

APEH Socratic Seminar

RATIONALE: The objective of this type of activity is to make students comfortable with reading about, analyzing, and discussing intelligently historical issues/problems through the prism of primary sources [text, graphics of all types like maps, charts, data tables, political cartoons, political posters, art work, song lyrics, etc.]—the major investigative tools of the historian.

HOMEWORK: You will read a packet of primary source documents thoroughly before coming to class. I want to see evidence throughout the documents that you have engaged in “active reading” of those documents. By that I mean you must underline/highlight key passages that reflected the major points presented in those documents, that you write comments about what you read along the margins of the documents or pose questions that you wish to raise in the class discussion. You should be having an “**intellectual conversation**” with those documents!

IN-CLASS SEMINAR PROCEDURES: As you come into class for an H-O-H, pick up a discussion sheet and a colored chip on your right. When the class is ready, I will pick one of the two colors in the chip box for that day and then direct all students with the color I choose to go into the inner circle first. They will begin the discussion. Everyone else is in the outer circle group for this round.

Every student has the discussion sheet along with your document packet extensively annotated [as described above] on their desk with a pen. All students will take notes on the key points made/questions posed/differing viewpoints, etc., in the left column of the sheet. Any questions that you have about disagreements with another student's point of view or new ideas/thoughts that are relevant to the discussion that pop into your head should be written in the right column on the discussion sheet. I want to see evidence of your thinking process as you actively/passively [in the case of outer circle students] participate in the H-O-H discussions.

INNER-CIRCLE RESPONSIBILITIES: All students in the inner circle will engage in the actual discussion directly. This activity should be 95% student-led. I will pose the first question. Students should address that question and start to engage in discussion amongst themselves, not looking to me to lead the inner circle group [I am there to correct a factual error, or referee a heated argument, or to pose another question when the discussion peters out]. Just jump right in. If more than one student begins to speak at the same time, one should show deference to the other and let them speak first; then the other student will speak next before any other members of the group chime in.

Ask each other questions.

- Pose alternative points of view.
- Disagree directly, but politely with each other.
- Support the idea/point just made by a student by presenting a **fresh example**.
- Make an interesting connection to another point made previously, or from something you read in the textbook, or heard in a prior class → connect the “info/data dots!”
- Identify a pattern or any bias that you notice in a document.
- Be aware of the date of each document → Is it significant? What is going on in the rest of Europe/the world at that time?
- Make a well-reasoned prediction or hypothesis.
- Go beyond the obvious → articulate the complex, the subtle, the nuanced → dig deeper into the documents [What's missing? What don't they tell you?]

Remember to make eye contact with the other members of the inner circle group [don't look at me or raise your hand to be recognized]. Acknowledge other students by name when addressing them or referring to something they had said.

OUTER-CIRCLE RESPONSIBILITIES: Those students initially in the outer circle should be quiet, listen to the discussion, write profusely on their discussion sheet [especially things that they feel should have been addressed by the inner circle discussion but were missed, or that they disagree with, or questions that they would like answered based on what was said in the initial discussions]. Perhaps they need some clarification of a point made by an inner circle member.

After 15-17 minutes has passed, I will stop the discussion and turn to the outer circle. This is their chance to make comments or ask questions of the inner circle. I give them up to 5 minutes for that.

Once this phase of the activity is over, the groups exchange positions and the discussion continues with the first question of "round 2" posed by me. We will proceed in the same manner as we did for round 1. At the end of the second round, you will hand in the discussion sheet on top of your document packet and place them on a pile on my desk. Both will be evaluated in formulating your grade.

GRADING OF THIS ASSIGNMENT: The point value for any Inner-Outer Circle will depend on the amount of documents in the packet [the more there are to analyze, the larger the point value]. Your grade will be holistically tabulated based on the following criteria:

- The extent of your pre-discussion preparations → the quality of the **"intellectual conversation" you have with your document packet** [underlining/highlighting, quality of the notations in the margins, etc.]
- The amount of and quality of your participation in the H-O-H discussion.
- The depth of your discussion sheet notes, the quality of your thinking and analysis of the discussion [shown in the right column of the sheet], etc.

