

The Harkness Method: A Student-led Discussion/Seminar class

AP World/European History Classes – Mrs. Rivas

Adapted from materials provided by the Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter NH
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Each group will prepare for and participate in discussions based on readings in your textbook and additional sources. You will know ahead of time when your group is scheduled to participate and you are to come prepared to class that day with your notes on the assigned readings and with questions that will generate and keep the discussion going. You will know in advance how long your group discussion is to last. The teacher will not speak during your group's discussion time.

To participate most effectively you must have a thorough grasp of the reading and an ability to connect it to the themes of your course such as:

- A detailed knowledge of the readings, especially key points and supporting evidence.
- A clear understanding of the chronology of events, not so much a rote memorization of dates but an awareness of how one event affected another and general trends of an era and a region.
- An ability to make connections between your assigned readings and previous topics or readings.

The Student and the Discussion:

Students help advance a discussion by interacting with their peers in a variety of ways:

One to One: One student can advance a discussion by making specific comments to another student:

- AFFIRM a comment made by another student
- CHALLENGE politely a comment made by another student
- ASK for more information, clarification or explanation
- RETURN to a comment another student made earlier
- CITE evidence from the reading that may support, challenge or question

One to All: A student can raise points for the whole group to consider:

- OPEN a discussion with a reaction, question or observation
- CITE evidence from the reading that pertains to the discussion for consideration by the group.
- CLARIFY a difference of opinion that may have emerged in discussion.
- CORRECT misinformation that may have been misread from the textbook.
- CONNECT ideas from the readings with ideas from past discussions or other groups or themes of the course
- SUMMARIZE a discussion point
- INTRODUCE a new line of inquiry if a particular topic has been thoroughly discussed
- CREATE closure as time is ending and explain the significance of this topic for future events.

Harkness Etiquette:

- Ask, question or critique, but DO NOT attack or insult
- Listen carefully to the comments of your peers, and think about them before reacting.
- Do not cut people off. A good rule to follow is waiting 2-3 seconds after someone has finished to speak.
- Avoid the urge to dominate the conversation but instead ask key questions that will prompt others to go into a particular topic.
- Avoid the urge to withdraw. If you are not a talker come well prepared with multiple talking points and questions that will contribute to or open up important topics. This will help ease you into the discussion.
- Admit and acknowledge when someone makes a good point.
- Avoid comments that might be disruptive or untimely or that will derail the discussion by changing the topic.
- Respect everyone in your group and expect the same in return.

Remember that this is not a debate or a competition. You are working as a team in a round-table discussion, also known as a seminar.

What your group should look like:

- Your group will be in charge of setting up the seats. Make sure you are able to make eye contact with everyone in the group during the seminar. However, make sure that no one in the group has his/her back to the class as they will be listening and taking notes during the seminar. Look up and speak clearly so that you can be heard.
- You may only rely on your own personal notes during the seminar and may make reference to page #'s in the textbook where critical topics are found. You are encouraged to jot down points as others are speaking in order to respond to them up later. Included in your notes should be key questions you can raise just in case the conversation stops before time is called.
- Create a place card so that all in the group may refer to each other by first names.

What to consider when preparing and planning your scheduled seminars:

All classes:

- Use EESPRIITE or SPICE to get the group discussion going and to orient the listening audience as to the main focus of the reading material your group is about to discuss. You may want to do this in the form of an opening question which others will chime in and start answering.
- Identify, describe and analyze change over time and continuities if they pertain to your readings.
- Identify, describe and analyze cause and effect relationships if they pertain to your readings.
- Identify, describe and analyze compare and contrast relationships if they pertain to your readings.
- Remember when analyzing you can talk about **how** something is happening, **why** something is happening or **the impact** of something that is happening. Remember many times there are multiple causes and effects as there are multiple ways of interpreting historical events.
- Predict possible essay questions that go with your readings.
- Use Google Drive to create some sort of discussion sequence. For example, who or what will open the discussion, where will it flow to next and eventually who or how will closure take place. Remember to remain flexible throughout as impromptu thoughts and comments may tend to add much to the topic. It is a conversation after all - keep it relaxed, flowing and natural.