Discussion Forums:
Creating Engaging Discussion

OLC Conference
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Introduction

Students are responsible for their own learning but the instructor is responsible for creating a supportive environment where effective learning can take place.
Session Outcome Goals

• Connect learning theories to the value of the discussion board format

• Dispel common myths/beliefs about discussion boards

• Provide applicable ways to increase engagement within discussion boards
Lev Vygotsky

Social Learning Theorist:
Zone of Proximal Development
Scaffolding
“Self Talk”
Zone of Proximal Development

- We are social beings
  - learn best through social interactions that occur

**Zone of Proximal Development**

Picture three concentric circles, each nested inside the other

- **Blue**: represents everything there is to know in the world but is beyond your current comprehension
- **Red**: represents the material you understand well enough that you can correctly answer questions about it without help
- **White**: represents material that you don't yet know well enough to get it right by yourself, but which you can understand with the help of others. For example: hints, feedback, cues, etc.

This is called your Zone of Proximal Development
Scaffolding

- Scaffolding – cues, support, etc. to expand knowledge and learning
  - How we grow our “Zone of Proximal Development” (white circle) and independent understanding (red circle)
- We can learn from peers at and above our level
- Knowledge includes what we can answer on our own as well as what we understand and grasp with help from others
- Educators should gauge students’ Zone of Proximal Development
“Self-Talk”

- Social Speech converting to internalized speech
- Discussion boards provide opportunity to have social speech with peers and faculty to further learning of learning objectives
- If we talk about what we learned we “deepen” the learning
Andragogy

- “The art of teaching adults”
- Malcolm Knowles – Adult Learning Theory
Motivating the Adult Learner

• Assimilation
  – How relates to past learning/experiences
  – Respect prior knowledge

• Goal oriented
  – How does this meet goals?

• Future oriented
  – Prioritization of time allocation
Fact verses Fiction

1. Students (and faculty) feel the discussion post is a box to check verses a learning opportunity
2. There is only really one answer in the discussion reply
3. Students do not value faculty feedback
4. Students do not read responses from faculty or other students
5. The focus is on the number of words verses content
6. Sources do not have to be cited
7. Every faculty has a different requirement
What is a Discussion Forum

• An assessment tool measuring the objectives
• Interactive learning forum
• Replicates the ability to have interaction with the content (Not just an opinion)
• Ability to apply and practice in order to work towards a mastery level
The How
Quality Matters

• Creating engagement begins with the quality of the discussion question/prompt:
  – Open ended questions
  – Not an essay topic
  – Promotes perspectives/diversity of thought
  – Application in real life scenarios/case studies
  – Keep end goal in mind (demonstration of learning objectives)

• Continues with the participation/facilitation within the board
How: Types of Talk

Types of Talk

Instigator
The starter who begins conversations

What do you think...
Let us start by...
So that leads us to question...
The first thing we need to do is...

Builder
Building on and developing others’ answers just like a runner

That was a good point... It could also...
I would like to add...
Yes, and then you could...
OK, but don’t you think...
Previously, we spoke about...
I would like to pick on...

Challenger
Challenger, arguing against, provoking like a competitor

You said X, but...
But if that is true, then how can...
That may be true but what about...

Clarifier
Clarifying, making things clearer like a commentator

What do you mean when you say...
Can you give us an example...
Is that the same as...
Can you explain a little more...

Prober
Probes and asks questions to go deeper into responses just like a coach

What is about... that makes you say?
Justify what you have said...
Can you tell us a little more...
Please show us evidence...

Summariser
Summarises and makes judgements like a referee

Am I right in thinking...
Are you saying...
So are we supposed to be...
So that suggests...
So we don’t understand the bit...

Adapted from https://www.edutopia.org/practice/oracy-classroom-strategies-effective-talk
How: Digital Storytelling

• Digital storytelling is the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling. “It presents educators and learners with a challenge to write, understand and communicate in a collaborative, persuasive, accurate and entertaining manner” (Raines, 2010, para 4).

• Share your “stories” to connect content to context using the discussion board and/or inserting technology into a post.

• Strengthen the human element thus strengthen engagement
### How: To Write it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convergent Thinking</th>
<th>Divergent Thinking</th>
<th>Evaluative Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usually begin with:</td>
<td>Usually begin with:</td>
<td>Usually begin with these words or phrases:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Why</td>
<td>- Imagine</td>
<td>- Defend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How</td>
<td>- Suppose</td>
<td>- Judge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In what ways...</td>
<td>- Predict...</td>
<td>- Justify...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples:</td>
<td>- If..., then...</td>
<td>- What do you think about...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How does gravity differ from electrostatic attraction?</td>
<td>- How might...</td>
<td>- What is your opinion about...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How was the invasion of Grenada a modern day example of the Monroe Doctrine in action?</td>
<td>- Can you create...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Why was Richard III considered an evil king?</td>
<td>- What are some possible consequences...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples:</td>
<td>- Suppose that Caesar never returned to Rome from Gaul. Would the Empire have existed?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- How might life in the year 2100 differ from today?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Convergent Thinking ~ Divergent Thinking ~ Evaluative Thinking**
Socratic Questioning

• Posting questions that elicit methodical, thoughtful dialogue

• Types of Socratic Questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clarity</th>
<th>• Could you elaborate further?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>• How would we verify or test this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision</td>
<td>• Could you give me more details?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>• How does that relate to the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth</td>
<td>• What are some of the complexities of the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breadth</td>
<td>• What other perspectives could we bring into this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logic</td>
<td>• Does what you say align with the evidence? How so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>• Which of these facts are the most important and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>• Are you representing the viewpoints of others?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Paul, R & Elder, L. The miniature guide to critical thinking concepts and tools.
Happy New Year's everyone. Hope you all had a wonderful break.

Welcome back everyone! Hope everyone had a wonderful Holiday Break. Feel free to share what you guys did on your break.

Happy next 11 weeks everyone! Good luck to you all!

Hope everyone had a happy holiday and a safe one. Glad to be back.

Super excited and nervous to be going back to school, but looking forward to this new adventure hope everyone had an amazing break!

Looking forward to the next 11 weeks!

It is never long enough but glad to get started again.

Getting close to the finish line!

I never heard of this program and thought I had to make an acct. go figure it was just a click in the box! I'm looking forward to this class. It's nice to be back to school.

I am excited to fully apply myself to this semester and get closer to reaching my graduation goals! Good luck to everyone! - Carey

Hi Everyone, I'm excited to be here. Let's see how the roller coaster rides!

I was excited to hear Dr. was our instructor. She is great and I am sure if any students were in her last class they feel the same as I.

I don't wanna go back to school anymore!

But I don't wanna go back to school anymore!

It's never long enough but glad to get started again.

Good luck, let's make this a good quarter!

Looking forward to starting a new path.
Hello Crystal,
Great job!!!! Take a peek at my reply:
https://www.useloom.com/share/7f5439d041f8482cb8c00716f8bd1e6e
The True Balance

• Focus on learning and create discussions interesting enough to pull learners into the conversation
• Create engagement for the adult learner to express themselves
• Celebrate when students collaborate in the forum and encourage their creativity
Questions
Session Evaluations & Drawing

- Download and open OLC Conferences mobile app
- Navigate to specific session to evaluate
- Select “Evaluate Session” on session details screen (located under session type and track)
- Complete session evaluation*

*Each session evaluation completed (limited to one per session) = one contest entry

**Five (5) $25 gift cards** will be awarded to five (5) individuals
Must submit evals using the OLC Conferences mobile app or website
References


