Technology Integration Practical Solutions
Engaging Discussions

Introduction

In this guide, we will look at tools and ideas for making discussion boards more engaging.

For many, the use of a standard textual discussion board is an easy to deploy tool in an online classroom. As the instructor, you provide a discussion topic and students respond to the topic and to each other.

Discussion and debate are critical skills for students to develop as part of their educational process. A textual response allows for the student to fully craft and refine their response before submission, which can be beneficial but may not always be authentic. However, a video submission can sometimes reveal the unrefined thought processes that are present in face-to-face discussion and debate and have the potential to be more genuine.

Consider This: Flipgrid

Flipgrid is a product owned by Microsoft. It is a video-based discussion board.

Just like a standard textual discussion board, the instructor creates an initial topic for discussion. However, students respond with short videos (up to 5 minutes in length). Follow-up comments and discussion can be either text or video.

Just like a standard textual discussion board, the videos can be moderated or unmoderated. The discussions can also be made public or private. Students and the instructor can post response videos and comments to posts as well.

Examples of Use:

Following are 3 examples of use for Flipgrid for engaging discussions:

Discussion Topics

A Computer Science instructor presents the following as a discussion topic:

We have recently covered "for", "while", and "do while" loops in-class. In this discussion, create a Flipgrid post (5 minute maximum) of an "ideal situation" for each of these looping structures. Make sure to explain why the particular looping structure is best for the given situation.

Afterward, review the submissions of your peers and play "Devil's Advocate". Create a response to one of their proposed situations that you feel could be solved better with a different type of looping structure. Once again, make sure you explain clearly why your proposed solution is the ideal solution.

UNT DALLAS
Distance Learning &
Instructional Technology

Technology Integration Practical Solutions
Engaging Discussions

An Earth Sciences instructor presents the following as a discussion topic:

> You have been assigned into various groups covering the different sources of energy that we are evaluating (solar, wind, nuclear, oil, natural gas, coal, hydroelectric, and geothermal).
>
> In your 5 minutes Flipgrid post, your group is to answer the following questions about your assigned topic:
>
> (1) How commonly used is this energy sources in the United States?
> (2) What are key advantaged of this energy source?
> (3) What are major disadvantaged of this energy source?
>
> **Individually**, review the posts of your classmates and respond with at least one item that you either found surprising or did not know from each of their posts. You should submit 7 responses (one for each energy source, excluding yours).

Peer Tutoring

A Mathematics instructor presents the following as a discussion topic:

> $$2X + 3Y^2 = \frac{5X^3}{2Y}$$
>
> Create a Flipgrid video that explains how to solve this equation for "X". Your video must be under 5 minutes in length.
>
> When done, check the work of two of your classmates and provide feedback on their solution.

Information – Flipgrid:

URL: https://www.flipgrid.com   **Price:** Free
Used by: K-12, Undergrad, Graduate   **Ease of Use:** Easy

Training Resources – Flipgrid:

- Printable Guide: Getting Started with Flipgrid (UNT Dallas DLIT Created)
- Printable Guide: Starting & Running a Discussion in Flipgrid (UNT Dallas DLIT Created)

Consider This: Videoconference with Zoom

There are numerous videoconference tools currently available. Zoom is supported and recommended by the Office of Distance Learning and Instructional Technology at UNT Dallas for use in all classroom environments. Zoom videos can be uploaded to a video hosting service, such as Panopto where they can be stored for asynchronous learners and can easily be captioned for hearing-impaired students.

UNT DALLAS
Distance Learning &
Instructional Technology

Technology Integration Practical Solutions
Engaging Discussions

A videoconference can operate much the same way that classroom discussion would operate. First and foremost, clear rules and expectations must be presented to all participants to ensure an orderly discussion or debate. A discussion/debate in a face-to-face classroom would be no different.

Examples of Use:
Following are 2 examples of use for Videoconferencing in Zoom for engaging discussions:

CX Debate
A Biology instructor sets up the following discussion in a Zoom videoconference:

> Today, we will be using a cross-examination (CX) debate model to discuss the concept of Genetic Engineering. I will be serving as the moderator of the debate. In our previous class meeting, you were broken into 3 groups (Affirmative, Negative, and Audience). Both the Affirmative and Negative groups have selected two spokespeople to present their arguments to the class.
>
> During the presentation, all participant microphones will be muted with the exception of the presenter and the moderator. All are encouraged to make notes in the side-channel discussion area during the presentation and ask questions. I will be using these along with pre-written questions at the conclusion of the debate.
>
> As a reminder, we will follow a hybrid CS debate model:
> - 8 Min – 1st Affirmative Constructive by Affirmative Presenter (1AC)
> - 3 Min – Cross Examination by Negative Co-Presenter
> - 8 Min – 1st Negative Constructive by Negative Presenter (1NC)
> - 3 Min – Cross Examination by Affirmative Presenter
> - 8 Min – 2nd Affirmative Constructive by Affirmative Co-Presenter (2AC)
> - 3 Min – Cross Examination by Negative Presenter
> - 8 Min – 2nd Negative Constructive by Negative Co-Presenter (2NC)
> - 3 Min – Cross Examination by Affirmative Co-Presenter
> - 5 Min – Negative Rebuttal by Negative Presenter (1NR)
> - 5 Min – Positive Rebuttal by Affirmative Presenter (1AR)
> - 5 Min – Negative Rebuttal by Negative Co-Presenter (2NR)
> - 5 Min – Positive Rebuttal by Affirmative Co-Presenter (2AR)
> - 5 Min – Moderator Questions Presented
> - 5 Min – Final Negative Rebuttal by Negative Presenter
> - 5 Min – Final Affirmative Rebuttal by Affirmative Presenter
> - 5 Min – Final Negative Rebuttal by Negative Co-Presenter
> - 5 Min – Final Affirmative Rebuttal by Affirmative Co-Presenter

Technology **I**ntegration **P**ractical **S**olutions
Engaging Discussions

An English Literature instructor sets up the following discussion in a Zoom videoconference:

Today, we will be using the "fishbowl" method of a Socratic Seminar to discuss "The Masque of the Red Death" by Edgar Allen Poe.

Ten (10) of you have been chosen to be in the inner-circle for this seminar with the rest of the class comprising the outer-circle. I will be serving as the facilitator. All outer-circle members microphones are muted. You will need to communicate with the inner-circle using the side-channel discussion tool. Inner-circle members need to monitor the side-channel discussion tool throughout the seminar.

Our opening question is: What does Prince Prosper's isolation from his dominion convey about his personality and character motivations?

Second question: What is the significance of the gigantic clock of ebony and what does it represent?

Third question: How does Edgar Allan Poe's writing technique and credible knowledge help the reader relate to the outside world?

Closing question: What are the parallels between "The Masque of the Red Death" by Edgar Allen Poe and "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" by James Thurber?

Information – Zoom:

URL: https://unt.zoom.us   **Price:** N/A (Covered by UNT Dallas)
Used by: K-12, Undergrad, Graduate, Business/Enterprise   **Ease of Use:** Easy

Training Resources – Zoom:
- Printable Guide: Account Setup (UNT Dallas DLIT Created)
- Printable Guide: Scheduling a Meeting (UNT Dallas DLIT Created)
- Printable Guide: Running a Meeting in Zoom (UNT Dallas DLIT Created)
- Printable Guide: Simultaneously Present and Run Chat/Discussion (UNT Dallas DLIT Created)