

# SEMINAR FACILITATION GUIDE

*When it is your turn, as a pair or small group, to facilitate seminar, you will need to take the following steps and consider the options below.*

1. **Read** through the material carefully, twice. Take copious notes.
2. **Write** a potential outline of ideas for your seminar.
3. **Meet with your co-facilitators** by Wednesday or Thursday (at the latest) to make your plan (see Seminar Facilitation Plan ). Review all of the options and ideas covered in this packet.
4. **Meet with your seminar faculty** during office hours to discuss your plan , key concepts, the book, and what you feel are the goals of the seminar session.
5. **Write out your Seminar Facilitation Plan** (this will be turned in to your seminar faculty prior to beginning seminar), including:
  - Names of facilitators
  - Key Concepts of the text
  - Goals of the seminar
  - Seminar process
6. **Write your Reflections on the seminar** (to be written immediately after)--who did what, how things went, what you might have done differently, what you wish had happened, what worked, what didn 't (see Seminar Facilitation Plan )

# Thinking About and Structuring Seminar...

As a “religious experience “: constructing a religious experience is not really so mystical as it sounds. It’s a matter of having a meaningful flow of

- loud and quiet times,
- expressive and reflective times,,
- times attending to a complex thought,
- time to privately integrate that thought,
- and time to share thoughts quietly or passionately with others.

*(It’s interesting to note that most people don’t claim to have “religious experiences “ in church so much as they become prepared while in church to have such experiences when they go out in the world. Similarly, you may find that your best thinking is done outside of seminar, but perhaps as a result of seminar. It’s important to seek ways in which seminar can prepare us to have more of these moments in life.)*



Open yourself up to some wacky options you may not have thought of as being particularly “seminar-y”. You may, for instance,

- bring music into seminar, or
- bring clay for people to work with as they talk (you’d be surprised at what the unconscious mind will do!)
- provide time in seminar for people to write or draw freely as they think or about what they think.
- You may institute silence in the middle or between conversations.
- Bring copies of historical documents for people to interpret.
- Create group timelines of the book.
- Show a cartoon or video that deals with themes or ideas in the book.



*Another Important Concept:*

**Providing Context:** Some books take some extra work digging up information, examples, or activities to drive home or make sense of their points.

*Take some time to do research on the book, the themes in the book, the place where the book takes place, or the author in order to get ideas for activities.*

Consider what group activities can aid our conversation. it may be

- looking at a slide of an image and trying to interpret it together..
- a game or a hypothetical problem to solve.
- You may need to research the author’s life or other works to provide some more perspective on what she is doing with a particular text.

*Here are some ways of thinking about how the 1.5 hours in seminar might be divided up*

## OPENING

how will you kick things off, with a shout, a bang, a meditation, something fun, a challenge, ...?

## GUIDING ACTIVITY

once things get going, is there a way to shift the conversation to help it go deeper?

## MAINTENANCE

who will and how will you keep things on track, a written agenda, observers? will someone take charge of keeping us from digressing?

## GETTING TO A BREAK

Ah, this one always eludes me... how to build in a good stopping point for that all important smoking circle?

## COMING BACK

once you’ve taken a break, how do you get people’s attention and regain focus?

## COMING TO A CLOSE

how do you take a raging beast of a conversation, or a dull slogging torture session and move it towards the final

stages

## REFLECTING

it’s important to build in some kind of check-in at the end, last thoughts, etc

## CLOSURE

finally, do you want to have some special way of closing the proceedings... group hug?

## ASSESSMENT

for you and your seminar leader, and any straggling students: how was it? what worked, what didn’t, etc...

# ○ SEMINAR MODELS ○

*the techniques below are often best used in combination. Remembering the “religious experience” approach, it can be powerful to combine very different techniques.*

**silent seminar:** everyone writes ideas and questions on a sheet of paper for five minutes and then passes it to their left. When you receive a paper, you have five minutes to comment on the author’s ideas, ask related questions, and pass it on....

**facilitated brainstorming:** facilitator comes up with specific questions or challenges and records the group’s ideas on the board.

**fishbowl:** designated groups alternate having their discussion in the center of the room. Observers are attentive to the content, the course of the conversation, and the group dynamics.

**panel:** facilitators and/or willing students act as a panel that presents some basic ideas or assigned point of view, then fields questions from the audience. This might involve role playing.

**role playing:** facilitators and or students use role playing to explore concepts in the text or to liven the conversation with specific “roles in groups” or specific scenes to act out.

**game:** a quiz game, pictictionary, or other competitive format designed by the facilitators.

**talk show (oprah):** facilitators stage a talk show in which the class is the audience. Guests on the show might be, for instance, David Wilson and John Okada.

**interpretive dance:** of course.

**agenda leads to discussion:** begin the seminar by forming an agenda on the board and determining a course through it. Consider time limits on each topic.

**pre seminars:** break the seminar into small groups. Give each group a task and let them know what you’ll expect of them when they come back.

**round robins:** go around the table so that everyone has a chance to talk. It’s up to you whether commentary is allowed throughout.

**talking ball:** any object can be used to slow the conversation down...only the person holding the ball can talk. the person with the ball decides who gets it next.

**discussion web:** a ball of yarn is tossed from speaker to speaker, with each successive person holding the string and passing the ball, revealing the course or web of the conversation as well as who is being left out.

**rule of 3:** each participant can only speak three times until everyone has spoken their full three.

**thesis statements:** in small groups construct thesis statements for the text and analyze them as a large group.

**workshop/discussion:** conceive of some activity that can provoke meaningful discussion related to key concepts in the text.

**create a debate:** determine two clear sides to a relevant issue and divide the seminar into debate teams.

**believing and doubting:** either split the class or split the time between believing the text (trusting the author and adding your own defense and knowledge to support their ideas) and doubting it (reading with skepticism, seeking holes in the argument, probing for weaknesses and seeking alternative perspective)

**close reading** spend time analyzing and discussing a single passage, paragraph, or section of a text.

**prepared questions:** facilitators come with a specific set of questions to pose to the seminar group.

**application of concepts to specific issue/problem:** use concepts from the book to discuss a specific issue or problem

**scenarios:** presented to groups to analyze using text ideas: construct scenarios that give the group various ways of applying text ideas.

**mapping ideas:** use visual means to map out the ideas in a text and how they relate to key concepts

**collaborative writing:** challenge groups or pairs to write about the text in collaboration

**complete the sentence:** instead of questions, bring the beginnings of sentences and see how different people complete them.

**mock trial:** stage a trial in which issues from the text are a key factor

**study guide:** create a study guide and use the questions to guide discussions.

**K.W.L.:** begin the seminar by asking participant what they know about the given subject, determine what they want to know, then, at the end, assess what has been learned

# Seminar Facilitation Plan

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Names of Facilitators: \_\_\_\_\_

Seminar Text: \_\_\_\_\_ Week # \_\_\_\_\_

KEY CONCEPTS OF THE TEXT (consider the text on its own and in relation to the program) IN YOUR OWN WORDS

What is your MAIN GOAL as facilitators of this seminar?

SEMINAR PLAN

WHAT 'S GOING TO HAPPEN?

11:00

11:15

11:30

11:45

12:00

12:15

12:30

keep this document  
and any notes taken in preparation for and during the seminar that you facilitate  
for your portfolio

# Seminar Facilitation Assessment

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On a scale of 1-10, 10 being best, how would you rate this seminar? \_\_\_\_\_

Comment on how the seminar matched your expectations as you planned it, and what surprised you.

What would you do differently if you had it to do over?

What was accomplished in seminar? What worked? What didn't?

Describe each of your roles as facilitators.