

What is a Socratic Seminar?

What does *Socratic* mean?

Socratic comes from the name Socrates. Socrates (ca. 470-399 B.C.) was a Classical Greek philosopher who developed a Theory of Knowledge.

What was Socrates' Theory of Knowledge?

Socrates was convinced that the surest way to attain reliable knowledge was through the practice of disciplined conversation.

What is a Socratic Seminar?

A Socratic Seminar is a method to try to understand information by creating a dialogue in class in regards to a specific text or question. In a Socratic Seminar, participants seek deeper understanding of complex ideas through rigorously thoughtful dialogue, rather than by memorizing bits of information.

What do I need to do to prepare?

- Come with at least **one** or **two** essential questions written down, the BIG questions, things you wonder about. Essential questions point to the heart of a subject or topic, especially its controversies. Your questions should cause further and deepening interest in the subject.
- Don't stray too much from the topic.
- Think out loud.
- Make notes and go back to something you want to discuss more.
- Do not raise your hand, use first names and do not dominate the conversation, give everyone a chance to speak.
- Ask for clarification, do not sit there confused.
- It is ok to disagree and argue, this leads to higher learning.
- You can discuss a concept you do not agree with.
- Questions are more important than answers.
- The seminar is as good as you make it.

During the seminar, here are some things to remember:

1. It's OK to "pass" when asked to contribute.
2. Do not participate if you are not prepared. A seminar should not be a bull session.
3. Do not stay confused; ask for clarification.
4. Stick to the point currently under discussion; make notes about ideas you want to come back to.
5. Listen carefully.
6. Speak up so that all can hear you.
7. Talk to each other, not just to the leader or teacher.
8. Discuss ideas rather than each other's opinions.

Socratic Seminar: Participant Rubric

<p>A Level Participant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Participant offers enough solid analysis, without prompting, to move the conversation forward ➤ Participant, through his or her comments, demonstrates a deep knowledge of the text and the question ➤ Participant has come to the seminar prepared, with notes and a marked/annotated text ➤ Participant, through his or her comments, shows that s/he is actively listening to other participants ➤ S/he offers clarification and/or follow-up that extends the conversation ➤ Participant's remarks often refer back to specific parts of the text.
<p>B Level Participant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Participant offers solid analysis without prompting ➤ Through his or her comments, participant demonstrates a good knowledge of the text and the question ➤ Participant has come to the seminar prepared, with notes and a marked/annotated text ➤ Participant shows that s/he is actively listening to others. S/he offers clarification and/or follow-up
<p>C Level Participant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Participant offers some analysis, but needs prompting from the seminar leader ➤ Through his or her comments, participant demonstrates a general knowledge of the text and question ➤ Participant is less prepared, with few notes and no marked/annotated text ➤ Participant is actively listening to others, but does not offer clarification and/or follow-up to others' comments ➤ Participant relies more upon his or her opinion, and less on the text to drive his or her comments
<p>D or F Level Participant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Participant offers little commentary ➤ Participant comes to the seminar ill-prepared with little understanding of the text and question ➤ Participant does not listen to others, offers no commentary to further the discussion