

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Study Guides and Jeopardy Based on Native American Ways of Learning

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

The Native American way of learning takes place in groups in which the entire class community works together to help one other learn and succeed. This particular innovative teaching practice is composed of three components: self-developed study guides, group discussion, and Jeopardy. Each piece builds on the prior activity; as such, the self-developed study guides are used for the group discussion; then elements of the group discussion are used to play the Jeopardy game.

Self-developed study guides are developed based on the assigned readings for the week. Students are asked to look for the who, what, when, where, and why of what they are reading to find key details they think are important to remember for later. There is no specific structure or format for the study guides—students format them in any way that is best for them. Students are expected to bring their study guides to class to use during discussions, the next step in the learning process. The study guides are turned in for a grade and are graded for completion, not specific content.

Students engage in a series of group discussions during class to talk about their study guides so that they can build on what they developed individually. In randomly assigned groups of up to four students, group members take turns sharing the details they included in their study guides. During this time, the instructor walks around to each group to ensure that each member is participating in the discussion.

Students are awarded participation points based on this observation.

As students share from their study guides, the instructor asks them to write down any insights they gleaned from what others included in their guides. After everyone has shared their piece, the groups come back together for a whole-class discussion and to craft a “class study guide,” which is a comprehensive study guide that includes information that the entire class agrees upon. The class discussion is moderated by a student who is chosen by the instructor in advance (each student is responsible for leading one class discussion). Students take turns sharing what each group crafted, and students are encouraged to share individually as well. Any time there is a class discussion, the instructor verbally acknowledges and praises each student for their contribution. As students are sharing, the instructor records the information and creates the class study guide to share with all of the students. The study guide development process happens weekly and the study guides are used to prepare for the Jeopardy game played prior to the mid-term and final exams.

For the Jeopardy game, students are randomly assigned to teams. The game is based on the material covered up to that point and follows the study guides the students created. Students are given points for participation, but there are no additional points awarded to the winning team. The point of the game is to engage in healthy competition and nurture teamwork while reviewing for exams.

How to Ensure Participation in This Innovative Teaching Practice:

The instructor offers several opportunities for students to engage at different levels. For those who are not comfortable engaging with the entire class, they have an opportunity to do so in the smaller groups. The instructor also moves around the room to encourage participation and regularly praises students for their contributions in class.