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Dialectical Teaching Strategies for First and Second-Year Students

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Dialectical Teaching Strategies for First and Second-Year Students

The practice and the need it addresses

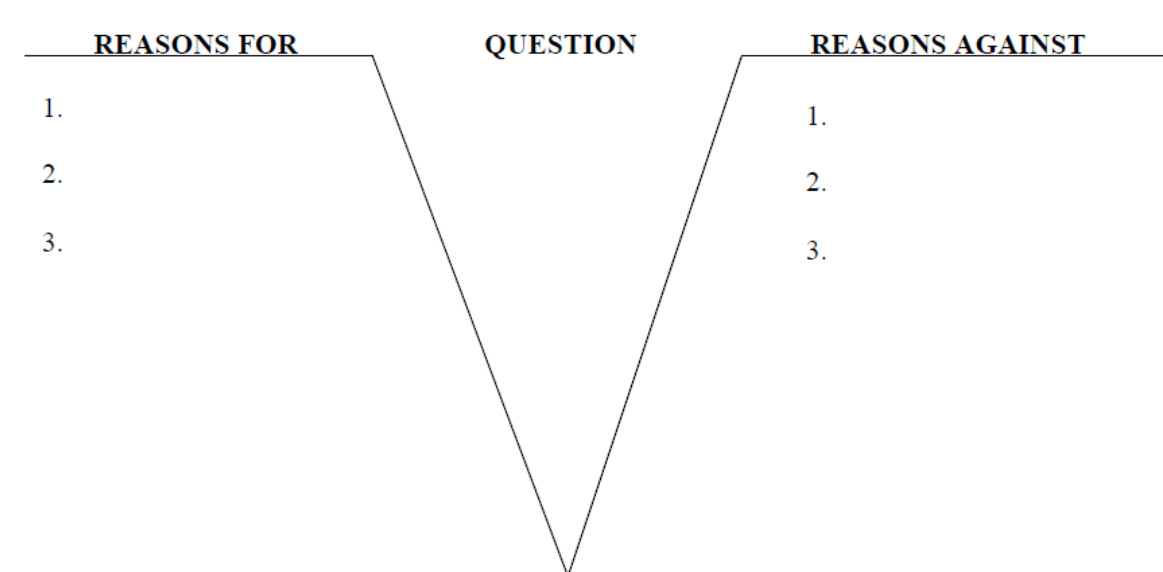
Teaching Strategies

What is the Dialectic?

An oppositional or bi-polar understanding of meaning (Rychlak, 1976). This ancient understanding of meaning has many applications for instructors.

Critical Thinking:

- Dialectical critical thinking focuses on critiquing an idea in relation to one or many alternatives.
- Instructors can foster this type of critical thinking by giving students time to think-pair-share (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2012) about alternative points of view.
- Argumentation Vee Diagrams (pictured below) can aid students' thinking about alternatives (Nussbaum et al., 2016).



Class Discussions:

- There is a dearth of literature on how instructors should lead discussions about common readers in First and Second-Year Seminars.
- Instructors can use Vee diagrams and think-pair-share techniques to guide informal dialectical discussions and debates on common reader content.

Evidence this practice benefits UNLV Students

Assessment & Research

Assessment:

Indirect assessment data for First and Second-Year Seminar courses (FYS/SYS) using these dialectical strategies indicate

- students progressed moderately to much on their inquiry and critical thinking ($M = 3.40$ FYS, 3.41 SYS), written ($M = 3.30$ FYS, 3.36 SYS), and oral communication ($M = 3.41$ FYS, 3.44 SYS) -- 5-point Likert scale.



Direct assessment of student work samples using AAC&U VALUE Rubrics indicate

- FYS students performed at a first-year level and SYS students performed above a second-year level for critical thinking.

Research:

- Nussbaum et al. (2016) investigated three sections of an undergraduate Second-Year Seminar that used different forms of AVDs to enhance critical thinking and argumentation.
- Initial results suggest the use of AVDs with questions designed to help students evaluate arguments positively affected student essays.

Resources and where to find them

Selected Resources

Dialectic:

Rychlak, J. F. (1976). *Dialectic: Humanistic rational for behavior and development*. Basel, Switzerland: S. Karger.

Yanchar, S., Slife, B. D., & Warne, R. (2008). Critical thinking as disciplinary practice. *Review of General Psychology*, 12 (3), 265-281.

Teaching:

Nussbaum, E. M., Slife, N. M., Turgut, R., Kardash, C. M., Dove, I. J. (August 2016). Using argumentation vee diagrams based on Walton's critical questions for consequences in an undergraduate seminar. Poster – presented at the Biennial Meeting of SIG 26 (Argumentation, Dialogue, & Reasoning), Ghent, Belgium.

Svinicki, M. D., McKeachie, W. J., & Nicol, D. (2012). *McKeachie's teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers* (14th ed.). Boston, MA, United States: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.



How other UNLV teachers might adopt this practice

Applicability & Potential Challenges

This practice is not discipline specific and can be used in any undergraduate or graduate course focused on critical thinking and communication.

- AVDs can be either filled out in advance by the instructor or filled out in the moment by students. These are excellent teaching tools to help students analyze and critique course content.
- The dialectic can be used to organize student papers so that students understand and analyze oppositional positions on a variety of topics.
 - Possible Paper Headings (Introduction, My Position, Opposing Position, Refutation of Opposing Position, Summary)
- Instructors benefit from more engaging class discussions because students are asked to take a position on a topic and critique alternatives. This critique and debate can occur individually or within small groups.

Potential Challenges:

- Students would likely benefit from seeing a filled-out AVD before being asked to complete a blank AVD form for use in class.
- Instructors must actively facilitate informal class debates so that all voices are heard and the debate stays on topic.
- Topics for a dialectical discussion/debate should be chosen that fit course objectives and background readings.