

HELPING ADULTS LEARN

TEACHERS COLLEGE October 21st & 22nd, 2011

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Please note that this workshop packet is a resource. I will not go through the items sequentially, nor will I address every one. They are there simply for reference.

Adult Learning

1. Assumptions of Practice
2. Treating People as Adults
3. Myths to Challenge
4. Distinctive Forms
5. Experiencing Learning
6. What's Distinctive About Adult Learning – Slicing the Pie
7. Four Lenses on Practice
8. Experiencing Adult Learning – Instructions
9. Learning Styles
10. Credibility & Authenticity
11. Building Commitment
12. Modeling Reflection

Classroom Research

13. Techniques
14. Learning Audit
15. 1 Minute Paper
16. Muddiest Point
17. Critical Incident Questionnaire
18. Why CIQ's ?

Evaluation

19. Giving Evaluations
20. Critical Practice Audit
21. Learning Portfolio
22. Course Evaluation Form

Discussion Methods

23. Creating Ground Rules
24. Critical Debate
25. Circular Response
26. Critical Conversation
27. Conversational Moves
28. Conversational Roles
29. Hatful of Quotes
30. Affirm & Challenge
31. Circle of Voices
32. Mutual Invitation
33. Jigsaw
34. Rotating Stations
35. Newsprint Dialogue
36. Snowballing
37. Why Discussions Fail
38. Chalk Talk
39. Discussion Problems & Responses
40. The Triad
41. Drawing Discussion
42. Spiral Conversation
43. Index Card Debrief
44. Post-It Questions
45. Grading for Class Participation Rubric

Miscellaneous

- 46 Engaging Learners
47. Case Study
48. Resistance to Learning
49. Bibliography
50. 1 Credit Assignment

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HELPING ADULTS LEARN

TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR THE TWO DAYS

Because I want this to be a flexible workshop, responsive to the dynamics and diversity within the group, I am not proposing a detailed timetable. Instead, I will lay out the themes that, provisionally, I am planning to address at each segment of the two days. I believe that a truly adult educational workshop is responsive to the interests of the participants and develops organically, rather than following a linear, predetermined agenda.

In terms of time we will start at 9.00.am each day and break for lunch close to 12.30.pm. The group work will end around 4.00.pm. with 4.00-4.30.pm on each day being set aside for individual consultations.

Day 1

In the morning we will get to know each other and examine some of the research and theoretical literature on how adults learn and how best to help this learning.

In the afternoon we will shift the focus onto our own experiences as adult learners and explore these experiences as a way of understanding adult learning.

Day 2

In the morning we will examine what literature, theory and personal experience tell us about the characteristics of effective adult educators (however we choose to define that slippery idea). We will also look at some particular techniques and approaches to encourage adults to engage in dialogue.

In the afternoon we will undertake some integrative case studies to apply the insights of the workshop to some specific problems of working with reluctant adult learners. The workshop will end with a review of the 1 credit assignment.

THROUGHOUT THIS TWO DAYS WE WILL MIX DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES - INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION, PRESENTATIONS AND SMALL GROUP PROJECTS. THE INTENT OF THIS CONVERSATION IS TO STIMULATE A REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF ADULT LEARNING & ADULT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE USING OUR AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AS LEARNERS AND PRACTITIONERS.

QUESTIONS ...

1. When have you been treated as an adult in a learning situation?
2. What (if anything) makes how you learn as an adult different from how you learned as a child or adolescent?
3. What are the strongest emotions or feelings you've experienced as a learner at Teachers College (or elsewhere) and what prompted these?
4. What would you like your learners, colleagues, reports to, or trainees to say about your practice when they were out of your earshot?
5. Why do you resist learning?
6. When are your students or colleagues justified in resisting the learning you are urging on them?
7. What's the best response that you've made, or seen others make, to resistance to learning?

ASSUMPTIONS OF SKILLFUL PRACTICE

**GOOD PRACTICE = WHATEVER HELPS
STUDENTS LEARN**

**BEST PRACTICE IS CRITICALLY
REFLECTIVE - CONSTANT SCRUTINY OF
ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT TEACHING
/CONDITIONS FOSTERING LEARNING**

**MOST IMPORTANT KNOWLEDGE
PRACTITIONERS NEED TO DO GOOD
WORK - HOW STUDENTS
EXPERIENCE THEIR LEARNING**

CONTEXT FRAMES & CHANGES EVERYTHING

TREATING PEOPLE AS ADULTS
AN APPROACH TO TEACHING

(3 'R's)

R E S P E C T

R E S E A R C H

R E S P O N S I V E N E S S

M Y T H S T O
C H A L L E N G E

J O Y F U L

S E L F - D I R E C T E D

F E L T N E E D S

U N I Q U E

D I S T I N C T I V E
F O R M S

E M B E D D E D L O G I C

E P I S T E M I C
C O G N I T I O N

D I A L E C T I C A L
T H I N K I N G

T R A N S F O R M A T I V E
L E A R N I N G

C R I T I C A L
R E F L E C T I O N

E X P E R I E N C I N G
L E A R N I N G

I M P O S T O R S H I P

C U L T U R A L
S U I C I D E

L O S T I N N O C E N C E

I N C R E M E N T A L
F L U C T U A T I O N
(ROADRUNNING)

C O M M U N I T Y

IMPLICATIONS

IMPOSTORSHIP

Teachers and leaders should reveal their own feelings of impostorship experienced as they learned the skills and knowledge new learners are facing. They should decrease the most demoralizing effects of impostorship by providing multiple opportunities for private failure, so learners can attempt multiple experiments away from the gaze of peers or instructors. Alumni panels of former learners can pay testimony to their own feelings of impostorship as they pursued learning.

CULTURAL SUICIDE

Role-play with students strategies for re-entering their homes, neighborhoods and workplaces to help them prepare to avoid committing cultural suicide: ask colleagues what happened while you were away, thank colleagues for covering for you, don't speak about your insight till asked to do so, when disclosing new learning begin with how it has helped you solve YOUR problems.

LOST INNOCENCE

Provide plenty of early scaffolding for learning, build on former learners' disclosures of how they dealt with this.

INCREMENTAL FLUCTUATION

Warn students this will happen and that it is predictable and normal. If you can anticipate in advance when it will happen, prepare for it by scheduling some explicit attention to this feeling and build on former learners' disclosures of dealing with this.

COMMUNITY

As much as possible find ways to put students in touch with each other. This can be done through team assignments, team presentations, online threaded discussion groups and setting up car pooling or subway riding groups to get to and from class.

6

WHAT'S DISTINCTIVE ABOUT ADULT LEARNERS (DIFFERENT WAYS TO SLICE THE PIE)

MOTIVATION & APPLICATION

Self-motivated, bring a clear sense of why they're participating in learning (Wlodkowski)

Desire to see the immediate application of learning to their goals or problems (Knowles)

EXPERIENCE

Want their own experiences acknowledged & brought into the curriculum (Boud)

Constantly try to connect new learning to existing/previous experiences (Belenky et. al)

METHOD

Prefer to learn in self-directed ways (Candy); dialogic learning (Freire, Horton)

COGNITION

Embedded Logic - contextually based reasoning grounded in an analysis of the concerns, imperatives and particulars of a situation - placing bets, making change (Sinnott, Rose)

Dialectical Thinking – the ability to move back and forth between particularistic & universal modes of reasoning (virtue of transparency & modeling - Basseches)

Epistemic Cognition - the self-conscious awareness of how we learn, how we come to know what we know, and the grounds for truth that we accept as valid (when to trust instincts, what cues to take seriously - Smith, Kitchener & King)

Transformative Learning – reframing meaning schemes and perspectives to be ever more inclusive & discriminating (depression, racism - Mezirow)

Critical Reflection – intentional scrutiny of power & hegemonic assumptions (ideology)

Source: Stephen Brookfield "The Adult Dimension of Lifelong Learning" In, J. Field and M. Leicester (eds). *Lifelong Learning: Education Across the Lifespan* . Philadelphia: Falmer Press (2000)

IMPLICATIONS

MOTIVATION & APPLICATION

A good adult learning program will strive as a first order of business to answer the “so what?” question, by showing learners how the activities planned will help them in their work or personal/political life, have immediate application, and relate to their concerns and interests. Two ways this can be done are through a panel of former resisters or through a creative use of simulations & case studies.

EXPERIENCE

If learners come with multiple, complex and diverse experiences then the more learning modalities that are employed the more chance that at some point everyone in the group will feel their experience is addressed. A good adult learning program will try to find out what people’s previous experiences are beforehand and, when appropriate, will build activities that connect to these. Even when difficult and complex new skills or knowledge are being learned, learners will draw on earlier experiences attempting to learn difficult material.

METHOD

A good learning program will use different learning modalities alternating independent, self-directed learning with collective learning using dialogue.

COGNITION

Given the prevalence of embedded logic and dialectical thinking, a good adult learning program will constantly strive to make contextual interpretations and applications of broad skills or knowledge that have been learned in decontextualized ways.

**WHAT'S DISTINCTIVE ABOUT HOW ADULTS EXPERIENCE HIGHER
EDUCATION?**

IMPOSTORSHIP

CULTURAL SUICIDE

LOST INNOCENCE

ROADRUNNING

COMMUNITY

WHAT'S DISTINCTIVE ABOUT HOW ADULTS VIEW THEIR TEACHERS?

CREDIBILITY

Expertise

Experience

Rationale

Conviction

AUTHENTICITY

Congruence

Full Disclosure

Responsiveness

Personhood

Error

Source: Stephen Brookfield, *The Skillful Teacher: On Technique, Trust and Responsiveness in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990.

F O U R L E N S E S O N
P R A C T I C E

A U T O B I O G R A P H Y
A S L E A R N E R S /
P R A C T I T I O N E R S

C L I E N T S
S T U D E N T S
P A T I E N T S

C O L L E A G U E S '
P E R C E P T I O N S

T H E O R Y

Experiencing Adult Learning - Instructions

This assignment asks you to explore your experiences as an adult learner and asks you to interpret this experience in terms of its meaning for your educational practice.

Choose a learning experience, or series of learning experiences, in your adult life that you remember clearly. These experiences should be ones in which you were encouraged to learn skills, gain knowledge or develop insight by someone recognized as the leader or educator in this process, though this person need not be a formally credentialled teacher.

Spend about 15 minutes writing down, on your own, the following details of these experiences:-

The incident (or incidents) you recall as being the most exciting and rewarding for you - the times you felt something important was happening to you as a learner

The incident (or incidents) you recall as being the most disappointing or distressing for you - the times you felt despair or frustration about your learning

The characteristics and behaviors of teachers that you found most helped you learn. Give specific examples of actions and events.

The characteristics and behaviors of teachers that you found most hindered your learning. Give specific examples of actions and events.

Those times when you felt most valued and affirmed as a learner, and why this was so. Give specific examples of actions and events.

Those times when you felt most demeaned and patronized as a learner, and why this was so. Give specific examples of actions and events.

Then, form a group of 5 members and share your responses to the above questions. Look for common themes that emerge, major differences, and any insights for the practice of helping adults learn that your themes suggest.

Spend about 30 minutes on this group sharing (6 minutes per person)

Finally, write up your conversation – areas of commonality, disagreements that emerged, and insights for practice that suggested themselves – on sheets of newsprint. **Spend about 15 minutes doing this.**

(n.b. This exercise is also a major part of assignment option #1)

LEARNING STYLES

*Kolb – Adaptive/Learning Style
Inventory MBTI
Syllabus Bound/Free
Convergent/Divergent
Field Dependent/Independent*

Pre-assessment

Alternate grouping learners by
style & mixing Styles

Use varied modalities – individual,
group, visuals, presentations,
kinetic – based on 5 senses

Talk out rationale for varied
modalities

Team teaching

Negotiate projects & assignments
based on different modalities

C R E D I B I L I T Y

E X P E R T I S E

E X P E R I E N C E

R A T I O N A L E

C O N V I C T I O N

A U T H E N T I C I T Y

C O N G R U E N C E

F U L L D I S C L O S U R E

R E S P O N S I V E N E S S

P E R S O N H O O D

C A R I N G

E R R O R

EXPERTISE

- frequent demonstrations of command of skills & knowledge
- ability to give good answers to unprompted, difficult questions

EXPERIENCE

- frequent examples of real life examples of skills & concepts taught in classroom
- reference to past teaching of this material

RATIONALE

- frequent explanations of why you do what you do in the way that you do

CONVICTION

- * individualized evaluations

CONGRUENCE

- words & actions consistent

FULL DISCLOSURE

- expectations, criteria and agendas are laid out repeatedly & fully to learners
- learners are tested for understanding of these expectations

RESPONSIVENESS

- * learners' concerns are unearthed & addressed

PERSONHOOD

- * appropriate use of autobiographical examples

CARING

- * intervention to control demeaning behaviors

ERROR

- * reassures learners they can make mistakes & still succeed

BUILDING COMMITMENT TO
LEARNING

11

R E S E A R C H

F O R M E R
R E S I S T E R S

M O D E L I N G

S I M U L A T I O N

V A R I E T Y

P R A I S E

F A I L U R E P R O O F

C O N V E R S I O N A L
O B S E S S I O N

12

MODELING CRITICAL THINKING & CRITICAL REFLECTION

TALKING OUT LOUD

C. I. Q.
(Performance
Instruction
Meetings)

TALKING PRACTICE
- taking the lead

JOURNALING
& public airing

INSTRUCTION
assumption analysis
devil's advocate
questions unanswered
group participation

C L A S S R O O M
R E S E A R C H
T E C H N I Q U E S

C. I. Q.

MUDDIEST POINT

ONE MINUTE PAPER

AFTER CLASS GROUP /
CLASS ADVISORY PANEL

VIDEO

PEER OBSERVATION

TEAM TEACHING

LEARNING AUDIT

LEARNING AUDIT

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW
THAT YOU COULDN'T DO
THIS TIME LAST WEEK ?

WHAT DO YOU KNOW NOW
THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW
THIS TIME LAST WEEK ?

WHAT COULD YOU TEACH
SOMEONE TO KNOW OR DO
THAT YOU COULDN'T TEACH
THEM THIS TIME LAST WEEK?

ONE MINUTE PAPER

WHAT WAS

THE MOST IMPORTANT
IDEA / INSIGHT

or

THE QUESTION THAT
MOST NEEDS ADDRESSING

" *THE MUDDIEST POINT* "

WHAT WAS

THE MOST CONFUSING IDEA

or

THE MOST POORLY
EXPLAINED IDEA

or

THE MOST POORLY
DEMONSTRATED PROCESS

Or

THE LEAST CLEAR
IDEA OR TECHNIQUE

The Classroom Critical Incident Questionnaire

Please take about five minutes to respond to each of the questions below about this week's class(es). Don't put your name on the form - your responses are anonymous. When you have finished writing, put one copy of the form on the table by the door and keep the other copy for yourself. At the start of next week's class I will be sharing the group's responses with all of you. Thanks for taking the time to do this. What you write will help me make the class more responsive to your concerns.

At what moment in class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening ?

At what moment in class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening ?

What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most affirming or helpful ?

What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most puzzling or confusing ?

What about the class this week surprised you the most ? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you).

WHY C.I.Q.'s ?

PROBLEMS WARNED

GROUNDS ACTIONS

*STUDENT
REFLECTIVITY*

BUILDS TRUST

DIVERSE METHODS

*CRITICAL
THINKING*

HELPFUL
EVALUATIONS

CLEAR

IMMEDIATE

REGULAR

ACCESSIBLE

INDIVIDUALIZED

AFFIRMING

FUTURE-ORIENTED

EDUCATIVE

CRITICAL PRACTICE AUDIT

Please complete this audit on a weekly basis. Its purpose is to help you understand more about your own practice - in particular, to help you understand the assumptions that undergird how you analyze situations, make decisions and take actions.

Please think back over the past 7 days. As you review your clinical practice, think about the critical incidents that have happened during that time. A critical incident is an event that can be called to mind easily and quickly because it is remembered so vividly. Usually critical events are considered as significant by us because they are unexpected, they take us by surprise. Sometimes they are wonderful highs, sometimes demoralizing lows. Often they're a mix of both.

Please choose the top two or three critical incidents in your clinical practice over the last 7 days. For each incident, please do the following:

1. Write a brief description of the incident. This should include details of what happened, who was involved, where and when it took place, and what it was that made the incident 'critical' for you.
2. List the assumptions you have as a clinical practitioner that were confirmed by this incident. What was it about what happened that led you to think the assumptions you uncovered were accurate and valid?
3. List the assumptions you have as a clinical practitioner that were challenged by this incident. What was it about what happened that led you to think the assumptions you uncovered might be inaccurate or invalid?
4. How did you try to check the accuracy of your assumptions that were challenged? If you weren't able to check these at the time, how could you check them in the future? What sources of evidence could you consult?
5. What different perspectives could be taken on the incident? As you think about it through the eyes of the other people involved, are there different ways the situation could be seen, or your behavior interpreted?
6. In retrospect, are there different responses you might have made to the incident? If so, what would these responses be, and why would you make them?

PARTICIPANT LEARNING PORTFOLIO

You will have the responsibility for documenting your learning during the course in a Participant Learning Portfolio. The final version of this is due to be handed in just over one week after the last class meeting on However, midway through the course I will be asking to see your interim portfolios to check that you are including enough material to warrant a Pass grade for the course.

If there are any problems with how you are putting the portfolio together, the level of your analysis, or with anything else, I will let you know at this time so that you can adjust how you document your learning in the second half of the course. Details of the portfolio are given below. If the final version of the portfolio needs some revision to bring it up to the level of a pass grade you have the rest of the semester to work on this.

If you are unable to hand in the portfolio on you will be awarded an Incomplete. When your portfolio is handed in I will remove the incomplete and award a pass.

If the portfolio is missing some of the elements I requested, or if some of the sections are only superficially completed, I will also award an incomplete. When the completed portfolio is handed in with all the elements fully documented, I will remove the incomplete and award a pass.

Course Assignment: PARTICIPANT LEARNING PORTFOLIO

The assignment for this course will be for you to compile a portfolio of your learning during the course. The Participant Learning Portfolio is a cumulative record of your experience of learning and activities in this class.

PLEASE TYPE ALL PORTFOLIO ENTRIES

Detailed Instructions: Participant Learning Portfolio

I would like you to submit in this portfolio the following elements:

1. An overall summary of the common themes you read in the critical incident responses that you completed at the end of each class. **DO NOT HAND IN ANY OF THE INDIVIDUAL FORMS.** You should submit a summary of your own incident sheets, not a summary of the sheets I prepared. Please take each question I asked on the sheet and write 1-2 paragraphs on your responses to each of these over the 12 weeks of the class.

2. A copy of each critical reflection homework assignment you completed during the class. This includes your personal experiences of critical reflection piece, your scenario analyses responses, your survival advice memo, your ideology critiques, your best/worst experiences matrix etc. Please include 2nd drafts of these if you changed or improved them after the classroom debriefings (eg, you will have got some new ideas for the ideology critique from your small group discussions).

3. Documentation of each of your reactions to the assigned readings during the course. Please take each week's readings and pick out the most important or provocative points in those readings for you. As you discuss these insights please give specific citations and attributions (author, article, chapter, page # etc.). I want you to document the highlights of your reading - the things you found connecting, omitted, discrepant with your experience, puzzling, affirming, or new.

After the week by week highlighted reactions I'd like an overall summary of the most important learnings you have gained from your reading. This summary doesn't need the citations and specific attributions of the weekly highlights.

4. An analysis of your learning in this class. What can you do now, and what do you know now, that you couldn't do, and didn't know, when you came into this course earlier this year? If I asked you to be a co-teacher for part of this course next year, what topic, task or activity would you volunteer for? And what happened to you to make you think you'd be a possible co-teacher?

Also, what was your most important realization concerning the subject matter of the course? Why did you judge this to be of particular importance to you? What was the most important skill you learned? Again, what was it that was significant about this skill? What is the chief learning that you feel you need to undertake the next time you study in this area?

5. A thematic analysis of your critical practice audits over the course of the semester. There is no need to include any of the individual audits, but go ahead if you want to.

6. A thematic analysis of your learning logs. Try to see what broad progress you learned over the semester. Also, please answer the 3 log questions for the semester: what can you do now that you couldn't do this time last semester? what do you know now that you didn't know this time last semester? what could teach someone else to know or do that you couldn't teach them last semester?

7. A completed course evaluation form.

8. A summary of what you think students who show up next year should know about how to survive and flourish in this class. Some themes you might consider writing about are 'what I know now about this course that I wish I'd known when I came in', 'the three

most important things you should make sure you do to keep your sanity in this class', 'the most common and avoidable errors that I and others made in this class' and 'the words that should hang on a sign above your desk concerning how to make it through this class'. Feel free to discard these themes and just write about whatever comes into your head around the theme of survival.

9. A reflection on how your experiences as a learner in this class will affect your own practice as an educator. What things will you do differently in your work as a result of spending these months reflecting on your learning ? What things have you decided you must add to your practice, and what things are you determined to delete from how you act as an educator, as a result of having analysed yourself as a learner over these last few months ?

10. Anything else you want to say about this experience of learning.

Interim Portfolio Due: Final Portfolio Due:

DRAFT STUDENT OPINION OF TEACHING FORM

Please read each of the statements below and then circle the score that most closely represents your opinion. The scores for you to choose from are as follows:-

1 Strongly Disagree 2 Disagree 3 Partly Agree 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree

If the question does not seem relevant in your course, just circle N/A.

After you have circled your response to each statement please write down anything you want to say in response to the follow up question.

1. IN THIS COURSE I RECEIVED A SOLID GROUNDING IN THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, CONCEPTS AND FORMS OF REASONING COVERED BY THE COURSE CONTENT

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

What did the course instructor do that helped you develop a solid grounding in the course content, or that stopped this from happening?

2. IN THIS COURSE I WAS ENCOURAGED TO THINK CRITICALLY ABOUT THE COURSE CONTENT AND TO LOOK AT MY OWN IDEAS FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

What did the course instructor do that helped you to think critically in this course, or that inhibited this process?

3. IN THIS COURSE I WAS INVOLVED IN A VARIETY OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES (for example, listening to lectures, participating in discussions, undertaking independent study, working in small groups, using computer technology and electronic communication)

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

In what ways did your involvement in a variety of learning activities help or hinder your learning?

4. IN THIS COURSE I WAS HELPED TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY OWN LEARNING BY DEVELOPING MY OWN UNDERSTANDINGS AND APPLICATIONS OF COURSE CONTENT

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

What did the course instructor do that helped you to take responsibility for your own learning or that inhibited this from happening?

5. IN THIS COURSE THE INSTRUCTOR TRIED TO DISCOVER AND RESPOND TO LEARNERS' CONCERNS, PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

In what ways did the instructor try to discover and respond to your concerns, problems and difficulties?

6. IN THIS COURSE I RECEIVED REGULAR INFORMATION ON MY PROGRESS AS A LEARNER

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

In what ways did receiving information assist or inhibit your progress as a learner?

7. WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A STUDENT IN THIS COURSE?

STUDENT INFORMATION

Please circle the score that represents your status or opinion in the 3 items below

| Student Status | Grade Point Average (1st semester students use high school gpa) |
|--|---|
| 1 Full time (1 st year) | 1 3.50 – 4.00 |
| 2 Full time (2 nd year) | 2 3.00 – 3.49 |
| 3 Part time (1 st course) | 3 2.50 – 2.99 |
| 4 Part time (not 1 st course) | 4 1.50 – 2.49 |
| 5 Continuing Education (CEU) | 5 less than 1.50 |

In terms of the directions my life and studies are taking, this course ...

- 1 Is of little importance to me
- 2 Is of some importance for me
- 3 Is very important to me
- 4 I am unsure about its importance to me

Discussion Ground Rules

23

1. Think of the best group discussions you've ever been involved in. What things happened that made these conversations so satisfying ?

Make a few notes on this by yourself.

2. Think of the worst group discussions you've ever been involved in. What things happened that made these conversations so unsatisfactory ?

Make a few notes on this by yourself.

3. Now form a group with 3 other people. Take turns in talking about what made discussion groups work so well for you. Listen for common themes, shared experiences and features of conversation that a majority of you would like to see in the course

4. Take turns in talking about what made discussion group work so awful for you. Listen for common themes, shared experiences and features of group conversation that a majority of you would like to see avoided in this course.

5. For each of the characteristics of good discussion you agree on, try and suggest three things a group could do to ensure that these characteristics were present. Be as specific and concrete as you can. For example, if you feel good conversation is developmental, with later themes building on and referring back to earlier ones, then you could propose a rule that every new comment made by a participant is prefaced with an explanation as to how it relates to an earlier comment.

6. For each of the characteristics of bad discussion you agree on, try and suggest three things a group could do to ensure that these characteristics were avoided. Be as specific and concrete as you can. For example, if you feel that bad conversation happens when one person's voice dominates then you could propose a rule whereby once someone has spoken they are not allowed to make a second comment until at least three other people have spoken (unless another group member explicitly invites the participant to say something else).

7. Try and finish this exercise by drafting a charter for discussion that comprises the specific ground rules you agree on. We will make each group's rules public and see if we can develop a charter for discussion to guide us in the coming weeks.

Creating Discussion Ground Rules through Video Vignettes Instructions to Students

You're going to see two 5 minute excerpts of different discussions. Please watch for the kinds of comments, contributions and actions that you think are good, and bad, discussion behaviors. Note these down by yourself. Don't discuss your reactions with others at this stage. You might find it helpful to watch the video with the following questions in mind ...

(i) In your view which participants made the best, most helpful or most useful contributions to the discussion ? Why were these contributions so worthwhile ?

(ii) In your view which participants made the worst, least helpful or least useful contributions to the discussion ? Why were these contributions so irrelevant or unproductive ?

(iii) What changes would you introduce to improve either of these discussions ?

Now, compare your responses with the reactions of others in your group. Look particularly for areas of agreement. Based on these, could you suggest any guidelines that would ensure that helpful discussion behaviors are encouraged ? When we reconvene we will see if your notes can help us decide on the discussion guidelines we want to follow in this course.

Making Ground Rules Specific

Our role as teachers in these exercises is not to suggest images of how we think good discussants behave. That's the business of group members. However, when it comes to translating these images into specific rules of conduct we have found that students do need some help. If the class agrees that good discussions involve lots of people talking then we'll work with them to suggest ways to make this more likely to happen. We'll suggest some specific possibilities such as putting a time limit on individual contributions or regularly calling for a circle of voices where each person in turn is given the floor. "I want people to listen carefully to what I'm saying" can be accomplished by suggesting a weekly circular response discussion period in which students take turns to listen carefully, paraphrase and then respond to each others' contributions).

CRITICAL DEBATE INSTRUCTIONS

Find a contentious issue on which opinion is divided amongst participants. Frame the issue as a debate motion.

Propose the motion to participants. By a show of hands ask people either to volunteer to work on a team that is preparing arguments to support the motion or to volunteer to work on a team that is preparing arguments to oppose the motion.

Announce that all those who have prepared to work on the team to draft arguments to support the motion will now comprise the team to draft arguments to oppose the motion. Similarly, all those who have prepared to work on the team to draft arguments to oppose the motion will now comprise the team to draft arguments to support the motion.

Conduct the debate. Each team chooses one person to present their arguments. After initial presentations the teams reconvene to draft rebuttal arguments and choose one person to present these.

Debrief the debate. Discuss with participants their experience of this exercise. Focus on how it felt to argue against positions you were committed to. What new ways of thinking about the issue were opened up? Did participants come to new understandings? Did they change their positions on this issue at all?

Ask participants to write a follow up reflection paper on the debate. Here's the instructions ...

1. What assumptions about the issue that you hold were clarified or confirmed for you by the debate ?
2. Which of your assumptions surprised you during the debate ? In other words, were you made aware of assumptions you hold that you didn't know you had ?
3. How could you check out these new assumptions ? What sources of evidence would you consult ?
4. What new perspectives on the issue suggested themselves to you ?
5. In what ways, if any, were your existing assumptions challenged or changed by the debate

Circular Response Discussions

The circular response exercise is a way to democratize discussion participation, to promote continuity and to give people some experience of the effort required in respectful listening. In this process participants sit in a circle so that everyone can see each other. The optimal size for this exercise is 8-12 participants.

Like circle of voices, the process begins with each person in turn taking up to a minute to talk about an issue or question that the group has agreed to discuss. Once the 1st person has spoken, the person to the speaker's left speaks for up to a minute. Each speaker is not free, however, to say anything she wants. She must incorporate into her remarks some reference to the preceding speaker's message and then use this as a springboard for their own comments. This doesn't have to be an agreement – it can be an expression of dissent from the previous opinion. The important thing is that the previous person's comments are the prompt for whatever is being said in circular response. What speakers articulate depends on listening well to the preceding speaker as much as on generating new or unspoken ideas. The process ends where it started – with the opening speaker. Only this time the opening speaker is responding to the comments of the person who spoke before her.

Here's the instructions:

Choose a theme that the group wishes to discuss, form into a circle and ask for a volunteer to start the discussion. This person speaks up to a minute or so about the theme chosen. No interruptions are allowed during this first round of talking. After the minute is up, the first discussant yields the floor and the person sitting to the discussant's left speaks for a minute or so. The second discussant must show in her contribution how what she is saying springs from, or is in response to, the comments of the first discussant. After a minute or so, the second discussant stops speaking, and the person to her left becomes the third discussant, and thus the discussion moves all the way around the circle. Once everyone has had their chance to speak in this first round then the discussion moves into open discussion – no ground rules apply in this open conversation.

To sum up:

1. In the first round of talk no one may be interrupted while speaking
2. No one may speak out of turn in the circle;
3. Each person is allowed only a minute or so to speak;
4. Each person, in all comments, must strive to show how his or her remarks spring from, or respond to, the comments of the previous discussant.
5. After each discussant has had a turn to speak, the floor is opened for general conversation, and the previous ground rules are no longer in force.

CRITICAL CONVERSATION PROTOCOL

PURPOSE OF THE EXERCISE

A critical conversation is a focused conversation in which someone is helped:-

1. To come to an awareness of the assumptions she is operating under – particularly those having to do with power relationships and hegemonic practices & ideas
2. To investigate whether these assumptions are well grounded
3. To look at her practice from different viewpoints
4. To think about the implications of the conversation for the future

ROLES PARTICIPANTS PLAY

In a process of structured critical conversation I suggest that people think of playing one of three possible roles - storyteller, detective or umpire.

The **storyteller** is the person who is willing to make herself the focus of critical conversation by first describing some part of her practice or life experience.

The **detectives** are those in the group who help her come to a more fully informed understanding of the assumptions and actions that frame her practice or experience.

The **umpire** is the group member who has agreed to monitor conversation with a view to pointing out when people are talking to each other in a judgmental way. All participants in the group play all three of these roles at different times. The idea is that the behaviors associated with each role gradually become habitual.

HOW THE EXERCISE WORKS

1. ***The Storyteller Tells the Tale (10 MINUTES)***

The conversation opens with the person who is the storyteller describing as concretely and specifically as possible an incident from her practice or life that for some reason is lodged in her memory. This incident may be one that is recalled because it was particularly fulfilling or because it was particularly frustrating. Most probably it is an incident that leaves the teller somewhat puzzled by its layers and complexities. The storyteller describes the incident in her own words and without any questions or interruptions. Her colleagues, who are in the role of detectives, attend to her remarks very carefully. They are listeners with a purpose.

The detectives are trying to identify the explicit and implicit assumptions about practice that they hear in the storyteller's tale. Some of these will be general assumptions about what good practice looks like, some will be about how a good professional should behave, and some will be about how to behave in the specific situation described. The detectives are listening particularly for assumptions that pertain to how the storyteller conceives of power dynamics, or assumptions that are hegemonic (i.e. that seem admirable & useful to the storyteller but that actually work against her best interests & support an inequitable situation).

The detectives are also asked to imagine themselves inside the heads of the other characters in the story and to try to see the events through their eyes. If possible, the detectives make mental or written notes about plausible alternative interpretations of the story that fit the facts as they hear them, but that would come as a surprise to the storyteller.

2. *The Detectives Ask Questions About the Event (10 MINUTES)*

After the storyteller has finished speaking, the detectives are allowed to break their silence to ask her any questions they have about the events she has just described. The detectives are searching for any information that will help them uncover the assumptions they think the storyteller holds. They are also looking for details not provided in the first telling of the story that will help them re-live the events described through the eyes of the other participants involved, thereby helping them to understand these events from the different participants' perspectives.

One ground rule they must observe is that of requesting information, not giving judgment. Their questions are asked only for the purpose of clarifying the details of what happened. They must refrain from giving their opinions or suggestions, no matter how helpful they feel these might be. Detectives should ask only 1 question at a time. They should **not** give advice on how the storyteller should have acted. Keep laughter to a minimum, you don't know how it's received.

As the storyteller hears the detectives' questions she tries to answer them as fully and honestly as possible. She also has the opportunity to ask the detectives why they asked the particular questions they put to her. The umpire points out to the detectives any examples of judgmental questions that they ask, particularly those in which they imply that they have seen a better way to respond to the situation than the way that's been described. Examples of such questions would be those beginning "Did you really believe that ...?", "Didn't you think to ...?", or "Do you mean to tell us that ...?"

The umpire brings the detectives' attention to the ways in which their tone of voice and body language, as well as their words, risk driving the storyteller into a defensive bunker.

3. *The Detectives' Report the Assumptions they Hear in the Storyteller's Descriptions (10 MINUTES)*

When the incident has been fully described, and all the detectives' questions have been answered, the conversation moves to the assumption hunting phase. Here the detectives tell the storyteller, on the basis of her story and her response to their questions, what assumptions they think she holds.

This is done as non-judgmentally as possible, as a reporting back exercise. The detectives seek only to state clearly what they think the storyteller's assumptions are, not to judge whether they are right or wrong. They are asked to state these assumptions tentatively, descriptively and non-judgmentally, using phrases like "it seems as if ...", "I wonder if one assumption you might be holding is that?", or "Is it possible that you assumed that ...?" They state only one assumption at a time, do **not** give advice, and watch out for laughter.

The umpire intervenes to point out to detectives when she thinks they are reporting assumptions with a judgmental overlay.

4. *The Detectives Give Alternative Interpretations of the Events Described (10 MINUTES)*

The detectives now give alternative versions of the events that have been described, based on their attempts to re-live the story through the eyes of the other participants involved. These alternative interpretations must be plausible in that they are consistent with the facts as they have been described by the storyteller. When appropriate, detectives should point out how power or hegemony plays itself out in the different interpretations they are giving.

The umpire points out those moments when a psychoanalytic second guessing is taking place. This happens when the detectives start to preface their interpretations with remarks like "you know, what you were really doing", or "what was really going on".

The detectives are to give these interpretations as descriptions, not judgments. They are describing how others involved in the events might have viewed them, not saying whether or not these perceptions are accurate. They should not give any advice here.

As the storyteller hears these alternative interpretations she is asked to let the detectives have the floor so that they can state their case as fully as possible. After they have described how the situation might look through the eyes of other participants, the storyteller is then allowed to give any additional information that would cast doubt on these interpretations. She is also allowed to ask the detectives to elaborate on any confusing aspects of why they are making the interpretations they are. At no time is she expected to agree with the detectives.

5. *Participants Do An Experiential Audit (10 MINUTES)*

Finally, the storyteller and detectives state what they have learned, what insights they have realized, and what their reflection means for their future actions. Now the detectives can give whatever advice they wish.

The umpire gives an overall summary of the ability of participants to be respectful listeners and talkers, and also gives her perspective on the story.

At each iteration of this exercise the roles change. As each new story is told each person assumes a different role so that all play each of the roles at least once.

Although this is a heavily structured an artificial exercise, the intent is for these dispositions to become so internalized that the ground rules and structure outlined above become unnecessary.

CONVERSATIONAL MOVES

Paste the conversational moves listed below on 3x5 cards and randomly distribute them among participants before a pre-arranged discussion session. Ask participants to practice their move during the discussion that follows.

Specific Moves

Ask a question or make a comment that shows you are interested in what another person says
(January)

Ask a question or make a comment that encourages another person to elaborate on something they have already said (February)

Make a comment that underscores the link between two people's contributions (March)

Use body language to show interest in what different speakers are saying

Make a specific comment indicating how you found another person's ideas interesting/useful
(April)

Contribute something that builds on, or springs from, what someone else has said. Be explicit about the way you are building on the other person's thoughts (May)

Make a comment that partly paraphrases a point someone has already made (June)

Make an summary observation that takes into account several people's contributions & that touches on a recurring theme in the discussion (July)

Ask a cause and effect question - for example, "can you explain why you think it's true that if these things are in place such and such a thing will occur?" (August)

When you think it's appropriate, ask the group for a moment's silence to slow the pace of conversation and give you, and others, time to think (September)

Find a way to express appreciation for the enlightenment you have gained from the discussion. Be specific about what it was that helped you understand something better
(October)

Disagree with someone in a respectful and constructive way (November)

Create space for someone who has not yet spoken to contribute to the conversation
(December)

CONVERSATIONAL ROLES

Devil's Advocate: This person listens carefully for any emerging consensus. When she hears this she formulates and expresses a contrary view. (Jan 1st-Feb. 15th)

Umpire: This person listens for judgmental comments that sound offensive, insulting and demeaning.. (Feb 15th-March 31st)

Connector: This person does her best to show how participants' contributions are connected to each other. April 1st- May 15th)

Appreciator: This person makes comments indicating how she found another's ideas interesting or useful. (May 15th-June 31st)

Speculator: This person introduces new ideas, new interpretations and possible lines of inquiry into the group e.g. "I wonder what would happen if ...?", "I wonder what (major theorist) would say about?" (July 1st-August 15th)

Active Listener: This person tries to paraphrase others' contributions to the conversation ("So what I hear you saying is ...", "If I understand you correctly you're suggesting that ...") (August 16th-Sept. 30th)

Underscorer: This person emphasizes the relevance, accuracy or resonance of another person's comments and underscores why the comments are so pertinent (Oct 1st-Nov. 15th)

Evidential Assessor: This person listens for comments that generalize or make unsupported assertions. She then asks for the evidence that supports the assertions being made. (Nov. 15th-Dec. 31st)

Hatful of Quotes

One question that invariably arises regarding exercises such as the circle of voices and circular response, concerns whether or not teachers should require all students to participate. Mandating speech seems like an exercise of teacher power that stands in direct contrast to the spirit of democratic conversation. However, I believe that there are occasions when it is justifiable to exercise power in this way. bell hooks (1994, p. 41) describes how she requires students to read out paragraphs from their journals in class so that none feel invisible or silenced. To her this is a responsible exercise of teacher power. Always allowing students the option to pass in discussion circles means that those who are shy and introverted, or uncomfortable because they perceive themselves as members of a minority race, gender or class, end up not contributing. The longer this pattern of non-participation persists, the harder it is to break. So what seems like an empathic, benign action by the leader - allowing students the right to silence - serves to reinforce existing differences in status and power. Those who are used to holding forth will move automatically to speak, while those whose voices are rarely heard, will be silenced.

One way through this dilemma is to make the mandated act of contributing as stress free as possible. This is the purpose of the 'hatful of quotes' exercise. Prior to a discussion of a text the leader types out sentences or passages from the text onto separate slips of paper. In class she puts these into a hat and asks students to draw one of these slips out of a hat. Students are given a few minutes to think about their quote and then asked to read it out and comment on it. The order of contribution is up to the students. Those who feel more fearful about speaking go last and take more time to think about what they want to say. Because the same five or six quotes are used, students who go later will have heard their quote read out and commented on by those who spoke earlier. So even if they have little to say about their own interpretation of the quote, they can affirm, build on, or contradict a comment a peer has already made on that quote. This exercise is a good way to create a safe opportunity for everyone to speak. Those who are diffident get to say something, thus building confidence for subsequent contributions. They avoid the feelings of shame and anger that come from feeling excluded from the discussion while lacking the confidence to break the prevailing pattern and project their voice into the mix.

bell hooks Teaching to Transgress. New York: Routledge, 1994

QUOTES TO AFFIRM & CHALLENGE

Here students choose quotes from a text that they wish to affirm and quotes they wish to challenge.

Quotes to Affirm

Students form into small groups and each member takes a turn to propose a quote they wish to affirm and the reasons for doing this. The quote does not have to be defended as empirically true. Sometimes a participant will propose a quote because it confirms a point of view she holds. Sometimes she feels the quote states the most important point in the text. At other times the quote is affirmed because it is rhetorically rousing or expressed so lyrically. When everyone in the small group has proposed a quote to affirm the group then chooses one to report back to the larger class.

The choice of which quote to report back to the whole class can be done randomly or through deliberation. Using the random approach the small group members each type out their quote beforehand. At the end of the small group conversation group members hand all the pieces of paper to one person who then randomly selects a quote. This quote is read out to the whole class with everyone (not just the student who originally chose the quote) trying to explain what it was about the quote that was so compelling. In contrast to this random approach, the small group can simply report the quote which drew the greatest support.

Quotes to Challenge

The 'quote to challenge' activity follows the same procedure only this time students choose a quote that they disagree with, find contradictory, believe to be inaccurate, or consider reprehensible and immoral. Each person proposes their quote to the small group and group members choose one to report back to the larger class. One thing that has surprised us in this reporting back phase is the unexpected advantages of randomly choosing a small group quote. Because group members don't know which quote will be drawn out of the hat, they have to stay alert to hearing the merits of, or objections to, all the quotes proposed. When a quote is chosen by consensus in the small group we have noticed that groups often pick one quote early on and then spend their time rehearsing a presentation on all the reasons why it's terrific or appalling. This ensures an impressive small group report, but it also means that the opportunity for fruitful discussion of the merits of diverse, even contradictory, quotes is lost.

The Circle of Voices

Participants form into a circle of about 5. They are allowed up to three minutes silent time to organize their thoughts. During this time they think about what they want to say on the topic once the circle of voices begins. After this silent period the discussion opens with each person having a period of uninterrupted air time. During the time each person is speaking no one else is allowed to interrupt.

People can take their turns to speak by going round the circle in order or volunteering at random. Although the latter arrangement sounds the most relaxed and informal the opposite is often the case. The order of the circle removes from participants the stress of having to decide whether or not they will try and jump in after another student has finished speaking. Not having to decide this is one less thing to worry about. An important benefit of using the circle of voices at the start of a discussion is that it prevents the development early on of a pecking order of contributors. Introverted, shy members, those whose experience has taught them to mistrust academe, or those who view discussion as another thinly veiled opportunity for teachers to oppress or offend, will often stay silent at the beginning of a course. The longer this silence endures, the harder it is for these individuals to speak out. By way of contrast, in the circle of voices everyone's voice is heard at least once at the start of the session.

After the circle of voices has been completed, and everyone has had the chance to say their piece, then the discussion opens out into a more free flowing format. As this happens a second ground rule comes into effect. Participants are only allowed to talk about another person's ideas that have already been shared in the circle of voices. A person cannot jump into the conversation by expanding on his own ideas, he can only talk about his reactions to what someone else has said. The only exception to this ground rule is if someone else asks him directly to expand on his ideas. This simple ground rule prevents the tendency toward 'grandstanding' that sometimes afflicts a few articulate, confident individuals.

To recap the ground rules:-

Begin by going round the circle with each person contributing & no interruptions allowed

After this, move into open discussion, but remember your contributions can only be about, or refer back to, something one of the other group members said in the opening circle.

Mutual Invitation

Developed by Eric Law (1993) mutual invitation is a technique designed to promote egalitarian group talk. The facilitator begins a discussion by sharing her views on the topic at hand. She then invites another member of the group to respond to what she has said, or to contribute whatever is on her mind regarding the topic. After that person has spoken she then chooses the next person to speak, and so on until all have had the chance to be involved. If someone does not want to offer a comment she can pass, but she then has the responsibility to choose who will speak next. No-one is allowed to interrupt the chosen speaker. Once everyone has been called on open discussion ensues & the ground rule doesn't apply.

This process is a way of structuring the opportunity for all to speak, and also of giving the participants the power to choose the direction of participation. One advantage is that in classes where students know each others' interests and areas of expertise better than the teacher does, those students are able to make more skillful choices about who should speak next than a teacher would.

If the process is used a second and third time the facilitator does not start off by sharing her view. However, she does start out choosing who will be the first to speak.

E.H.F. Law *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community*. St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993 (pp. 79-88).

THE JIGSAW TECHNIQUE

Still another way to retain the advantages of small groups but to infuse them with more diverse perspectives is to use the cooperative grouping technique called "jigsaw". Teachers and students begin this process by generating a short list of topics they would like to study. Each student becomes an 'expert' on one of those topics, first by herself and then in discussion with other experts. Later on these student experts become responsible again, through dialogue, for helping non-experts to become as knowledgeable as they are. The sequence of steps that one would use in implementing this process is as follows:

- A class of 25 students chooses five topics they would like to know more about (the number of topics chosen should be roughly equal to the square root of the number of students in the class - 5 in a class of 25, 6 in a class of 36)
- Each student decides which of these 5 topics she wishes to become expert about. She spends time before the class meets studying her topic in order to develop the required expertise
- When the class meets students who have selected the same topic gather in a small group to raise questions, explore misunderstandings and discuss what they have learned
- When students feel they have finished pooling the insights they gained in the course of becoming expert, new small groups are formed that include expert representatives for each of the original topics
- Each student expert takes a turn to lead the others in a discussion of their particular area of expertise

- These small groups end when all members of the group express satisfaction with their knowledge and understanding of all of the topics covered. Sometimes the exercise ends there - other times it extends to a large group summing up

The following is an example of the jigsaw technique as applied to a course on "Leadership and Biography".

For today's class I am going to hand out six biographies for you to read. Since there are 36 students in the class each bio will be read by six students. You should read your chosen biography carefully so that you are quite knowledgeable about this person's life - enough so that you can be designated an "expert" on this person for the purposes of our discussion. When we return to class, you will meet in a small group with the other people who have chosen the same biography--thus everyone reading about Susan B. Anthony will meet together, everyone reading about Frederick Douglass will form a group, etc. In these groups, you will touch on as many different aspects of the person's life as possible, focusing on key accomplishments, missed opportunities, character flaws, personal history, and unanswered questions.

Once all the members of each group have "mastered" their chosen subject, a second set of small groups are formed with one representative from each of the expert groups present. In this way, each group includes one person who read about Stanton, at least one who read about Douglass, etc. These second discussions allow each expert to share perspectives from their expert groups and to lead the rest of the group in a discussion of their person's life. These discussions should not come to a conclusion until each expert has had a chance to lead the group in discussion of their chosen biography and until everyone is reasonably familiar with each life discussed. The activity will end with debriefing in the large group.

In this activity students benefit from having extended discussion with twice the usual number of students.

The jigsaw gives even the most reticent students reason to speak up, thereby bolstering their confidence. Both sets of discussion are rich, but in different ways. In the initial expert conversations everyone is roughly on equal ground. They have a common focus and a lot to share with one another. In the second round of discussions, everyone has a basis for contributing substantively and all are obligated to participate. Additionally, each person has a chance to be in the spotlight for part of the discussion. The chief drawback to the jigsaw is that the amount of information to absorb in the second round of discussions can be overwhelming.

ROTATING STATIONS

Another way to avoid the usual format of reporting back through a series of summaries is to locate each small group at a station where they are given 5 or 10 minutes to discuss a provocative issue and record their ideas on newsprint or a chalkboard. When this time is up the groups move to new positions in the classroom where they continue their discussion. But now the comments written on the newsprint or chalkboard by the preceding group at the station add a new voice to the mix. Rotations continue every 10 minutes until each group has been at all of the positions and has had a chance to consider all of the other groups' comments. Here's the instructions:

We're going to do another small group activity, but this time you won't be staying in one place for long. Each of you should join a group of about five participants at one of the stations that have been established around the classroom. Together you will have the responsibility of answering some questions by making comments on the newsprint directly in front of your group. You will have 10 minutes to do this. When the 10 minutes is up move with your group to a new station where you will continue your conversation by responding to the comments left behind by the group that has just vacated that station. Record the main points of your discussion at this station and then, after another 10 minutes, rotate to the next station, where you now have the comments of two other groups to consider.

Again take 10 minutes to respond, and then move when the 10 minutes are up. When every group has occupied each station, leaving remarks behind at all of them, break out of your groups and read all of the newsprint comments. Add questions, comments, or criticisms to these news sheets wherever you are inspired to do so. Remember that each station will include comments from all groups, making orderliness a challenge. Write as small and as legibly as you can, please!

Rotating stations encourages students to examine critically ideas that originate outside their group. The safety and intimacy of small groups is retained, yet the diversity of viewpoints experienced in whole class discussion is incorporated. Momentum and excitement tend to grow as groups rotate from one station to another. People feel they have heard from, and responded to, many voices in the classroom in a way that is less threatening than in large group exchanges. On the debit side, the 10 minute period for each rotation is not particularly conducive to deep discussion.

NEWSPRINT DIALOGUES

Small groups summarize their conversations on large sheets of newsprint or chalkboards. Individual members of the class are then free to wander about the room reading all the responses & adding comments.

Here's the instructions:

In this activity, you will be working in small groups most of the time. I have prepared some questions for you to consider in these groups, but don't follow them too slavishly. Use them as a jumping off point for ideas you find especially worth exploring. You will have 30 minutes in your groups to discuss these questions and to write your answers to these on the newsprint provided.

Take some time to let your responses emerge from the discussion. Covering all the questions is not important, but you should begin to jot some ideas down on the newsprint provided within 15 or 20 minutes of starting. Try and make sure that everyone has a different color marker and that each person writes something on the newsprint.

When the 30 minutes is up, post your newsprint sheets around the classroom and tour the answers recorded by other groups. Look especially for common themes that stand out on the sheets and for possible contradictions that arise within or between groups' responses. If possible, write your responses to others' comments on the same sheet of newsprint containing the point you're addressing. Finally, note any questions that were raised for you during the discussion on the separate sheets of newsprint specially provided for this. We will bring the activity to a close with a short debriefing in the large group.

Attractions of this activity are that it takes people out of groups for a while and lets them act as relatively autonomous free agents. It also reminds people that dialogue can work as a written as well as spoken exchange. On the other hand, it is frequently difficult in the limited space and time allotted for students to explain fully the meaning of the words and phrases on the newsprint. Still, is an interesting alternative way to keep the conversation going.

SNOWBALLING

One way to illustrate how discussions can be developmental and increasingly inclusive is to use a process called "snowballing" or "pyramiding".

Students begin this activity by responding to questions or issues as individuals. They then create progressively larger dialogic groups by doubling the size of these every few minutes until by the end of the activity everyone is reconvened in the large group. At each stage as students move from pairs to quartets, quartets to octets they recap the chief point of difference, or the chief question that emerged, in their previous round of conversation.

Here's the instructions students follow:

We are going to try something a little different today. It's called "snowballing" and it gives you a chance to think and talk about issues in a variety of different configurations. Please begin with some private, solitary reflection in which you gather your thoughts about the questions at the bottom of this sheet. Jot down some notes if you wish.

After about 1 minute of solitary thought join with one other person to continue the dialogue. After about five minutes you and your partner should join another pair to form a group of four. As the two pairs merge, each pair should recap the chief difference that emerged, an area of agreement, or a question they raised, in their conversation.

The quartets will continue the discussion for another 10 minutes and then they will merge with other quartets to create octets - groups of 8. As the two quartets merge, each quartet should recap the chief difference that emerged, an area of agreement, or a question they raised, in their conversation.

The discussion proceeds for 20 minutes this time and continues in 20-minute intervals until the whole class is brought together at the end of the session.

This exercise gets a lot of people talking to one another, while retaining much of the value of small groups. It also contributes a festive quality to the class. People mill about excitedly and greet each other warmly as they meet in new configurations. On the other hand, snowballing can sometimes have a frenetic, disjointed feel.

WHY DISCUSSIONS FAIL

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

UNPREPARED STUDENTS

NO GROUND RULES

REWARD SYSTEMS ASKEW

NO TEACHER MODELING

**WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO ENGAGE ME (AS A
SKEPTICAL, RESISTANT, HOSTILE LEARNER)
IN DISCUSSION ?**

I would be more likely to participate if

...

**Former resisters testified to its
utility**

Faculty modeled their own participation

**I had the right to silence & silent
participation**

**I knew it was genuinely open & I wasn't
being asked to guess the 'correct'
interpretation & risk humiliation**

**The group had developed norms to
equalize participation**

**I knew that participation counted
towards my grade & that a range of
indicators had been specified**

CHALK TALK

Developed by Hilton Smith of the FoxFire Fund

CHALK TALK is a (mostly) silent and visual way to engage in discussion without speaking. It takes as long as it takes and it's over when it's over. I've used it mostly in 10-minute bursts as a reflective 'prep' for spoken conversation. It can also build a community/organizational agenda from the ground-up by allowing a wide range of voices to be heard. Here's how it works:

1. The leader writes a question in a circle in the centre of the board – for example “What kinds of learning outcomes is the discussion method most suitable for?” She places several sticks of chalk by the board.
2. She then explains this is a silent activity and then when people are ready they should write a response to the question on the board
3. People get up and write something in response to the question whenever they feel ready. Usually there are long silences or pauses between postings
4. The facilitator can also participate by drawing lines connecting comments that seem similar or contrasting, by writing questions about a comment, by adding her own thoughts and so on.
5. When a suitably long silence ensues the facilitator asks if people are done.
6. If the activity is finished conversation then ensues about the postings.

DISCUSSION PROBLEMS & POSSIBLE RESPONSES 39

Generally:-

Use the CIQ to monitor & understand the problem

1. Model the desired behaviors
2. Scaffold conversation by exercises, roles, directions
3. Build incrementally into conversation
4. Check the Reward System

People Won't Talk

Indicators of Classroom Participation Snowballing
Circle of Voices Conversational Moves Conversational Roles
Structured Silence Newsprint Dialog Speech Policy

One or Two Talk Too Much

3 Person Role Conversational Role (eg Reflective Analyst,
Umpire) Circular Response Spiral Conversation
Nominating Questions

Move From Small to Large Groups Loses Energy

Snowballing Nominating Questions Rotating Stations
Newsprint Dialogue Quotes to Affirm & Challenge
Discussion Audit Structured Silence

Discussion Goes Off-Track

Conversational Role – Textual Focuser Structured Silence
Discussion Inventory Quotes to Affirm & Challenge

Discussion is Just Swapping Personal Opinions

Critical Debate Conversational Roles
Conversational Moves

Students State Misunderstandings & Errors

Discussion Inventory

THE TRIAD

COMMENT THEN QUESTION

The whole group is assigned a topic (such as when are your students or colleagues ever justified in resisting the learning you are urging on them?). The only instructions are (i) to decide who will be the two speakers and who will be the observer, and (ii) for the two speakers to observe the ‘comment then question’ rule – speakers try to follow each comment they make with a question to their partner.

Participants divide into triads. Two people agree to discuss the questions for 5 minutes while the third person observes the conversation. The discussants begin by each giving their opening thoughts on the topic. As they get into the conversation they try to practice the ‘comment then question’ rule – they try to follow each comment they make with a question to their partner.

The 3rd person – the observer - tries to note areas of agreement, differences in viewpoints, and interesting questions that emerge in the conversation the other two members are having.

After 5 minutes or so the observer has the floor to report out how she heard the conversation – areas of agreement, difference & questions – & also what thoughts, comments and questions the conversation prompted in her that were not raised by either of the participants.

The Triad has 2 advantages ...

1. The presence of the observer is more likely to make the participants follow the ‘comment then question’ rule
2. The focus is on asking questions as much as on sharing opinions

DRAWING DISCUSSION

Groups of six or seven are formed

- Students explore ideas and discuss responses to a topic or question.
They have about 30 minutes to do this
- Once the group themes or ideas are fully discussed, students are given 15 minutes to put together some sort of visual representation that communicates some of the most important of these ideas.
- They are supplied with large newsprint to draw on, plenty of colored markers, pens, rulers, scissors and tape to help them create fairly traditional two dimensional drawings. They also receive magazine photographs, cloth scraps and other textured materials for creating a mixed-media collage creation, if they so desire.
 - * One member volunteers to take notes of what the group is trying to communicate so s/he can interpret the drawing to the large group and respond to any questions they have
- When all of the groups have completed their task, each group displays their work somewhere in the room for all to observe at their leisure. A blank sheet of paper is posted next to each visual posting.

Participants wander the room and on the blank pieces of paper they add their responses – comments, questions and reactions – to the pictures or collages.
They can use words to give their responses or use drawings.

The group members then gather as a whole class for the chance to talk about each of the postings and the reactions posted to it.

THE SPIRAL CONVERSATION

THIS SIMPLE PROCESS
STRUCTURES THE CONVERSATION
SO THAT ALL HAVE A CHANCE TO
SPEAK.

THE RULE — ONCE YOU HAVE
SPOKEN YOU HOLD ANY FURTHER
COMMENT UNTIL EVERYONE HAS
HAD A CHANCE TO SPEAK. THE
FACILITATOR MONITORS TO
ENSURE THIS HAPPENS. QUIETER
STUDENTS WHO USUALLY GO LATER
CAN OPT TO PASS — OR HAVE THE
OPPORTUNITY TO AGREE/DISAGREE
WITH COMMENTS ALREADY MADE,
RATHER THAN HAVING TO COME UP
WITH AN ORIGINAL COMMENT.

INDEX CARD DEBRIEF

Small groups are assigned a discussion question and post their responses on newsprint around the room.

Once responses are posted each small group is given a set of color-coded 3 x 5 index cards. Each person takes a card and wanders around the room reading all the postings.

Students write one or two of three things on their individual cards as they are wandering ...

A common theme that seemed to emerge across the different groups' postings

A new idea, insight or practice that was suggested by reading the newsprint

A question that occurred as a result of reading the newsprint

Students go back to their tables and read out to each other what they've written on their index cards.

They then exchange cards with another table that has a set of differently colored cards. They read out to each other whatever is written on the new set of index cards. The exchange can be continued with new tables as time permits.

POST-IT QUESTIONS

Small groups are assigned a discussion question and post their responses on newsprint around the room.

Post it pads are placed by each newsprint posting. Whenever a comment on the newsprint prompts a question this is written down on a post it note.

The post it question is then placed next to the comment on the newsprint that has prompted it.

After a while clusters of post-its become observable around the room.

In the large group debriefing, the discussion is framed around the most noticeable clusters of questions that are observed around the room.

Class Participation Grading Rubric

20% of your grade for this class is based on your participation in discussion. Participating in discussion does not necessarily mean talking a lot or showing everyone else that you know or have studied a lot. Good discussion participation involves people trying to build on, and synthesize, comments from others, and on showing appreciation for others' contributions. It also involves inviting others to say more about what they are thinking. Some of the most helpful things you can do are call for a quiet interlude, bring a new resource to the classroom, or post an observation on line. So there are multiple ways quieter learners can participate.

Below are some specific behavioral examples of good participation in discussion:-

Ask a question or make a comment that shows you are interested in what another person says

Ask a question or make a comment that encourages another person to elaborate on something they have already said

Bring in a resource (a reading, web link, video) not covered in the syllabus but adds new information/perspectives to our learning

Make a comment that underscores the link between two people's contributions & make this link explicit in your comment

Use body language (in only a slightly exaggerated way) to show interest in what different speakers are saying

Post a comment on the course chat room that summarizes our conversations so far and/or suggests new directions and questions to be explored in the future

Make a comment (online if this is appropriate) indicating that you found another person's ideas interesting or useful. Be specific as to why this was the case

Contribute something that builds on, or springs from, what someone else has said. Be explicit about the way you are building on the other person's thoughts – this can be done online

Make a comment on your CIQ that prompts us to examine discussion dynamics

When you think it's appropriate, ask the group for a moment's silence to slow the pace of conversation to give you, and others, time to think

Make a comment that at least partly paraphrases a point someone has already made

Make a summary observation that takes into account several people's contributions & that touches on a recurring theme in the discussion (online if you like)

Ask a cause and effect question - for example, "can you explain why you think it's true that if these things are in place such and such a thing will occur?"

Find a way to express appreciation for the enlightenment you have gained from the discussion. Try to be specific about what it was that helped you understand something better. Again this can be done online if this suits you better

ENGAGING ADULT LEARNERS

This exercise asks you to focus on working with a group of adults to bring them to a point of readiness to take learning seriously.

Please work in groups of about 4.

1. Your first task is for one of the group to propose a group of adult learners that will be the focus of examination. This could well be an actual group that one of the group is struggling with. The key point is that these adults must be skeptical about the value of the learning you are asking them to engage with. This skepticism could be because they see it as irrelevant, because they mistrust the agenda of the educator or sponsoring organization, because they have a bad history with education, because the teacher appears incompetent, because they already feel they know what they are being asked to learn or any combination of these and other reasons.

2. Have the group member concerned give as much information about the group as they can. We need to know the demographics, cultural mix, ethnicities, social class, educational level, and preferred/exhibited learning style of the learners and the political history of the community or organizational setting concerned.

3. Now, with this information in hand, start to discuss ways of bringing these adults to a point where they are willing to engage - at a minimal level you' feel satisfied with - with learning. There are three ways you might do this:

(i) Brainstorm any ideas that seem useful

(ii) Reflect on your own experiences as learners or educators that have helped you understand how to bring skeptical adults to engage in learning

(iii) Build specifically on the workshop materials and insights. Trawl your notes and handouts for helpful ideas

4. Get your ideas down on a sheet on newsprint so they can be posted for the rest of the workshop

Time estimated for this exercise 1 hour

CASE STUDY - "THE BEST LAID PLANS"

It was 6.30.p.m. and David Threlfall felt that familiar tingle of excitement that always accompanied the best moments of teaching for him. Tonight would be a special night. David worked at Gotham Community College – a college that prided itself on its open-entry policy, and its willingness to work with students who lacked well-developed academic skills. At 7.15.p.m. his new course 'Introduction to Critical Thinking' would get under way. For the past year at the college David had chaired a task force to design this course after arguing to the President that all incoming adult students needed a grounding in the most basic academic skill of all - critical thinking. The powers that be had agreed with him and, starting this semester, all new incoming adult learners across the college had to take an 'Introduction to Critical Thinking' course in their first semester, along with the 'Introduction to Study Skills' the college already required.

David made sure he got to the class early. It would be important to welcome students, he felt, on this particular night. Although a White American himself, he felt that welcoming someone was a cross-culturally stable indicator of good practice. When he walked in to the room where the class was due to start in 20 minutes or so, he found a couple of students sitting silently in different parts of the room. He introduced himself to them, shook their hands, and welcomed them to the course. As other students filed in he did the same to them. This would set a good, warm, welcoming tone for the evening and the rest of the course he felt. Some seemed surprised, and a little shocked at his offering his hand, others shook it in new ways he didn't know, others obviously felt pleasantly surprised by the personal tone he was setting. As students took their seats they noticed that a copy of the course syllabus was on each chair. Some of them picked this up and read it, some put it in inside their folders. David had also left adhesive name tags on the chairs, and he asked students to write their first names on these and put them on their lapels. He waited till a few minutes after the class was due to begin, checked the corridor to see if any latecomers were in sight, then walked to the front of the class. About 30 people were in the room. About half were White, the other half split roughly equally between African-American, Latino/a and Asian Americans. There was one Native American woman. David noticed in fact that most students were women.

"Good evening everyone, thanks for coming to the class", he said. "I want to say again 'welcome' to this class, I think you're going to have an interesting time. Before we start talking about the course in more detail, why don't we take five minutes to get to know each other. I'd like you to turn to the person either side of you, introduce yourself to them, and tell them what the words 'critical thinking' mean to you. I don't expect anything too intellectual - if you already knew what critical thinking was then you wouldn't need to be in this class. But let's see if any ideas, pictures or associations suggest themselves to you when you think of the phrase 'critical thinking'." After five minutes of conversation David called out "O.K. folks, let's see what we've come up with. Who'd like to suggest what the words 'critical thinking' mean to them. Just shout out anything".

There was silence. David did his usual trick of counting off fifteen seconds in his head before opening his mouth again. Still no-one said anything.

With a friendly smile on his face, David tried another approach.

"O.K., well, critical thinking is a difficult idea to get hold of. How about this? If you're in a supermarket check out line and you hear the person in front of you telling her friend that she just read Michael Jackson was really alive because she'd seen a photo of him in a Texas diner that appeared in the 'National Inquirer' would you say that person was thinking critically?"

A White woman in her 20's sitting in the front row raised her hand.

"Yes Vicky?" asked David, reading her lapel badge.

"Why do you assume that women shop in supermarkets and read the Inquirer?" she said.

"Well, I don't assume that", he replied, "I just said 'her' without thinking. It could just as easily have been 'he'. So ... would 'he' be thinking critically Vicky?"

"What do you mean by thinking critically?" asked Levon, an older African-American man sitting further back.

"Well" said David with a friendly smile, "that's what I'm asking you!"

"I don't see how you can expect us to tell you what critical thinking is. I mean we've come here to learn about it - that's why were here", Levon said.

After a couple more unsuccessful attempts to get students to talk about the idea of critical thinking, an elderly White student - Jack - spoke up.

"Well, I've been married twice and I can tell you that I wish I'd done a bit more critical thinking in my time" he said in a hearty voice. Jack looked round the room for support and appreciation of his comment. David laughed - a little nervously. He saw Vicky roll her eyes.

Joan, a White middle aged women student sitting next to Jack, began to speak.

"One thing you learn as you get older is that you can't trust what people tell you just because those people are important. To me critical thinking means not taking things on trust, checking them out, not believing rules just because they're rules"

"Exactly" said David excitedly. "When we think critically we start to question beliefs and assumptions that we've never really looked at carefully before and we realize how we've been misled".

Joan spoke again.

"Yes, that's one thing that I always felt my generation did well. I grew up in the sixties" (here an audible groan escaped the lips of several younger students) "and I learned to think critically about the Vietnam War, about Nixon, about racism and sexism. I got pregnant early so never went to college but now I'm here I know it's the most important thing anyone in this room can do."

David thought about following up this comment but he'd been thrown by the early pregnancy information, so he decided to switch tack. He saw people muttering to each other, laughing at Joan, digging each other in the ribs.

"O.K. If you look at the syllabus I've prepared for the course you'll see that on page 2 I ask you to prepare a learning contract."

Marcia, a Latina woman near the back raised her hand.

"Yes?" asked David.

"Do you mean that critical thinking makes us question our beliefs and values?"

"Yes"

"Well I don't see how that's right. I mean my commitment to Jesus Christ is the most important thing in my life. I don't see why you're attacking him"

"Well that's not what I meant. Of course I don't want you to abandon your religious beliefs. I just meant that when you think critically you start to look at some things - not everything - a bit differently"

"Like when you're wasted" he heard a male voice mutter. Sniggers followed.

"O.K. folks" David said quickly, "let's have a look at the learning contract instructions. Like I said - page 2 please".

Pages rustled as students found the relevant page.

"As you can see, a learning contract is a way of letting you tailor the course to your own pace and interests. Instead of me setting all the assignments, I want you to feel that you have a say in what you do. So, for the next few minutes before the break, I want you to take sheet of paper and write on it some suggestions for course assignments that you think you'd like to do. Don't put your names on the sheet. In 10 minutes I'd like you to leave the sheets on the table by the door over there and then take a 5 minute break".

David busied himself shuffling papers and re-reading his own course syllabus for the 10 minutes that students spent jotting down ideas. As they started to file out for the break he felt pleased with the class so far. There'd been some discussion of critical thinking. He'd been a relaxed and respectful teacher. And the different ages of the adult students would lend an interesting dimension to the class. There'd been a couple of hitches, but that was only to be expected. People would be a lot more comfortable by the fourth or fifth week. He was especially proud of the learning contract idea. In the contract format he'd designed, he asked students to suggest activities they'd involve themselves in, and things they'd produce, to show that they'd been thinking critically. By giving them freedom over how they demonstrated that they'd been learning, David felt that students would become much more engaged in the course. They'd suggest assignments that meant something to them, rather than jumping through hoops that he'd set and that would probably appear meaningless. After the break he planned to talk about the suggestions the students had made for things they might do for their learning contracts.

His satisfaction turned to panic, however, as he went to get coffee at the machine in the faculty lounge. As he walked along the corridor he started to read the suggestions for their learning contracts that the students had left. First of all, only 12 of the 30 had left pieces of paper. Of those 12, all but two were hostile. Their general tone was typified by one which read as follows ...

"I don't see why we have to do this work. It's not fair for you to ask us. We don't know what critical thinking is. How can you expect us to suggest anything ? Anyway, you're the expert, why don't you just tell us what to do?"

Several of them contained complaints like the following ...

"I don't know why we have to do this. I came here to learn to be an engineer, I don't see why I have to do all this psychology stuff"

"If you want us to write contracts, shouldn't we be in a law course or something like that?"

Those students who did suggest ideas for their contracts came up with the following.

"Write an essay that you set me" "Do as little as possible"

"Do a 5 minute talk on something you want me to read"

"Whatever the minimum acceptable is" "Do a book report"

David was dismayed by the lack of response to his first assignment of the course. Less than half the students had bothered to write anything down. And of those who had, the tone of what they'd written was undeniably hostile. As he walked back to the class he wondered how on earth he could have a good discussion on possible learning contract activities. When he got back in the room after 15 minutes, only half the students were

there. Joan and David were talking animatedly in the front row. Knots of other students sat with their feet up on the desks in front of them. Three young men had earphones on and David could hear the tinny sounds of rap and rock seeping through. A man and woman in the corner of the room were smoking and chatting to each other under the 'No Smoking' sign. The rest of the students were gazing at the ceiling, yawning, or reading the paper. One of the papers being read was the 'National Inquirer'.

Instructions for the Case Study Analysis.

1. READ THIS CASE STUDY BY YOURSELF (10 Minutes)

2. AFTER YOU HAVE READ THE CASE STUDY PLEASE MAKE SOME NOTES BY YOURSELF ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS (10 Minutes)

WHAT IS YOUR INTERPRETATION / READING / EXPLANATION / PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE ?

WHAT DO YOU THINK DAVID SHOULD DO IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE CLASS ?

IF YOU WERE OBSERVING THIS CLASS THROUGH A ONE WAY MIRROR, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO DAVID ABOUT HOW HE MIGHT RUN THINGS DIFFERENTLY AT THE START OF THE COURSE THE NEXT TIME HE TEACHES IT ?

After you have finished writing down your responses, form a group with 4-5 other people. Take each of the 3 questions above and spend about 10-15 minutes sharing your responses to each question. List on a sheet of newsprint all the responses and ideas that emerge. Where appropriate feel free to build on any insights or suggestions you have picked up during the workshop that might be relevant.

Time for Case Study - Approximately 1 hour

RESISTANCE TO LEARNING

48

Poor Self-Image as Learners

Fear of the Unknown

Part of the Incremental Rhythm of Learning

Disjunction of Learning & Teaching Styles

Racial, Cultural & Gender Differences Between Teachers & Students

Apparent Irrelevance of the Learning

Level of Required Learning is Inappropriate or Misjudged

Fear of Looking Foolish in Public

Cultural Suicide

Lack of Clarity in a Teacher's Instructions

Personal Dislike & Mistrust of a Teacher

Racial, Cultural, Gender Mistrust

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HELPING ADULTS LEARN

ASSIGNMENT (1 Credit)

There are 6 options for the 1 credit assignment for this workshop. Please choose **one** to be sent to me by Monday November 21st, 2011.

Assignment Option (1) Autobiographical Experience of Learning.

This assignment asks you to explore your experiences as an adult learner and asks you to interpret this experience in terms of its meaning for your educational practice.

Choose a learning experience, or series of learning experiences, in your adult life that you remember clearly. These experiences should be ones in which you were encouraged to learn skills, gain knowledge or develop insight by someone recognized as the leader or educator in this process, though this person need not be a formally credentialed teacher. Describe, in as concrete, specific and honest a fashion as you can, the following details of these experiences:-

1. The incident (or incidents) you recall as being the most exciting and rewarding for you - the times you felt something important was happening to you as a learner
2. The incident (or incidents) you recall as being the most disappointing or distressing for you - the times you felt despair or frustration about your learning
3. The characteristics and behaviors of teachers that you found most helped you learn. Give specific examples of actions and events.
4. The characteristics and behaviors of teachers that you found most hindered your learning. Give specific examples of actions and events.
5. Those times when you felt most valued and affirmed as a learner, and why this was so. Give specific examples of actions and events.
6. Those times when you felt most demeaned and patronized as a learner, and why this was so. Give specific examples of actions and events.

Now, review these responses and analyze them in regard to the following questions:-

1. What common thematic threads concerning your own learning, or good and bad adult educational practices, seem to run throughout your descriptions ?
2. What are the most striking contradiction, divergences and differences you note between and across your responses ?
3. Having viewed learning from the inside, how would you change your educational practice ?
4. What advice would you give to the educator concerning methods, material, actions and evaluative approaches that would be most helpful to learners ?

Assignment Option (2) Developing an Adult Education Program

This assignment asks you to develop a program to help adults learn in a setting of your choice. This setting can be real or imagined, formal or informal, long or short, large or small. The program can be something as specific as one particular class meeting, or as broad as a national literacy campaign. It can take place in any format - independent study, group instruction, via the internet, through distance education, and so on. It can be in a formal educational setting (school, college etc.), a formal non-educational setting (prison, government agency etc.), an informal educational setting (e.g., a living room, self-help support or study group) or an informal non-educational setting (e.g. a social action movement).

Develop a program plan designed to help adults learn. The plan should include the following:

1. A description of the clientele for this program - the adult learners' backgrounds, expectations and learning styles.
2. A statement of the purposes, aims or objectives for the program.
3. A description of the philosophical rationale for practice underpinning your development and organization of the program - the organizing ideas about adult learning that inform how the program works.
4. A description of the needs assessment procedures you will use.
5. A mission statement for the program
6. A description of the pedagogic approaches, curriculum development, teaching materials and formats for evaluating student learning you will use in the program.
7. A description of the evaluative criteria, indicators and formats you will use to judge the effectiveness and success of the program.

Assignment Option (3) Critical Review of Literature

This assignment asks you to review critically a text in adult learning or adult education. This essay should comprise:

1. A summary of what seem to you to be the chief ideas of the work(s)
2. A description of the ideas and practices you found in the text(s) that were most congruent and consistent with your experiences as an adult learner and adult educator.
3. A description of the ideas and practices you found in the text(s) that were most discrepant or contradictory to your experiences as an adult learner and adult educator.
4. An analysis of the important ideas and practices that you felt (drawing on your experiences as an adult learner and adult educator) were omitted from the text(s).
5. An analysis of the ethical issues and dilemmas that you felt (drawing on your experiences as an adult learner and adult educator) were omitted from the text(s).
6. A statement of the ideas in the text you found to be confusing, poorly argued or contradictory.

Assignment Option (4) Writing Up Workshop Case Study “The Best Laid Plans”

This assignment asks you to write up the analysis, responses and suggestions that you and your group members made to the case study in resistance.

Assignment Option (5) Writing Up Reflections on the Workshop

This assignment asks you to write up your reflections on the themes & ideas covered in the workshop – eg. impostorship, cultural suicide, lost innocence, roadrunning, community, credibility, authenticity – or other reflections the workshop triggered for you. (N.B. If you are also taking *Discussion as a Way of Teaching* this semester you can combine this option with Option (2) for that course and just write one overall reflection paper on the two workshops).

Assignment Option (6) Independently Arranged Assignment

If none of the 5 assignments above fits your interests, then feel free to propose an alternative. But check with me during the workshop, or online, that your idea is approved by me.

HOW TO GET YOUR ASSIGNMENTS TO ME

You can use either of the options below:

1. E-Mail:

Send to sdbrookfield@stthomas.edu no later than Monday, November 21st, 2011. If you need an acknowledgment from me that the paper has been received please request it.

2. Snail Mail:

Send it **postmarked** no later than 11/21/11 to:-

Brookfield Limited, 695 Lincoln Avenue, St. Paul,
Minnesota 55105-3534

Please NO FedEx, UPS, certified or recorded delivery. Just use the ordinary US Postal service.

**ALL ASSIGNMENTS WILL RECEIVE A PASS OR
INCOMPLETE GRADE.
NO LETTER GRADES ARE GIVEN IN THIS
WORKSHOP.**

*** If you would like written feedback on your paper then send it to me by snail mail, along with a self-addressed envelope ***