Teaching Discussion in the Context of a Methods Course
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Teaching Works Seminar ● November 14, 2012

Context: The University Methods Course

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	Stanford	SUNY New Paltz
Program	1-yr, Graduate	Undergrad & grad; varied length
Methods Course & Fieldwork	• 3 quarters (30 weeks total) • Year-long student-teaching placement	• 1 semester (15 weeks total) • 35 hours/semester of observation at Fieldwork sites; student teaching the following semester.

Guiding questions

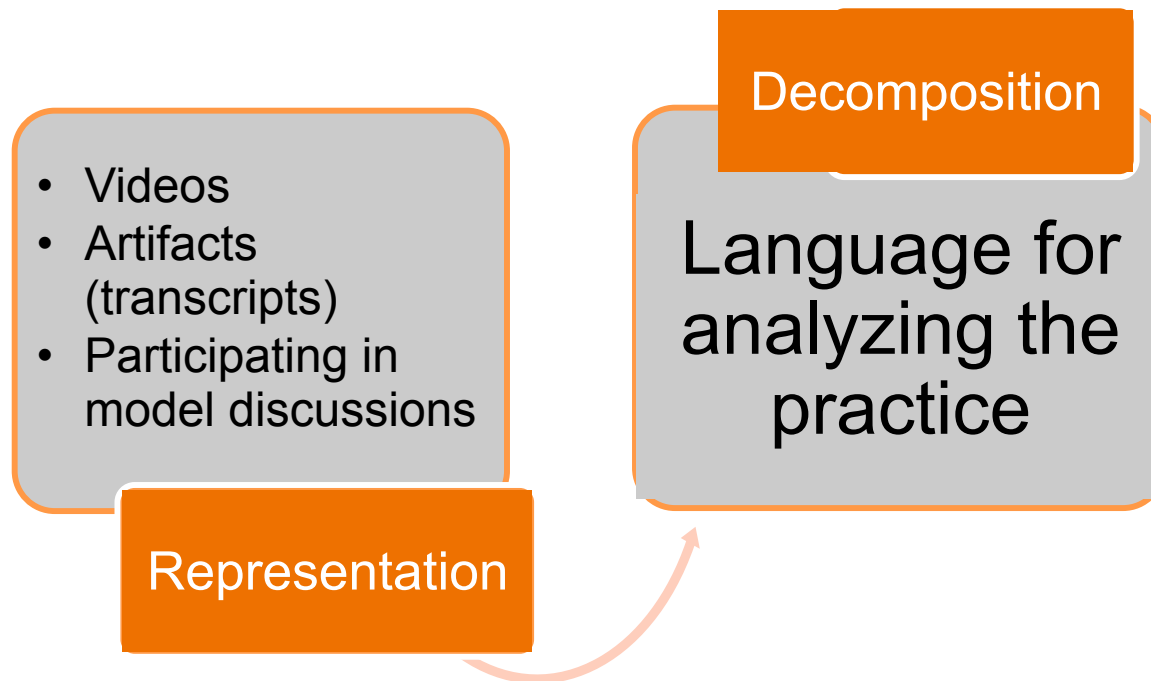How do I teach discussion in the context of a one-semester methods course?

- What's my pedagogy?

- Through what instructional sequence do I enact this pedagogy?

- How do I assess student progress?

Pedagogy: How do I teach discussion?

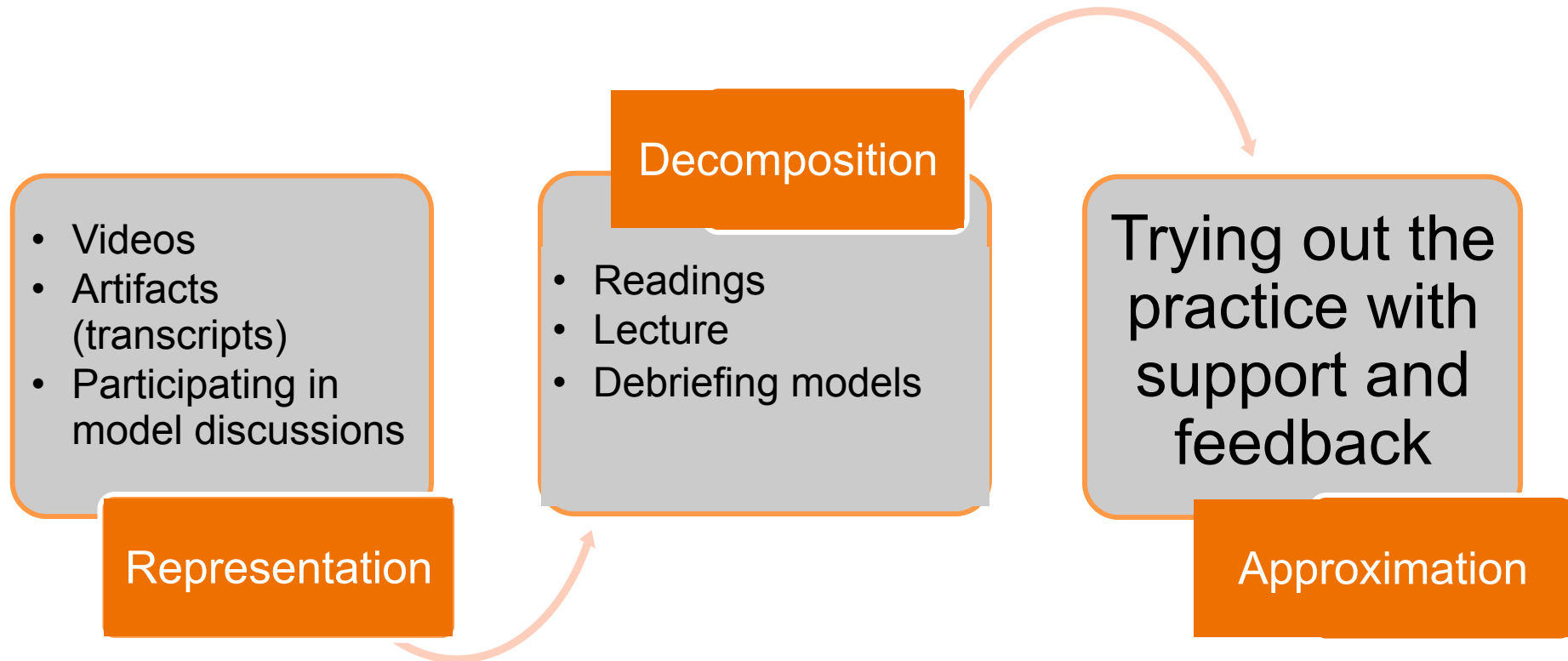A picture of practice

Representation

Pedagogy: How do I teach discussion?

Representation

- Videos
- Artifacts (transcripts)
- Participating in model discussions

Decomposition

Language for analyzing the practice

Pedagogy: How do I teach discussion?

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- Videos
- Artifacts (transcripts)
- Participating in model discussions

Decomposition
- Readings
- Lecture
- Debriefing models

Approximation

Trying out the practice with support and feedback

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Pedagogy: How do I teach discussion?

Representation

- Videos
- Artifacts (transcripts)
- Participating in model discussions

Decomposition

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Approximation

- Enactment in class among peers
- Facilitation at placement
- Feedback & reflection

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Instructional sequence

Weeks 1-3

- Weekly models of facilitation of discussion

- Readings

Week 4

- Unpacking readings in pair and small-group discussion

- Explicit modeling of discussion with debrief

- Lecture

- Assignment given

Weeks 5-15: Weekly approximations, feedback, and written reflection

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Framework for thinking about discussion

INTO	THROUGH	BEYOND
How do we prepare ourselves and our students for discussions?	What do we do during discussion?	What do we do after discussion?

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Discussion assignment

What does the assignment entail, and what features of the practice does it highlight?

I. Planning

- In trios, TCs co-plan a discussion based on course readings.

II. Facilitation

- Trios separate and individually lead 20-min in-class discussions in groups of 7-8 colleagues.

III. Feedback & Reflection

- Peers give structured feedback using criteria provided.
- Discussion leaders write reflection.

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Discussion assignment: Planning

What does the assignment entail, and what features of the practice does it highlight?

TCs use a template to plan for the following components of discussion:

❑ Establishing learning targets for

➢ teaching *with* discussion

➢ teaching *for* discussion

❑ Designing questions and anticipating answers

❑ Designing activity structures to get Ss 'into' the discussion (e.g., freewrite, partner talk)

❑ Setting norms for interaction, turn-taking, etc.

Discussion assignment: Facilitation

What does the assignment entail, and what features of the practice does it highlight?

TCs facilitate a discussion in order to practice the following moves:

❑ Giving clear prompts and tasks that get Ss 'into' the whole-group discussion

❑ Listening carefully and taking purposeful notes

❑ Using wait time to give Ss time to think and extend their ideas

❑ Using uptake to respond in non-evaluative and strategic ways

❑ Enforcing norms of civility/participation

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Press.

Teacher or student responds to a comment in order to:

1. Ask for elaboration or clarification.

2. Ask for evidence.

"Say more about what you mean by '_____'."

"Can you clarify what you mean by '_____'?"

"What in the text makes you think _____?"

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Revoice.

Teacher or student strategically restates another person's claim (and then checks in with speaker to confirm) in order to:

1. Verify their understanding of someone's claim.

2. Summarize what has been said so far.

3. Introduce or encourage use of academic language.

"I'm hearing X say that _____."

"So let me see if I understand. Your claim is __."

Post.

Post is a move in which a speaker, usually the teacher, gives other conversants a space to respond to something someone else has said.

"Who thinks they can articulate what X's trying to say?"

"Why would X make such a claim?"

"Who can add onto X's point?"

"Do you agree/disagree with X, and why?"

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Discussion assignment: Facilitation

What does the assignment entail, and what features of the practice does it highlight?

In the video, note how Marissa practices the following moves:

- ✓ Giving clear prompts and tasks that get Ss 'into' the whole-group discussion

- ✓ Listening carefully and taking purposeful notes

- ✓ Using wait time to give Ss time to think and extend their ideas

- ✓ Using uptake to respond in non-evaluative and strategic ways

- ❑ Enforcing norms of civility/participation

Discussion assignment: Facilitation

Discussion assignment: Feedback

FEEDBACK PROTOCOL (15 minutes)

I.   (4 min) **Participants take notes independently on feedback form.**

II.   (9 min) **Participants discuss feedback while discussion leader listens silently and takes notes. One participant chairs the conversation by keeping track of time and ensuring a focus on targeted criteria and a balance of Praise-Question-Polish.**

    A.   (3 min) <u>Praise</u>**:** What did you like? What felt good, safe, comfortable, and why?

    B.   (3 min) <u>Question</u>**:** What do you authentically want to know more about?

    C.   (3 min) <u>Polish</u>**:** What specific suggestions for improvement can you make?

III. (2 min) **Discussion leader synthesizes feedback while participants listen.**

    A. "I'm hearing the group say that a strength of this discussion was _____."

    B. "Some things I might try next are _____."

Thank your discussion leader and participants.

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Feedback protocol – Examples

- *Praise*

  - "When you <u>started with a visual text</u>, I felt <u>engaged in the topic</u> because <u>the text was clear and compelling and related to the later more complex texts</u>."

- *Question*

  - "I noticed you <u>were taking notes</u>, and I wonder: <u>What are some good strategies for taking notes during whole-class discussions</u>?"

  - "I noticed you <u>spoke after every few turns</u>, and I wonder: <u>How do we decide when to participate during whole-class discussions</u>?"

- *Polish*

  - "When you <u>spoke after every student turn</u>, I felt <u>frustrated</u> because <u>I didn't get a chance to practice uptake</u>, and I suggest <u>letting students speak consecutive turns</u> in order to <u>give them more opportunities to practice listening to their peers</u>."

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Discussion assignment: Feedback

Discussion assignment: Reflection

1. I give global feedback on strengths and next steps.

2. TCs who led discussion write reflection on own facilitation.

3. All TCs self-assess own participation during class discussions along three dimensions:

   • Community

   • Argumentation

   • Knowledge

Celebrations & Challenges

Celebrations

ᔆ We're attending to the content domain of Speaking & Listening.

ᔆ TCs are showing improvement in several areas: Giving clear prompts and tasks that get Ss 'into' the whole-group discussion, listening carefully and taking purposeful notes, showing listening through uptake, and giving constructive peer feedback.

Challenges

ᔆ Getting TCs to increase the intellectual rigor of discussions by: Using text, enforcing norms during discussion, and using uptake moves like Press

ᔆ Finding usable video models of classroom discussion

ᔆ Structuring opportunities for TCs to facilitate discussion among young people

ᔆ Giving individualized feedback on facilitation

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Thank you, and thanks to…

- Teaching Works

- My teaching partners and methods friends: Pam Grossman, Chandra Alston, Michelle Brown, Mike Metz

- My students and colleagues at SUNY New Paltz

- The teachers and researchers who work to understand discussion: Adam Gamoran, Diana Hess, Sarah Michaels, Martin Nystrand, Cathy O'Connor, Lauren Resnick, Peter Williamson, and many others

Let's discuss…

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Supplementary Slides

Sample Assignment II (Stanford)

I. Investigating CD

    A. Watch a 2-hr video through the lens of a guiding question

    B. Lead a brief discussion in class among peers

II. Trying out Strategies for Facilitating CD

    A. Select a discussion strategy and text

    B. Facilitate and videotape CD at placement

    C. View video

    D. Write reflection

➢ Pam Grossman has created a website to document this assignment. See: http://insideteaching.org/quest/collections/sites/grossman_pam/site/

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Sample lecture slides from week 4 of methods course…

Week 4: Orchestrating Whole-Class Discussion
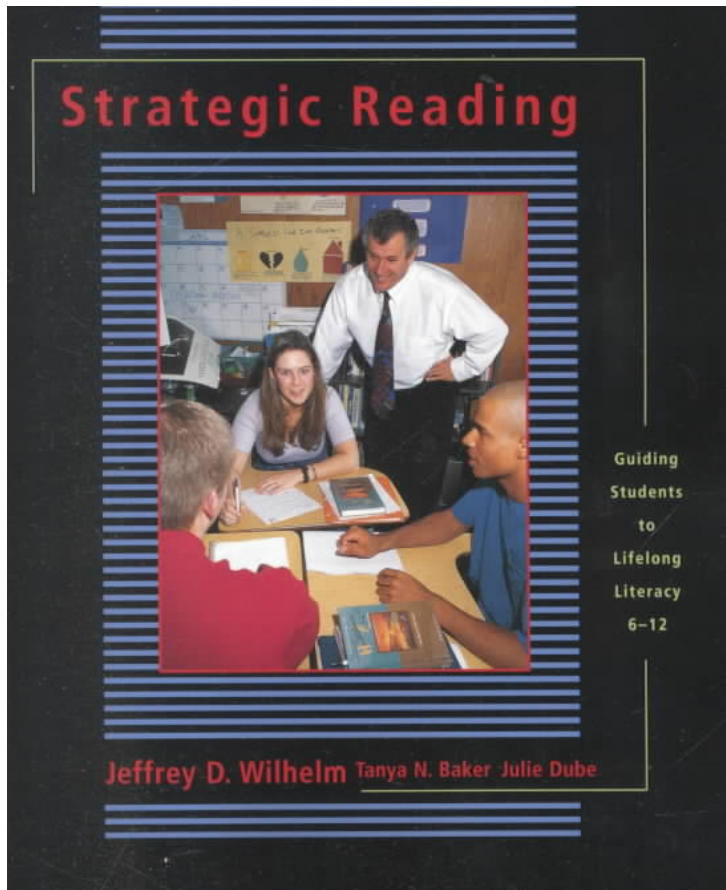
Welcome!

Your Task:

Independently consider: What do you feel is the most important word, phrase, passage, or paragraph in Baker's chapter (i.e., Ch 5 of this text)?*

Note this excerpt and be prepared to explain why it is important.

* Question modified from Myers (1988) *Twenty (Better) Questions* (#19)

What is discussion? Why discuss?

A: "The excerpt I selected is located on p. __, paragraph __."

1. Wait for partner to find passage.
2. Read passage aloud.
3. Explain why you chose it.

B. Listen and respond with:

➢ "I'm hearing you say _____."

AND one or more of the following:

➢ "Tell me more about what you mean by _____."
➢ "I (dis)agree with your idea that _____ because _____."
➢ "To build upon your idea that _____, I would like to add _____."

❖ Switch roles and share 2nd excerpt.

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What is discussion? Why discuss?

Rich, purposeful discussion in a secondary English class requires/needs _____.
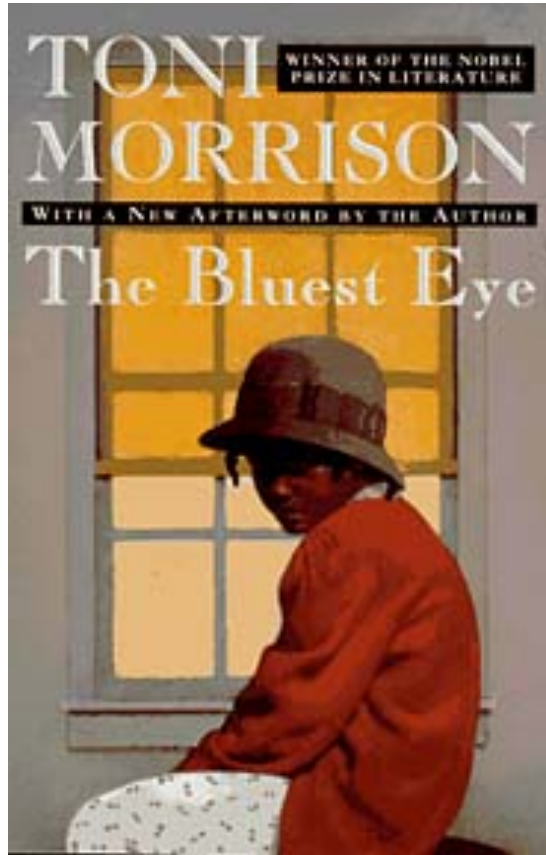
What is NOT discussion?

How would you characterize this conversation?

Examining the transcript:
- Does seeing the words highlight anything else for you?
- What might Baker notice about this interaction?

Discussion on a discussion

Based on what we (and Baker) have said good discussion requires, what do you see in this transcript that you would classify as discussion?

Norms

In addition to the norms you used during small-group discussion:

- making explicit textual references
- listening carefully and periodically restating
- using uptake to ask follow-up questions and build upon previous comments

I expect you to:

- Listen:
  - Track the speaker – with your eyes when possible.
  - Be ok with silence.

- Speak:
  - Use a raised hand to indicate that you would like to speak.
  - Look at your classmates while you are talking.
  - Follow the 'thread' of previous speakers whenever possible.

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The Typical vs. The Possible

THE TYPICAL: Gentle "Inquisitions"	THE POSSIBLE: Instructional Conversations
I-R-E / recitation; monologic	Exploratory talk; dialogic
Mostly inauthentic questions	Mostly authentic questions
Arrive at fixed interpretations	Co-construction of interp
Assesses what Ss already know	Gauges Ss understanding

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The Challenges of Discussion

- It requires that power/authority be redistributed.

- It is difficult to prepare for instruction that can't be scripted.

- Learning through talk is difficult to assess.

So why bother?!

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Two responsibilities

- Teaching *with* discussion
- Teaching *for* discussion

Three dimensions (CAKe)

ℨ Community

ℨ Argumentation

ℨ Knowledge

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INTO the discussion

INTO

- Set **norms and routines** for discussion

- Select **appropriate texts** for discussion that are:

  - Hard but not too hard

  - Discussable

- Prepare **questions** for discussion

- Prepare students for the **content** of the discussion

  - Text annotation, anticipation guides, what else?

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THROUGH the discussion

THROUGH

What facilitative moves support discussion?

- Listening carefully, and demanding this of others

- Non-evaluative responses

- Uptake (e.g., pressing for student thinking and evidence)

- Attending to (and assisting) student participation

- Enforcing norms of civility/participation

- Interjecting mini-lessons where needed

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BEYOND the discussion

BEYOND

Reflect and assess

- Gauge S understanding to determine future instruction

- Use discussions as the beginning of writing assignments

- Assist S reflection/self-assessment of discussion process and

content

- Connect each discussion to earlier learning events

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Uptake – basic moves

Unexplained Evaluation
     "Good"
     "Okay"
	To communicate "I'm listening" or "keep going."
	
	 To communicate evaluative feedback.

Repetition or **Restatement**	To make student response more audible to others. To emphasize a specific part of the student response.

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Scaffolding

Scaffold from:

- Small to large groups
- Shorter to longer texts
- More to less structure
- Simpler to more complex questions
- T- to S-generated questions