**The Socratic Seminar**

**What is it?**

A Socratic Seminar is based on the Socratic Method of Socrates. Socratic seminar is a method of teaching developed by Socrates. He engaged his students in intellectual discussion by responding to questions with questions, instead of answers. This method encouraged the students to think for themselves rather than being told what to think.

Prior to the seminar, students are given a piece of reading in literature, history, health, philosophy, art or music to examine. After the students have read the text, open-ended questions are asked. The open-ended questions allow the students to think critically, analyze multiple meanings in text, and express ideas with clarity and confidence.\*

Participants in the seminar are expected to respond to one another in a respectful manner without bias or prejudice. They are also expected to listen carefully without interrupting. They must make direct eye contact with others and must use each other’s names.

<http://wblrd.sk.ca/~bestpractice/socratic/index.html>



**The Task**:

Students will be assigned in 1 of 2 groups (an outer circle and an inner circle).

Students may be assigned a close reading prior to discussion day, or may receive the passage the day of discussion and be asked to read as a group twice before beginning discussion. **Students may also be asked to create questions for discussion. These questions need to be though provoking, trigger conversation, and spark curiosity. Both groups create at least 6 discussion questions.**

The goal of the seminar is to participate in discussion by using questions for other peers and to participate without the prompting of the instructor.

**Inner Circle Responsibilities:**

1. Provides a basis for discussion: TALK TALK TALK!
2. The discussion is continuous until the instructor says to stop (typically 15 -20 minutes)
3. Should rely on prior annotation, questions you personally have about the reading, connections you have made, relating it (the secondary source) to the primary text, etc. **Refer to the text!**
4. Piggy-backs off other members’ ideas in the inner circle to continue discussion.
5. Tries to gain participation from all members of the group
6. If you are a more talkative member, try to prompt discussion from members who are less talkative.
7. YOU ONLY GET POINTS IF YOU TALK! (30 points)

**Outer Circle Responsibilities:**

1. Remaining silent and listening during the inner circle discussion
2. You talk, you lose points.
3. Taking notes during the inner circle’s discussion
4. Once the inner circle closes, it is your time to talk, so in order to piggy back off discussion, you will rely on your notes.
5. In order to gain points, you must take notes (10 points) and talk when it’s the outer circle’s turn (10 points).

**Closing the seminar**

If time allows, open the entire floor for discussion.