

Philosophy Discussion Panels

This is an Honors Philosophy class, so obviously, it only functions when we discuss the big problems of the world rather than mouth-breathe at each other. It is important that everyone has the opportunity to speak, and the way we're going to do so is with "expert panels" who will lead discussions (similar to a "fishbowl" model, if you've done that before).



Here's how it will work/look:

1. You will be on a panel at least once this semester, possibly twice.
2. *Every student in the class* will complete a reflection/prep the night before, which I will collect and which will be graded. You will not know if you are on the panel before the panel happens.
3. That is, I will choose six random panel members at the start of class. (We may end up with two panels in one hour and "switch out" after a while.) These panel members will function as the "experts" for their given part of the discussion. Only the panel members will speak, and, in fact, each panel member is *required* to speak.
 - This will be difficult for the "peanut gallery" over-talkers. ☺ *shhhh...*
 - If panel members choose not to speak or are not prepared, they will be called for the panel the next time, and so on. That is, you cannot not-panel.
4. I will give the panel members guiding questions, if they need. "Socratic" discussion is expected (see back side of this sheet) because duh, philosophy.
5. While the panel is "paneling" up front, the rest of the class (the peanut gallery) is taking notes on the discussion. They are considering where they agree with an idea, where they disagree with an idea, where they think there might be more evidence or examples to reiterate a point. They are preparing a few questions they will ask the panel so as to encourage more reflection from the "experts." The peanut gallery note sheets will be formatted as such on a full notebook page:

I agree because...	I disagree because...	Oh! Here's a thought!
[write things]	[write things]	[what I'd say if I were up there]
Questions I will ask the panel (or ask particular panel members):		
[write questions]		

6. When the panel is finished, we will have a five-ish minute question/answer period. The class will ask for clarification from the experts and ask further questions about the topic. The class may add any final thoughts. I will collect everyone's notes and prep work and assign a grade to each panel member.

It is imperative that discussions that happen in this class stay in this class. You may talk about your own opinion outside of class, but not those of your classmates; this will be construed as gossip, bullying, or rumor-spreading.

Expectations for the Experts

The panel member:

- _____ keeps a balance of speaking and listening throughout the conversation.
- _____ carefully considers their argument before speaking; makes a claim and supports that claim.
- _____ uses direct evidence from the reading (such as, “I noticed on page 48...”) in a way that guides the class to also dig back into the reading. Uses specific examples from their personal experience or from life to support a point (such as, “this reminds me of Manifest Destiny...”)
- _____ actively listens to their peers and offers nonverbal feedback of this listening, such as eye contact and head-nodding, etc. (No phones, obviously; no doodling or finishing your homework.)
- _____ asks questions of fellow panel members; kindly encourages them to elaborate or clarify.
- _____ is kind, compassionate, respectful, and empathetic to others’ opinions. If the panel member disagrees, they do so maturely, and with support for their opinion. Panel members know all conversation nurtures perspective and growth. Panel members can give each other high fives at the end.

The panel member does NOT:

- _____ simply read the reflections or responses they prepared beforehand. (*Conversation* is casual and authentic.)
- _____ dominate the conversation.
- _____ simply repeat what others have said.
- _____ fake it. No b.s. I have a detector. 😊
- _____ disrespect other classmates or tell them they are “wrong.”