

US Classroom Culture: Leading and Participating in Classroom Discussions

Before

- Do the reading and take notes
- Anticipate what others may say.
- Write out in advance some of your own opinions, questions, and points of uncertainty.
- Develop a relationship with your professor through conversation after class and visiting during office hours.

During

- Classroom DOs
 - Listen to other students' opinions and take notes.
 - Build on other students' comments
 - If you agree with what is being said, say so and explain why.
 - If you disagree, say why and never attack the other personally.
 - Ask other students' questions of clarification.
 - Connect other students' comments to each other.
 - Talk to the instructor if you are very uncomfortable with participating.
- Classroom DON'Ts
 - Try not to over participate. Make sure that at least 3 people comment before you comment again. Exceptions: if someone asks you for clarification or if someone comments on your opinion in a way that misunderstands what you said.
 - Never interrupt another.
 - Do not accept bullying from other students. If someone is rude and attacks you personally, gently say something like, "I'd appreciate if you'd address my opinions respectfully." Hopefully the instructor will intervene, but if this doesn't happen, talk to instructor outside of class about the problem.
 - Do not ramble. Keep your comments clear and concise.
 - Do not go off topic.

After

- Take notes on what happened:
 - Points of agreement
 - Competing sides
 - Your own thoughts
 - Enduring questions or ambiguities
- Review assigned reading
- Compare notes with a classmate
- Ask for clarification as necessary