Fifteen Benefits of Discussion

1. It helps students explore a diversity of perspectives.
2. It increases students’ awareness of and tolerance for ambiguity or complexity.
3. It helps students recognize and investigate their assumptions.
4. It encourages attentive, respectful listening.
5. It develops new appreciation for continuing differences.
6. It increases intellectual agility.
7. It helps students become connected to a topic.
8. It shows respect for student voices and experiences.
9. It helps students learn the processes and habits of democratic discourse.
10. It affirms students as co-creators of knowledge.
11. It develops the capacity for the clear communication of ideas and meaning.
12. It develops habits of collaborative learning.
13. It increases breadth and makes students more empathic.
14. It helps students develop skills of synthesis and integration.
15. It leads to transformation.

A few recommended resources
Websites

“Inclusive Classrooms,” Elon University Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning website at http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/teaching/inclusive%20classrooms/default.xhtml
Suggestions/feedback on this site would be appreciated.

Lee Warren's “Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom” is featured on the website of the Bok Center at Harvard. Url: http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/html/icb.topic58474/hotmoments.html

Shari Saunders and Diana Kardia, “Creating Inclusive College Classrooms,” website University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P3_1.php

Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence at Carnegie Mellon University - tool for diagnosing and then addressing common classroom problems. If you choose the problem, “My students don’t participate in discussion,” you’ll be encouraged to think about a variety of reasons that might be happening and then offered some strategies for how to deal with the problem.

Books and articles

Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, Pat Griffin, Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, 2d edition (Routledge, 2007).


Claude Steele, Whistling Vivaldi; How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do (W.W. Norton, 2010).

Google Document with our ideas:
http://tinyurl.com/inclusivediscElon

Contact information

If you have suggestions for inclusive teaching strategies, helpful resources, or want to provide feedback on this workshop, email Mary Jo Festle at festle@elon.edu.
For those interested in getting off to a good start

Suggestions
• Do discussions on the first day of class
• Start with interesting, significant, and clear readings and prompts
• Build from “safer” topics before taking on emotionally charged ones
• Use structured exercises to insure widespread participation
• Insure that multiple points of view get on the table

Questions to consider and work on:

• What are effective exercises or other ways to structure class discussions to insure that all students participate and that they take one another’s ideas seriously?

• What are some good topics or opening prompts for spurring thoughtful discussion (from your course material)?

• What are ways to get multiple points of view considered?

List your ideas on the bottom of this sheet – or type them in the google doc at:
http://tinyurl.com/inclusivediscElon
For those interested in conveying clear expectations

Suggestions
- Early on, convey or collectively arrive at common expectations for what “good participation” involves
- Follow up/reinforce as semester continues
- Frame difficult conversations as “learning experiences”

Questions for you to consider and work on:
- What are the various aspects of “good participation” in your class?
- What are some possible ways you might convey and/or get student buy-in for those expectations?
- What are some ways you might make sure those expectations aren’t forgotten after the first day of class (i.e. follow up)?

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For those interested in sending welcoming cues

Suggestions

- Take time to get to know students as individuals (and for students to get to know one another)
- Send cues that you are aware that people’s culture/group memberships/backgrounds affect them
- Show that you want to be respectful, inclusive, and fair

Questions for you to consider and work on:

- How might you show your good intentions regarding fairness, respect, and inclusiveness?
- How might you show that you’re sensitive to diversity and aware of cultural issues that might be affecting students (such as race, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability, etc.)?
- How might you facilitate your members of class community getting to know one another in a manner that fits your values and course goals?

List your ideas on the bottom of this sheet – or type them in a google doc at: http://tinyurl.com/inclusivediscElon