

The Socratic Seminar

This class seminar will give you the opportunity to test your analytical and discussion skills through a structured conversation.

The Process

1. Before the seminar your teacher will organize the class into two groups and direct the groups to prepare by reviewing written material, generating questions, and writing answers to questions.
2. Your teacher will arrange the classroom chairs into an inner circle and an outer circle. The inner circle will have one extra chair: the hot seat.
3. Half of the class will sit in the inner-circle chairs (leaving the hot seat empty) and the other half in the outer-circle chairs. When you are in the inner circle, you are participating in the conversation. When you are in the outer circle, you are observing and taking notes on the conversation.
4. If, as an outer-circle student, you would like to enter into the conversation of the students in the inner circle, you may choose to sit in the hot seat and wait to be invited to speak by a classmate in the inner circle. When called on, you may briefly do one or more of the following:
 - ask an inner-circle student to clarify or support a statement
 - respectfully correct an incorrect statement
 - raise an important point that has not yet been addressed
 - direct the group back to the original topic
5. Your teacher will be observing the seminar, not actively participating in it.
6. Halfway through the seminar, the inner-circle and outer-circle students will switch places.

Positive Contributions to the Seminar

Your teacher will consider your contribution to the Socratic seminar to be positive if you do the following:

- participate in conversation
- demonstrate critical thinking in analyzing the background text (whether Scripture, the student book, or another source)
- make an insightful point
- articulate a connection to earlier class material or to material from another academic subject
- pose a good question
- allow another speaker to speak before you
- direct the group back to the original topic
- invite someone to participate
- provide support for your arguments from Scripture, the student book, or other relevant sources



Negative Contributions to the Seminar

Your teacher will consider your contribution the Socratic seminar to be negative if you do the following:

- interrupt another student
- challenge other students' statements in a disrespectful or dismissive manner
- repeat points without adding new ideas or material
- derail the conversation
- dominate the conversation

