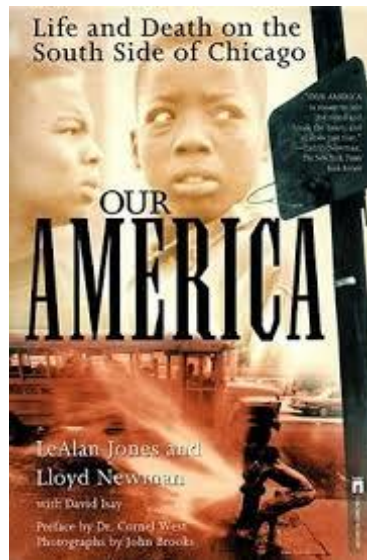


Socratic Seminar (Inner/Outer Circle Method)

Why? Because, as Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Freedom of expression is essential and is worth talking about.

Focus: *Our America: Life and Death on the South Side of Chicago.*

You will be assigned a stance to discuss the question — Who is most responsible for the death of Eric Morse? You must do outside research and the text to support the argument you are required to defend.



Format and Instructions: I will divide our class into two circles --- a smaller, inner circle and a larger outer circle. The inner circle will be provided with an opportunity to talk while the outside circle listens. One open seat will be provided for students in the outer circle who feel they have something significant to contribute. In order to access an “open” seat, simply leave the outer circle and join the inner one. You are only allowed one comment before you must return to the outer circle. Each circle will rotate and will be given an opportunity to speak every ten minutes.

Rules: A Socratic seminar is a *discussion* and not a *debate*. In other words, we are not looking for a winner. In a Socratic seminar, every person in the room *not speaking* is expected to listen *respectfully*.

Inner circle participants may:

- Ask for clarification if a person's comment confuses you.
- Add to a comment made by another person.
- Voice an opposing viewpoint.

No one may:

- Criticize anyone's opinions, comments, or beliefs.
- Interrupt when someone is speaking.
- Respond in a manner that is in any way contemptuous or derogatory.

General Responsibilities:

Before class:

1. Formulate and write down 4-5 things you plan to talk about.
2. On the assumption that you may have to lead the discussion, write a brief (1-2 minute) statement about your stance. Your statement should set the stage for, and end by raising, one or more of your discussion.

During class:

When you are part of the discussion in the inner circle

1. Listen to the introduction by the designated discussion leader and consider the discussion question(s) or issue(s) he or she raises.
2. Discuss (inner circle) or discuss on Quad (outer circle) the issues raised, keeping to the subject of the readings, attempting to analyze, criticize, and connect.
 - a. Analyze the readings to gain a deeper understanding of difficult concepts, examples, the author's position, and the author's arguments.
 - b. Criticize the readings, articulating and defending personal opinions about the adequacy of the author's presentation and arguments.

- c. Connect the issues you have analyzed and criticized to material of previous assignments in order to discern broader themes, similar concepts, and comparable or contrasting opinions.
3. As you participate, make good use of the text, at times calling attention to specific passages relevant to the issue at hand. When working with such a passage, cite the page number and allow time for others in the class to locate it. Then, read it aloud.
4. Ignore the teacher, who will not speak. Direct your attention to other students and regard the teacher as a recording secretary on hand to take down information for use later in the course.
5. Take brief notes of points and examples that deepen your understanding; opinions that differ from your own; and arguments that you find helpful, convincing, or worth trying to refute. These notes may be useful when you want to contribute to discussion, when you formulate study questions for subsequent classes, or when you participate in discussion. Do not, however, allow note-taking to cause you to lose the thread of the discussion.

After class:

1. Fill out self-evaluation form and bring to class the next day.

Specific Responsibilities:

Everyone

- You engage in discussion, **actively** participating (if you are silent you will fail).
- You read aloud excerpts of the text to support or make a point, drawing our attention to the words the author chose to use (diction).
- Listen to each other carefully.
- Look the speaker in the eye.
- Do not interrupt.
- Refer to one another by name: "What Amanda said about LeAlan's story..."

- Paraphrase what the speaker before you has said to respond responsibly. Support or refute the prior speaker's ideas.
- Stick to the text. Your point or opinion only matters if you can support your ideas.
- If you are confused about another's point, question her/him.
- Discuss ideas; do not attack people. It is the dialectic, the debate that makes us all more informed. Changing your mind or adding to your understanding means that your mind was open. We all win, if we learn from our discussion.

Discussion Leader

- Encourage students to talk to each other. Ask for a response to the most recent comments. Ask a specific student to respond.
- Ask students to defend or explain their opinions.
- Encourage an exploration of differing points of view. When you hear conflicting views, point them out and get the holders of those views to discuss their differences. Perhaps ask a third person to sum up the two positions.
- Keep the class on subject. If you are even halfway familiar with the material, you know when the discussion is no longer on track. Just say so.
- Point to a particular passage in the text relevant to a comment made by one person, or to a discussion among several. This might be a passage that challenges, or sums up and confirms, the views being expressed.

Outer Circle

- You are silent but "talking back" by taking posting your ideas onto Quad.
- When do you think the inner circle "sparked"? How did that happen?
- To what idea were you dying to respond? What would you have said?
- What was the single most important idea that was discussed? Why?
- What was the single most important idea that didn't get discussed? Why?
- What could have made the discussion even more constructive?