Multi-Purpose Lecture Breaks

Double-response homework check

- Before class, write 2 questions stemming from the assigned readings. Questions that can be answered in a few words tend to work better for this activity.
- Ask students to fold a sheet of paper in half and answers questions twice: once on each half.
- They give you one set of answers (either with their name on it or anonymously if you prefer) and keep the other one.
- Ask students to ‘legally cheat’ by writing in the corrected answers with a different coloured pen as the questions are discussed in class.
- Example question: Which is greater: the average depth of the ocean or the average height of the continents about sea level? Justify your answer.

Think-pair-share

- After 20-30 minutes, design a lecture break with a question asking students to elaborate on information received during the lecture. Asks students write down their individual answers, discuss in pairs, then share with the whole class.
- Example question: Give a real-life example, summarize a concept, list pros/cons or costs/benefits

Heads together, random share

- After 20-30 minutes, ask students to form groups of four. Pose a complex question with a convergent (i.e., closing down on possible answers).
- Heads together, students discuss the answer for 1 or 2 minutes
- Randomly call on a 3 to 4 groups to provide their answer
- Example question: In class we discussed the hierarchical arrangement of the human body. Arrange the following structures according to that plan from the simplest to the most complex (6 structures are provided).

Graphic thinking

- Ask students to draw a diagram (e.g., Venn diagram, web, compare/contrast chart, concept map) to organize information.

Three-step interview

- If students are working on individual or (group) projects, ask them to share their efforts with a small audience of their peers.
- Student 1 interviews student 2 and vice versa for three minutes each.
- Then they join another twosome and each explains their partner’s project to the other pair.

Brainstorm, categorize, and roam
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- Ask students to form groups of 4 and brainstorm ideas (ask for 10 to 15 key ideas) on a given topic for about 5 minutes.
- They record each idea on Post-it notes or flash cards (ahead of time ask them to bring Post-its to class and have some with you) and to categorize them and label the categories in a logical manner they can explain.
- After selecting one student per group to remain with the chart to explain it, all other students roam the room to study the other groups’ charts.
- Example: What comes to mind when you think about post-colonial literature?

Send-a-problem

- Students form groups of 4. On a flash card, each student writes a question on one side and the answer on the other.
- As a group, they check all 4 cards for accuracy. The cards are sent to another group to be answered orally inside that group.
- If questions are confusing, groups can send one member to the table of origin for clarification.
- As an option, cards are submitted to the instructor for assessment.

K-W-L reading strategy

- K: Students list what they know about a topic
- W: Students list what they wonder (want or need to know) about that topic
- L: They list what they have learned after the lecture / unit of study.

Group discussion with passport

- Students form groups of 3 to 4 and discuss a complex issue.
- To encourage active listening, ask students to paraphrase they key point of the last person who spoke before stating their opinion.
- Clearly capturing what the previous person has said gives the next speaker the ‘passport’ to state his or her point. If the paraphraser does not restate the previous accurately, clarification occurs before continuing.

Minute paper

- Ask students to write down they thoughts based on a prompt that you provide. They should do so immediately and quickly.
- As an option, you can ask them to exchange their paper with a partner and ask for a follow-up quick write. You can select a few randomly to discuss.
- Example prompts: Summarize the main point of the last class. What are the two [three, four] most significant [surprising, etc.] things you have learning during this session? What questions remain in your mind about this topic?

The University Writing Council: http://www.upei.ca/uwc/wac/strategies/one-minute_essay.html

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