This handout will help you generate class discussion. For more information, please visit KOLT in SCI Z40.

Before Discussion:

- Explain the purpose of discussion. Inform students of ground rules as well as expected and prohibited discussion styles (e.g. staying on topic; not telling personal stories).
- Try to organize classroom chairs into a circle. This may increase the comfort level of participants.
- Inform students before class what topics will be discussed and ask them to bring related questions to class. Provide students with a core list of discussion questions.
- Generate interest through warm-up exercises. For example, before discussion, you can give your students a pertinent question to discuss in pairs for 2-3 minutes. You may also give students a few minutes to take preparatory notes before beginning discussion.
- If you plan to grade participation, determine in advance how you will assess contributions. Inform students of evaluation criteria. Maintain consistency and fairness in grading.

During Discussion:

- Avoid yes or no questions. Instead, ask broad "how" or "why" questions.
- Try calling on individual students rather than addressing questions to the entire class. This prevents the most verbal students from dominating the discussion.
- Give students adequate time to respond. Give students a few minutes to take preparatory notes before beginning discussion.
- Maintain eye contact with students while they are responding.
- If no one answers a question, try phrasing it differently.
- Gently and tactfully correct wrong answers.
- Keep students alert by moving around the classroom and changing the intonation of your voice.
- Ask students to respond to comments made by others. If necessary, rephrase comments for the entire class.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, tell the student that you will look it up. Make sure you do!
- At the end of discussion, summarize the issues discussed and acknowledge all contributors individually.

Some Question Types

- **Definitional** *(how do you define x?)*
- **Contextual** *(how was y influenced by the time period in which it occurred?)*
- **Comparative** *(can you compare x and y?)*
- **Causal** *(what is the cause of x?)*
- **Evaluative** *(how strong is the case for y?)*

Resources for Further Reading

- University of Toledo. "Fostering Effective Class Discussions." [http://www.utoledo.edu/centers/ctl/teachingresources/Fostering_Effective_Classroom_Discussions.html](http://www.utoledo.edu/centers/ctl/teachingresources/Fostering_Effective_Classroom_Discussions.html)
- University of Oregon. "What are some good ways to facilitate a discussion?" [http://tep.uoregon.edu/resources/faqs/presenting/facilitatediscussion.html](http://tep.uoregon.edu/resources/faqs/presenting/facilitatediscussion.html)