

Session 1 - Notes

Pre-survey - gauge interest/investment before a class - put invested students together. Could also put majors together. But want to balance that with putting together diverse groups so people can learn from each other.

Transparency - explain to students why doing groupwork, how it's set up.

Maintain individual accountability: students have to come prepared to do the work that's going to help the group succeed.

Motivate students to buy in to group work through an opening exercise where individually, it doesn't go as well as it does when they do it again as a group.

Opening icebreaker ideas: three sets of cards: 1 inanimate object, one occupation, one animal. Build a hybrid out of all three things. Work in teams of 3-4 to build that thing out of cardboard in two class sessions. Outcome is relevant to the class, but there's no right/wrong answer and the outcome is of no significance. Try to set it up so that no one seems to know more than anyone else - sets a basis for equity/inclusion from the beginning. (If you send out a pre-groupwork assignment then the activity doesn't have to depend on prior knowledge, but instead can set a standard for how you expect students to come prepared.

Watch out for how precursor assignments might run up against students' lack of accessibility before they get to campus. Not everyone is familiar with learning management platforms, too.

Even something as simple as having students introduce each other to the class.

Concentric Circles: Break people into groups of 2. Each pair has to talk about a question for two minutes, like "What was a piece of art or theater that made you change the way you thought about something?" Each person talks for two minutes, then switch roles. Then they switch partners and answer a deeper question, then there's one more partner switch to respond to a deeper question.

Sian Christie's icebreaker - you learn about a partner, then choose what fictional story character the person you're talking with was most like, but it's a surprise.

Can set up an icebreaker that is discipline adjacent. So rather than asking students to use German vocab on day one and possibly alienate some students who have less vocab, have them do a group task in a fake language that uses grammatical properties of the target language. Or have them brainstorm pop culture examples of things and compare lists.

Why use collaborative learning?

- Promotes awareness of diversity inherent in classroom +1
- Emphasizes peer learning, decentralizes authority/expertise
- Employs social variability typical of college environment
- Personalizes classroom environment
- Emphasis on learning/knowledge rather than grades assessments
- Students help each other, learn by teaching each other +2
- Easier to get them to take risks in group than individually
- Reminds them that they aren't alone in struggling with things
- Prepares them for THE REAL WORLD aka jobs (blech) +1
- Bring diverse perspectives and expertise
- Divide workload among students
- Build trust/appreciate different ways of working
- Produce something creative/analytical on a larger scale +1
- See gaps in one's own understanding/perspective
- Listen to understand rather than respond
- Opportunities for leadership and self-discovery about how you work best
- Empathy can be learned in group work, if that learning is structured
- Building a sense of community/belonging, again if it's structured right +1
- Communication skills!
- Learning to compromise
- Harder to hide; students have to articulate ideas
- Energizes learning
- Can get lots more work done (similar to producing something on a larger scale)
- Community building/empathy/teaching and ceding leadership
- Get more work done on bigger projects +1
- Humanities knowledge is produced through conversation
- Easier to take a risk when not everyone is listening to them, and esp. when prof isn't listening
- Students are more active
- Can spur creativity.
- Danger in students not taking responsibility
- Life is more collaborative than not - household as well as job
- In the arts, most interesting art today is collaborative/interdisciplinary
- Intellectual gain in terms of ideas that are pinballing; get more creative ideas out of group than out of one person.
- You might make a friend!
- Can force students to step into new roles - don't always have to be a leader or a scribe.
- Community building, peer-to-peer learning, shared responsibility, time management
- Practice for working through disagreements (important to set ground rules)
- Students can group-generate rubrics and decide on how work will be evaluated
- Students are accountable to each other, maybe less likely to fall through cracks and disappear (especially online)