Leading Worthwhile Class Discussions

What are the best ways to engage students in focused, time-efficient, worthwhile class discussions? How can we lead an informative discussion that engages UNLV students while promoting their academic success? We’ll use a case-discussion format to address these questions and to examine some common pitfalls of class discussions. An analysis of our own discussion will add a metacognitive approach to our topic.

Strategies for worthwhile class discussions:
- **establish a cooperative group dynamic**, based on shared guidelines (For example: emotions are valid and we treat them with respect.)
- **develop clear group goals** (For example: explicitly define the purpose of the discussion, the task [what to discuss and how], and the criteria for success.)
- **invite students to join you in monitoring both the process and the content of the discussion** (Remember that the more you intervene to guide the discussion, the less responsibility students will take for doing so.)

Resources (hover over each resource for its URL):


- Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University, Online Document. “Some Different Types of Questioning.” Copyright © 2002-2007 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

- Felder, Richard. “*Hang In There! Dealing with Student Resistance to Learner-Centered Teaching.*” Chemical Engineering Education 43(2), 131-132 (Spring 2011), reprinted in *Tomorrow’s Professor* #1111.


- Ritchhart, Ron. “*A Typology of Classroom Questions.*” Culture of Thinking Project, 2009.


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