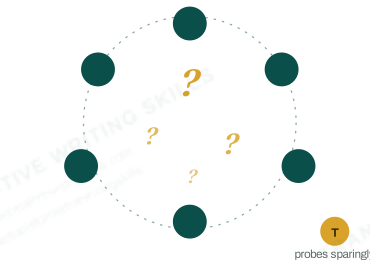


05 Socratic Seminar

Complex ideas examined through open-ended questions, evidence, and sustained reasoning.

Question-driven dialogue where no one tries to “win.”

QUESTION-DRIVEN CIRCLE



● Student ● Teacher (edge of circle)

? questions drive the talk

TEACHER INVOLVEMENT

Low — opening question, then probing questions only when necessary.

BEST EAP USES

- Controversial issues
- Evaluating assumptions
- Developing inquiry questions
- Connecting several readings
- Preparing argumentative essays

PREPARATION — STUDENTS BRING

Two or three texts representing different perspectives, plus:

- One opening · one interpretation · one evidence · one implication question
- Two annotated quotations

THE SIX SOCRATIC QUESTION TYPES

Clarification — “What does the author mean by ‘academic preparedness’?”

Evidence — “What evidence supports this claim?”

Assumption — “What is the author assuming about first-year students?”

Perspective — “How might an international student view this differently?”

Implication — “What could happen if the course becomes optional?”

Evaluation — “Which source argues most strongly, and why?”

1

Circle up

Teacher sits outside or among students, never central.

2

Review expectations

Genuine questions, evidence, careful listening, openness to changing minds, no “winning.”

3

Opening question

“What responsibility does a university have for developing students’ academic writing?”

4

Explore

Students may answer directly or respond with another question.

5

Require evidence

“Where do you see that in the text?” “Which source supports your conclusion?”

6

Probe when needed

“Who benefits from this policy, and who might be disadvantaged?”

7

Encourage synthesis

“Source A emphasizes success; Source B, cost. How should universities balance these?”

8

Final philosophical turn

“Is academic writing a skill, a social practice, or participation in a community?”

9

Written reflection

What did you reconsider? Which evidence moved you? What remains unanswered?

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

“Does that mean the same course should be required for everyone?”

“Would placement testing create another barrier, especially for multilingual students?” — “That depends on whether the assessment measures language proficiency, academic writing, or both.”

TEACHER’S ROLE & ASSESSMENT

- Selects rich, debatable texts; provides the opening question
- Uses probing questions sparingly; never announces the “correct” answer
- **Assess:** quality of questions · textual evidence · depth of explanation · considering alternatives · respectful interaction · intellectual flexibility

WRITTEN REFLECTION PROMPTS

- ? What idea did you reconsider?
- ? Which evidence influenced you most?
- ? What question remains unanswered?

Modeled on the questioning method of Socrates in Plato’s dialogues; the modern classroom seminar was popularized by Mortimer Adler’s Paideia Proposal (1982).

Design & EAP adaptation by Anita J. Ghajar-Selim with Claude AI help · © 2026 Transformative Writing Skills, LLC · transformativewritingskills.com · t.me/transformativewritingskills