview next week, and name any preparation.	Exit prompt: "What is one takeaway or question you are leaving with?"

Notes for Adapting the Outline

- **For discussion-heavy seminars:** Shorten content blocks and build in more structured prompts or small-group discussion.
- **For lecture-heavy seminars:** Add processing pauses every 20-30 minutes so participants can ask questions and absorb ideas.
- **For media-based seminars:** Plan time before and after each clip or image for setup, observation, and discussion.
- **For hands-on seminars:** Allow more time for instructions, transitions, participant work time, and sharing results.
- **For sensitive topics:** Set discussion expectations early, use structured questions, and keep the focus connected to the seminar goals.

Final reminder: The purpose of the outline is not to control every minute. It is to give you a flexible plan so you can facilitate with more confidence, respond to participants, and still reach a clear conclusion.

