



# News for Adjuncts

November 1, 2013



## Special Interest Notes:

- Keep it lively
- Don't have only one answer in mind
- Encourage critical thinking

## Class Discussion

One of the best ways to vary your class is to facilitate a class discussion as a “break” from lectures. Many online instructors have already discovered the value of discussion boards. In face-to-face classes, you can achieve similar benefits by leading a directed class discussion. In either case, planning well makes the difference.

First, we need to choose the “destination for the day.” Deciding where you want to end up makes it easier to focus the discussion (pose the “trigger” questions) and help the students see the point. As a great thinker once said, “the focus of higher level thinking is not just to answer the question, but also to question the answers.”

Secondly, we can help students define the key ideas in a day’s topic by asking the “right” questions to lead them in that direction and really listening to their answers. They may take the discussion in a variety of directions; that’s fine as long as everyone can define the main ideas at the end of the discussion. Guided discussion takes a thoughtful and engaged approach on the part of the discussion leader.

As the semester progresses, you may want to assign a student (or group of students) the role of “discussion leader.” If you prepare a rubric of best practices for an insightful discussion, you can involve the class in a silent “rating” of each discussion. After the class has been led by two or

three other discussion leaders, you may want to develop your own class list of best practices without referring to individuals.

We can also help students establish a “critical thinking” climate by using the vocabulary of “higher level” thinking each day of the semester. *Stress application, analysis, and synthesis* help each student learn to approach discussion topics in multi-dimensional ways. Reward critical, creative, and balanced thinking. Do hold students responsible for reading the material on which the discussions are to be based each day.

Always keep in mind that the more the students engage the ideas presented in a given class or reading, the deeper their “real” learning will be. We are all in the “business” of transforming lives one student at a time. Guided discussion may take more time, but it will be worth it if your students learn more.

May your class discussion benefit all.



## Individual Highlights:

- Find Key Ideas
- Listen to the tone
- Use student responses
- Keep the flow going
- Show respect for others