Why have Discussions?

• Knowledge is constructed individually and collectively
• One aspect of teaching
• Continuous Discovery
• Crucibles of the democratic process?
Better than Boring Power Point Slides
Modeling Good Discussion
Leading Practices
Good Discussions are Unpredictable and Surprising
THE GOAL?

Getting as many people as possible deeply engaged in the conversation
Discussions are Collaborative Enterprises
“Democratically inclined teachers are frequently silent in discussion, curbing the compulsion to say all they would like to say in the interests of promoting engagement and participation.”
Saying too much???

- Responding to every student comment...even positively
- Too much of any teacher creates a passive audience
- Often we dominate unintentionally
Why do we fill the silence?
Habit of “didactic transmission”

v.

The reality that knowledge is constructed individually and in groups
Knowledge divorced from Contexts and Relationships

We need to connect disciplinary discourse with the everyday experiences of diverse communities and individuals.
Fear of Failing

Often we socialized to believe that everything that happens in the classroom is our responsibility.
We underestimate the Students
We overestimate our own contributions

Only a small part of what we know can be usefully and effectively conveyed to students
When we don’t say enough

Don’t stay on the sidelines: “Teachers must be active listeners”

Before students “discuss” they need a model

Discussions need to be productive

Strategic intervention
Questions to Consider
Do I interrupt students in mid sentence?

Do I comment more than the students?

Do I give student’s time to reflect and think?
Are my methods consistent with the class goals?

What are the class goals?

What am I doing to build a sense of collaborative engagement?
PLANNING

“Good Discussions Don’t Just Happen On Their Own.”
PLANNING

Sketch out Questions ahead of time
Identify relevant passages and formulate possible responses
Setting the Classroom

Adapt the Space for your own purposes
Set Expectations for Discussion

Discussion as a part of the Contract with Learners
Ask students to unpack assumptions and implications of their contributions.
Discussions are more likely to teach process than straight content