SOCRATIC CIRCLES

International Teaching and Learning Conference
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Dennis Bozyk, Chair
Department of History
Madonna University
Discussion Outline

• Experience of Socratic Method
• Model of Socratic Circle
• Obstacles and Reservations
• Socratic Education as Transformational
Socratic Circles

Socratic Method: A dialogic experience intended to develop, question and deepen a learner’s ideas

Your Experiences/Memories of Socratic Dialogues

As a learner? As an instructor?

The Paper Chase (1973)

https://vimeo.com/9628635
Socratic Circles

• Beware the “illusion of technique”

• Adaptation of “Socratic” rather than duplication from Plato’s Dialogues and Republic

• Sadly, may be “innovative” in today’s university classroom
Socratic Circles

One model of Socratic Circle or Socratic Seminar

• Assigned reading + brief “talking” paper
• Goldfish bowl: Socratic participants + Instructor
• Outside Circle: audience participants
• Socratic dialogue
• Audience questions
• Formative Assessment
Socratic Circles


Socratic Circles

Why aren’t Socratic Circles used in today’s classrooms?

Time: Takes time from lecture, not “accelerated” learning
Numbers: Too many students in class
Uncertainty: Instructor can prepare, but not plan
Assessment: Difficult to quantify, not a Scan-tron
Why Socratic Circles?

• Deeper knowledge of class material


• Compatible with Technology (Blackboard, Moodle, etc.)

• Guided thinking experience becomes internalized.

• Ethical responsibility: Transforming life-long learning
Contact:
Dennis Bozyk, Chair
Department of History
Madonna University
Livonia MI 48150

734 432-5547

dbozyk@Madonna.edu