

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

The following strategies are based on Julie Hatcher and Robert Bringle's "Reflection for the College Classroom" (1996, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis).

CLASS DISCUSSIONS: This is a technique where faculty create questions to guide group discussion in the classroom. Use structured reflection sessions during regular class time and throughout the course.

CLASS PRESENTATIONS: Class presentations are an effective technique to use during the middle and end of the course, and can be designed for individuals or groups. Faculty should have clear and well defined expectations and criteria for these projects. Students share their learning with peers through a video, slide show, bulletin board, web page, panel discussion, or a persuasive speech. This is an opportunity for students to synthesize and summarize their learning over the entire course and connect the classroom knowledge to out of the classroom learning.

COMMUNITY MURAL: Creating a mural is a more nontraditional approach to student reflection. This technique enables students to collectively create a statement about a topic. Murals are excellent final projects. Students can use various sources (magazines, newspapers, other art materials) to build their mural. Faculty need to clearly define the criteria for evaluation of content. Display the murals in a public space.

DIRECTED READINGS: Directed readings are additional readings, outside of traditional textbooks, that provide a broader or local context to a topic. Students can find their own directed readings to share with their peers. Directed readings take all literary forms (newspaper articles, short stories, novels, poetry, etc.).

ESSAYS: Reflective essays are a more formal example of journal entries, and are created via essay questions provided at the beginning of the course. Students are expected to submit a specific number of essays during the semester (usually two or three). Reflective essays can focus on personal development, academic connections to course content, or ideas and recommendations for future action. (Chris Koliba, Georgetown University)

FREE ASSOCIATION BRAINSTORMING: Students have 10-20 post it notes to write down how they felt at the beginning of the semester about the course, then how they felt after the first assessment, and how they are feeling now. They also can write down suggestions or concerns about the course. The students stick their post it notes on newsprint around the room labeled with happy, sad and bewildered faces. The students stand where they have to most post it notes. Faculty and students can then discuss as a class their progress and create a plan for success.

FISH BOWL: Faculty asks for 5-7 volunteers to be in a circle in the middle of the room. The remaining students form a large circle outside the inner circle. Faculty provide the inner circle with open ended questions about content in the course and encourages students to maintain discussion. If a student from the outer circle has something to say, he or she replaces someone from the inner circle. Faculty may ask all students to provide questions for the inner circle or require all to be in the inner circle at some point. This activity provides for public and private reflection.

IT'S MY BAG: Students find a bag at home and fill it with items that symbolize an assigned or self identified idea from the course. Students bring in the bags and explain their items to the rest of the class. Students are given the chance to think metaphorically about their learning and connect the abstract with the concrete. (James Wolf, Miami-Dade College)

FOUR CORNERS: Faculty can use this to assist students in clarifying their values and exploring the knowledge base for student opinion. This can be used anytime during the course. Name each corner of the room as follows: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Instruct students to go to the place in the room for which they most identify after you read certain statements. Faculty can create questions based on course content. Once students have chosen their respective place, allow time for the students to discuss their reasons with other group members. Have each group report back their reasons, and then allow students to switch if they want to. Continue discussion and repeat with different statements.