

## Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Services

To schedule an appointment or contact the CTL, visit UL 1125, call 274-1300 or email us at [thectl@iupui.edu](mailto:thectl@iupui.edu).

**Individual consultations** with faculty on topics related to teaching and the use of technology in teaching (e.g., course design, assessing student learning, scholarship of teaching and learning, active learning, using library resources, Turnitin.com, NVivo, podcasting, Oncourse CL).

**Workshops, symposiums and multi-day events** on various topics related to teaching and teaching with technology (e.g., millennial students, effective lecturing, promoting academic integrity, Moore Symposium, Tech Camp, Jump Start online course development program, Oncourse CL). To see a list of the workshops offered, please visit <http://ctl.iupui.edu/events/eventsCalendar.asp>.

**Customized workshops** for schools, departments and/or groups of faculty on any topic of interest related to teaching and/or teaching with technology. These workshops are typically held during a retreat or professional development session. To schedule a workshop or discuss possibilities call the CTL at 274-1300 or email [thectl@iupui.edu](mailto:thectl@iupui.edu).

**Classroom observations of teaching.** Completed by a member of the instructional design staff, this service provides faculty with feedback about their teaching. Typically faculty members identify the area in which they would like feedback. The instructor and consultant meet in advance and after the observation. A written report is provided to faculty member. The observation (and all other CTL services) is confidential, but faculty can elect to include this feedback in their annual reviews or dossiers. The focus of the observation is strictly on teaching strategies as this is not a peer review of teaching. Often these observations include facilitation of student focus groups about their learning experiences in the course. Student focus groups are usually done at mid-semester so the faculty member can make changes to enhance student learning.

**Equipment for check-out.** (e.g., video and digital cameras, laptops, projectors, classroom response system/clickers, light kits, tripods).

**Multimedia and computer lab** available for faculty to record audio, transfer video to other formats, create podcasts, edit video, scan documents and slides, etc. Support for use of this equipment is available on a walk-in or appointment basis.

**Resources on teaching.** This includes a small library collection on topics related to faculty life, higher education administration, teaching practices, assessment, online education, etc. Print and electronic resources such as tip sheets and an online module on inclusive teaching are also available. Come by anytime and browse our library or visit <http://ctl.iupui.edu/resources/main.asp> to review our electronic resources.

**Sample dossiers.** Copies of dossiers from faculty members who were successful in the promotion and tenure process are available for review. All areas of emphasis are represented (teaching, research, service, balanced case) as are a wide-range of academic disciplines. Sample nomination materials for various campus awards are also available. Stop by anytime and browse the collection.

## Tips for Effective Online Chats

*Online learning need not be an isolated experience. Collaborative learning can be facilitated through the use of online chats (Palloff & Pratt, 2005). This tip sheet identifies the challenges associated with the use of online chats and highlights key strategies for implementing effective and engaging chat experiences.*

### Challenges to Effective Chats

- Facilitating a chat is typically much more difficult than facilitating a face-to-face discussion. Nonverbal cues are not present, and it can be challenging to know what students find interesting, how they feel about a topic, and if they'd like to speak.
- Typing ability affects one's ability to participate in the chat.
- Students without a high-speed internet connection may experience additional lag time between postings and responses, thereby disrupting the synchronous nature of the chat.
- Chats are generally more conducive to extemporaneous discussion rather than reflective and critical thinking.

### Overcoming the Challenges

- Limit chat groups to four or five students.
- Keep chat sessions to an hour or less.
- Provide specific questions for students to consider prior to the chat. You can even have students draft a response to post as part of preparation for the chat.
- Be clear about chat room rules including: who will facilitate portions of the chat; the instructor's role throughout the chat; how often and when students should post comments; civility expectations; and acceptable shorthand notation.
- Instruct students to break up lengthy posts by typing ellipses after the first portion of a post. Ellipses signal to the group that the posting student is actively responding to the discussion and that additional thoughts are forthcoming.

### Strategies for Structuring Effective Chats

- *Jigsaw.* The purpose of a jigsaw is for each student to share relevant highlights from an assigned text with classmates who reviewed different texts. Through this technique, the group gains familiarity with a broader array of sources.
- *Role Play.* In a role play, student postings take the perspective of a type of person (e.g. union leader) or actual person (e.g. Abraham Lincoln).
- *Debate.* Students respond by taking a specified position on an issue. Clear guidelines on the structure of the debate and content of postings are critical to a successful debate.
- *Guest Speakers.* Outside experts can join the discussion and field student questions. Alternatively, the guest speakers could consist of selected students playing the role of an expert.
- *Office Hours.* Instructors can use online chats as the medium for holding office hours. This can be especially helpful since all students can reference the archived chat at later dates.

### References

- McKeage, K. (2001). Office hours as you like them: Integrating real-time chats into the course media mix. *College Teaching*, 49(1), 32-38.
- Palloff, R. & Pratt, K. (2005). *Collaborative online: Learning together in community*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## Chat Room Activities

Activity	Procedure	Modifications for Large Groups
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Debate</b></p>	<p><i>Before:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate a debate topic before the chat.</li> <li>• Assign any reading or other preparation.</li> <li>• Announce a schedule, guidelines, team assignments, and other logistics.</li> </ul> <p><i>During:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin the chat with an introduction by the professor.</li> <li>• Finish the introduction with a leading question.</li> <li>• A controlled debate (point/rebut) means that only one side can speak at a time, one person on one side making an opening point to which the other side responds.</li> <li>• A less structured debate can consist of each group/party posing a summary statement of their position. After all summaries are posted without comment and reviewed, the floor is thrown open to discussion.</li> <li>• The professor should interrupt if the communication protocol or other rules are violated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign groups who will meet and work together but have only one spokesperson</li> <li>• Have groups meet in separate chat rooms and then enter the common chat room when ready to contribute thoughtfully.</li> </ul>

<b>Guest Speaker</b>	<p><i>Before:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make arrangements with a guest to come to the chat to interact with the students on a given topic.</li> <li>• Ask the students to study the topic and to read biographical data about the speaker for questions to ask.</li> <li>• Set ground rules for the “ask the speaker” chat session.</li> </ul> <p><i>During:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin the chat with an introduction by the professor and comments by the guest speaker.</li> <li>• Begin the chat portion with a leading question by either the professor or the guest speaker.</li> <li>• Individuals or teams should use the questions they have prepared and also comments and questions that ask for clarification of a point made by the speaker or a class member.</li> <li>• The professor should interrupt if the communication protocol or other rules are violated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divide the class into groups that chat with the speaker at different times or dates</li> <li>• Individuals or teams can be assigned the task of summarizing the discussion at specific times or when the subject changes.</li> </ul>
<b>Office Hours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let students know you will be available for consultation via a chat room at regular times during the week.</li> <li>• Set evening “office” hours that you can participate in from home.</li> <li>• Announce a particular topic for each week’s consultation.</li> </ul>	

Leticia Ekhaml, “Tips for promoting collaboration and interactivity in online distance learning,” <http://computed.coe.wayne.edu/Vol5/Ekhaml.html>. Sept. 26, 2000.

## Tips for Effective Discussions

*Discussions are more effective than other methods of instruction for the goals of retention, application, problem-solving, attitude change, and motivation for future learning (McKeachie, 2002). Although discussion is an effective teaching tool, it can be difficult to manage because "discussion teaching is the art of managing spontaneity" (Barnes, 1994, p. 23). This tip sheet provides suggestions on how to create and manage effective classroom discussions.*

### Consider What You Want Students to Accomplish or Learn

- If your lesson or course objectives include having students apply concepts, develop critical thinking, use problem-solving skills, evaluate ideas, critically consider multiple points of view, or retain learning for use in future situations, then small group discussion has much to offer.
- Create the objectives and expected outcomes of the discussion and share them with students.

### Formulate Attainable and Acceptable Goals

- Have clear objectives for the discussion and communicate them clearly using handouts or a flip chart.
- Clarify for yourself your role as the discussion leader. Will this be a student-led discussion or will you take a more central role in guiding the conversation?
- Take into account different stages of intellectual development (Tiberius, 1999).
  - ✓ Students may feel they only receive the "truth" from an authority figure.
  - ✓ Students may accept more than one right answer.
  - ✓ Students have an "intellectual commitment" and accept more responsibility for interpretation and exploration.
- Use plus-one-staging. Challenge students' understanding by legitimating alternative points of view, explaining why authorities disagree, and dividing arguments into specific parts (Tiberius, 1999).
- Consider timelines. Allow enough time for brainstorming, discussion, and preparation for reporting (Tiberius, 1999).

### Create Meaningful Tasks that Produce Productive Discussion

- Ask why or how questions that lead to discussion. If students give only short answers, ask them to elaborate. Try to avoid asking yes/no questions or questions that have only one answer.
- Ask questions that require higher order thinking. See tip sheet on Bloom's Taxonomy for examples.
- Use, rather than fear silence. Students will generally need some time to react to your question and formulate thoughts.
- Consider introducing discussion in small groups rather than as one large group. Providing opportunities for students to talk in small groups often helps them to become comfortable with sharing ideas.
- Whenever possible, provide students with a specific goal for discussion. This is especially important when asking students to engage in small group discussion. You may ask students to answer a question, solve a problem, or provide alternative approaches.
- Choose meaningful topics. Often good conversation stems from discussion of controversial topics, conflicting viewpoints, case studies, or examining concepts or theories.

### Prepare Students for Group Discussion

- Early in the course discuss discussion. Talk about the way you teach and why discussion is important. Define what it means to engage in discussion. You may want to have students provide input on what defines an effective vs. ineffective discussion.

- Lay out general ground rules for discussion and have students respond to or generate specific ground rules for the course.
- Make evaluation of the discussion or participation explicit. Explain how you expect students to participate and how, or if, they will be graded on their contributions to discussion.
- Consider handing out a list of discussion topics at the end of the session to give students something to think about and prepare for the next class meeting.
- Consider having students prepare something before the class discussion. This could be a short written response to a question, a quiz, or online postings about readings or course topics.
- Prior to the discussion, ask students to write down one or two comments about the selected topic.
- Teach students how to participate. Consider providing them with resources about small group communication.
- Inform students that participation is not just sharing their unformed or uninformed opinions.
- Make resources available before, during, and after group activities.
- Give individual students an opportunity to react to the discussion through reports, journals, and evaluations (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Use this feedback to refine or reconfigure future discussions.

### **Take Time to Encourage Student Participation**

- Get to know students' names and if possible find ways to incorporate things about them in the course. For example, if you ask Laura to contribute a perspective based on her work in a non-profit agency you are more likely to get her involved in the conversation than if you ask a more general question.
- If discussion is going to be used frequently in the class, plan an icebreaker activity early in the class and make certain that within the first week or two each student has had an opportunity to talk during class.
- Provide positive feedback for participation. Use student comments as a way to add insight or build on a concept. Nonverbal cues, such as nodding or smiling, will also provide students with positive feedback about their contributions.
- Ease students into the discussion. One way to do this is to informally chat with students at the beginning of the class period. This helps students to feel more comfortable speaking in class.
- Take time to manage both the process and content. Encourage quiet students to speak up and when needed ask students who have made numerous contributions to hold their comments until you have heard from others. In addition, when discussion moves off topic the leader will need to carefully move it back on track.
- Consider assigning student roles. For example, you could assign students to serve as recorders, reporters, process observers, and time keepers. Be sure to have students rotate roles throughout the semester.
- Protect dissenting views by focusing on the view and not the person.
- If some students dominate conversation and others rarely speak you may want to consider using a talking stick, which will serve as a visual cue of student participation.
- Assign credit for the quality of the discussion or its product rather than the presentation.
- Recap the discussion. A summary of the discussion lets students know they have been heard and assists in their understanding of the most important points.
- Model effective communication by paraphrasing others' views, asking students to give summaries of group goals, and incorporating students' agendas into the class plan.

### **Intentionally Divide Students Into Small Groups**

- Divide students into heterogeneous ability, major, or prior experience groups to promote sharing of ideas, integration, and cooperation.
- Divide students into homogenous ability, major, or prior experience groups to solve particular problems or look more deeply at an issue or topic.
- Divide students using learning styles such as a learning style inventory or personality tests such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator to enhance social and skill development.

#### **References**

- Barnes, L. B. (1994). *Teaching and the case method: Text, cases and readings* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Johnson, D. & Johnson, R. (1999). Making cooperative learning work. *Theory into Practice*, 38, 67.73.
- McKeachle, W. J. (2002). *Teaching tips* (11<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Tiberius, R. (1999). *Small group teaching: A trouble-shooting guide*. London: Kogan Page.

## Pros/Cons of Threaded Discussion

### PROS

**Anytime/Anywhere/Anyone:** Learning is accessible to virtually everyone. It can also give a sense of security for those who may have experienced gender or race bias in the classroom or bias because of physical disabilities.

**Freedom and Reflection:** Threaded discussions can create a sense of freedom for students in giving honest, direct peer feedback during collaborative learning activities. The threaded discussion also allows students the opportunities for reflection and organization in their responses and can be a tool to encourage higher skills in writing and critical analysis.

**Practical Alternative to Email:** By using threaded discussions, you need only answer the same questions that keep coming up once and everyone will see your answer. And you and your students do not need to send each other emails confirming whether an assignment or responses have been received because everything on the threaded discussion becomes public record in the course.

**Community Building:** The threaded discussion allows you to create peer communities in the online classroom and to “publish” work that can serve as an incentive toward excellence for many students, motivating them to do their best work and to emulate the strong work of their peers. It can make any of these kinds of group “in the classroom” learning activities possible online:

- Informal and formal small discussion
- Project coordination
- Peer editing
- Brainstorming
- Small group work
- Instructor/student consultation

### CONS

**No Face to Face Contact:** Can be a con but can also be a pro!

**Fear of Public Speaking:** Becomes the fear of “public writing” because students realize that they have time to formulate a good response and there should be no excuse for a bad answer. These students may try to get by with quick response answers like “I agree with so and so...”. Instructor needs to make sure they keep students engaged and encourage them to respond no matter what.

**Thread Monopoly:** Just like in the classroom, there are always those students who tend to monopolize the online discussion forums with response after response after response. This can be a major turnoff to those students who are already shy about participating in

the first place. Instructor needs to privately contact those students who are monopolizing the forum and let them know that you appreciate their enthusiasm for participating but that they need to back off a little in order to let others participate.

**Informality vs. Formality:** Instructor needs to set the guidelines for how the discussion forum is to go. Some instructors are strictly using it as an opportunity for the students to respond to a variety of issues posted by the instructor. It is done in a laid back format with little emphasis put on grammar and punctuation. Some faculty on the other hand want the forums to be a representation of student work that would be turned in for a grade. It is up to the instructor, but it needs to be made clear to the students from the beginning how you want the discussion forum presented.

**Technology Inequalities:** Slow modems, down servers, etc. can cause frustration to any student trying to participate in a discussion forum or chat session. Unfortunately, you have little if any control over some of the technical glitches and need to keep this in mind when requiring certain types of participation in your class.

## Keeping Online Asynchronous Discussion on Topic

1. **Well-designed questions that keep students topic-focused:** Creating the open-ended question that fosters on-target discussion is a matter of experience. See Bloom's Taxonomy for some guidance.
2. **Provision of guidelines for students on preparing acceptable responses:** A few times I have heard new online instructors express surprise that their class's threaded discussions did not pan out even though they had heard that threaded discussion is such an effective learning tool online. Usually, these same instructors simply created a space for discussion to happen with no parameters or guidelines. See our section on guidelines for creating the free thread, the moderately informal thread, and the formal thread.
3. **Revision of original threaded discussion question when responses are off-target:** Online courses offer the instructor flexibility. If a particular question is not working well and students are confused, change it immediately and send out an email to your students regarding the change or post a thread in the threaded discussion.
4. **Consistent summaries of discussion:** Usually the entire class will answer a threaded discussion question by the time the discussion is over. But the class does not always realize this. Send an email to your students summing up the issues presented and resolved in a discussion; pinpoint especially interesting and informative responses by your students. You can also do this by posting a "my two-cents" response after the conclusion of the threaded discussion. Waiting until the discussion is over (if you have placed a date due on it) will help you avoid any "teacher says" syndrome.
5. **State the expectation that online discussion stay on topic:** Give clear detailed directions to your students on what you want in their responses at the beginning of each thread.
6. **Provide café or informal threaded discussion elsewhere in the course:** Have more than one threaded discussion in your course. You might have a permanent "water cooler" thread at the very start of your course which students can access as they come and go. A colleague made the suggestion that the "Café" thread or "Student Lounge" thread can be used as a place to get your students to decide on the parameters of threaded discussions in the course – let them jointly decide how structured the thread should be or how often class members should participate.
7. **Include a reminder that students stay on topic:** Don't ignore the threaded discussion if you want it to be effective. If students begin to stray from the topic, send out an email pushing everyone back in the right direction, or, better yet, if the direction the students have strayed is a good one, reinforce it and allow the discussion to focus on the new topic.
8. **Present the rules of conduct to eliminate off-topic discussion:** From the start, detail the "p's and q's" of the thread. Or use the informal thread as a place for your students to determine the "p's and q's".
9. **Provide a reward:** Offer extra credit for excellence in thread participation.

10. **Privately reprimand and give constructive feedback to students with off-topic conversations:** Don't be afraid to shoot off an email to a student who is doing a poor job in the threaded discussion. If the problem is chronic and quite disruptive, call the student and make sure he/she understands the protocol of the threads.
11. **Provide a grade for keeping on topic:** Make both participation and quality of response a part of your grading policy.
12. **Screen postings and route off-topic posting to alternative locations with explanation to submitter:** Ask all your students to email to you their threaded discussion responses and post them yourself on the threads. Notify those students whose responses are not adequate.
13. **Expel offenders after a certain number of off-topic submissions:** Delete threaded discussion postings by those students who refuse to play by the rules and then deny them access into the threads and dock their class participation grade. You also might include threaded discussion responses in an overall Courtesy Code for your course.