The Question Game

Learning goals:

1) Develop student’s ability to think critically about course material and their own writing.
2) Help students gain a deeper understanding of the course material.
3) Assist in developing student’s ability to think philosophically.
4) Help instructors to gage the student’s level of understanding and critical thinking skills.
5) The Question Game (Variation 1) - Encourage class discussion about course material.
6) The Question Game (Variation 2) - Provide students with feedback from their peers on their writing assignment

Description:

This ‘game’ has only one rule, **YOU CAN ONLY ASK QUESTIONS!**
Below are two variations of the Question Game. But the game can be tailored to suite different disciplines, class sizes and course levels.

Variation 1- Verbal

This activity will take anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes. It is a great way to get students engaged with the course material, initiate discussion and encourage participation from all students. Begin by reviewing an assigned reading (or excerpt) from the course material. Students are then to ask a question (ANY QUESTION!) about the course material. You can do this in turn (i.e. going around the table or down the rows) or allow students to volunteer. The idea is to go around the room raising questions (and only questions) about the course material.

*Take note of the difficult and interesting questions for a class discussion that will follow.*

Variation 2- Written

This activity will take anywhere from 15 to 45 minutes, depending on the number of students in the class. All students are required to bring a sample of their own work. It’s best to use a draft or outline of an essay assignment that students are working on for your class. The draft/outline should be written on loose paper which can be passed around the room. You can either group students by essay topic, or mix them up.
Then, the game begins!
1) Have students write their name on the top of their essay and highlight their thesis. Each student then writes their essay ‘question’ (i.e. the question that they have been asked to answer for this essay/ the question their thesis is answering) on the top of the page.
2) Everyone passes their essay to the right.
3) Students will receive a peers essay from the left. They must review their peers essay/ outline and write a question (pertaining to the essay/ outline) directly onto the page.
4) Next, all essays rotate to the rights. Students are to review this ‘new’ essay/ outline and add a different question onto this page.
5) Repeat step 4 until the essays have circulated once around the room and returned to their author.

*To add some interest and make the game harder you can direct the flow of questions at any point. For example:
- Students may only ask a question about another question on the page.
- Students may only ask a question about the thesis.
- Students may only ask a question about objections to the author’s argument.

Key concepts:

The key concepts employed can vary depending on the discipline, course material and focus (verbal or written). For a philosophy class, the focus is on getting students to think philosophically. For this, what, how, and why are the most important sorts of questions.
For example:
What do you mean by ________?
How might one define/ understand this term differently?
Why might someone disagree with your position?

Students should focus on understanding why the questions are difficult and why reasonable persons might disagree.

This class exercise was originally developed for Introduction to Women’s Studies, Women’s Studies and Feminist Research 1020E and later modified for Gender and Sexuality, Philosophy 2077 F by:

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