HHK 200.9 Spring 2019
Discussion Question Guide

Asking good questions is the key to getting any student-led discussion going. This document is intended to give you some guidance on best practices for good discussion questions, and some things to avoid.

Question prompts can be drawn from a range of learning goals. The examples below are adapted from *Collaborative Learning Techniques* by Barkley, Cross, and Major (2005), and the Stanford Teaching Commons (n.d.).

Question Type		
Exploratory	Probes facts and basic knowledge	What evidence from the text supports _____?
Personal Experience	Asks for discussion about how the concept may apply to someone's life	What has been your experience with _____? In what ways does this concept show up in your life/experience? Have you ever been in _____ (situation), and what did you do/think?
Clarification	Seeks to explore how students understand particular concepts	What is meant by _____? Explain how _____?
Challenge	Examines assumptions, conclusions, and interpretations	How else might we account for _____?
Relational	Ask for comparison of themes, ideas, or issues.	How does _____ compare/relate to _____?
Diagnostic	Probes motives or causes	Why did _____?
Action	Call for a conclusion or action	In response to _____, what should _____ do?
Cause and effect	Ask for causal relationships between ideas, actions, events	If _____ occurred, what would happen?
Extension	Expand the discussion	What are additional ways that _____?
Link to Previous Learning	Challenges students to connect to prior discussions/content	How does _____ tie in with what we learned before?
Hypothetical	Pose a change in the facts or issues	Suppose _____ had been the case, would the outcome have been the same? What would the outcome have been?
Priority	Seek to identify the most important issue	From all that we have discussed, what is the most important _____?
Summary	Elicit syntheses	What themes or lessons have emerged

		from _____?
Problem	Challenge students to find solutions to real or hypothetical situations	What if? (To be motivating, students should be able to make some progress on finding a solution, and there should be more than one solution)
Interpretation	Help students to uncover the underlying meaning of things	From whose viewpoint or perspective are we seeing, hearing, or reading? What does this mean? What may have been intended by _____?
Application	Probe for relationships and ask students to connect theory to practice	How does this apply to that? Knowing this, how would you _____? How is ____ and example of _____? Why is ____ significant?
Evaluative	Require students to assess and make judgements	Which of these are better? Why does it matter? So what?
Critical	Require students to examine the validity of statements, arguments, and conclusions, and to analyze their thinking and challenge their own assumptions	How do we know? And, What's the evidence and how reliable is the evidence?

Just as there are good types of questions, there are also questions to avoid. These tend to make a good discussion even more difficult:

1. **Simple yes/no:** Were the authors focused too much on nutrition and not enough on culture?
2. **Elliptical - too vague:** What did you think of the description of bugs as food?
3. **Leading - conveys the expected answer:** Don't you think that bugs could be useful as a food?
4. **Slanted - could shut down students who may not agree with the implied assumption:** Why is the agricultural subsidy program so useless?