

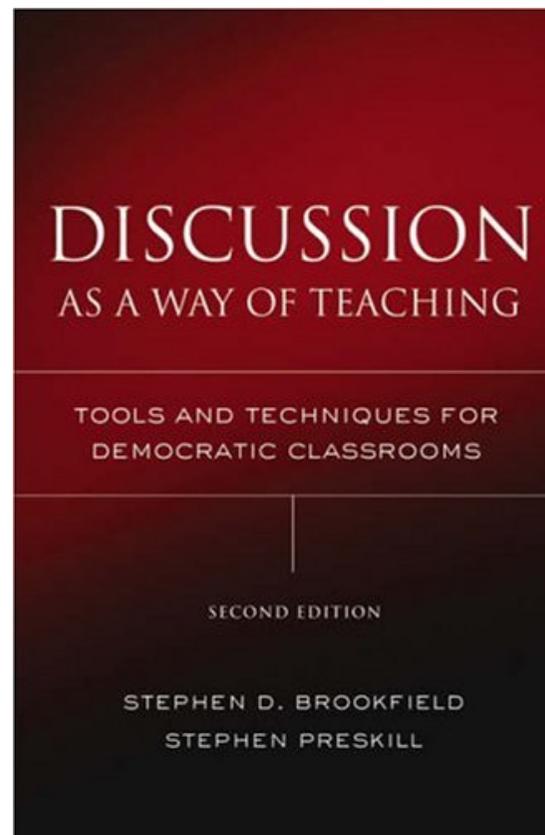
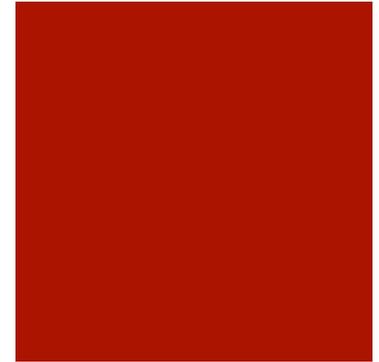


# Pathways to successful classroom discussions

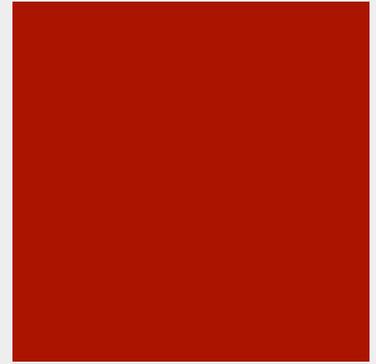
**Irina Simpson, Ph.D.**  
**New Economic School**

# “Discussion as a way of teaching. Tools and Techniques for democratic classrooms”

by Stephen D. Brookfield and Stephen Preskill



# Why do we use discussion in a classroom?



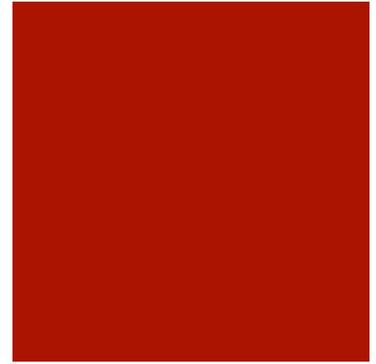
# Benefits of Discussion (by Stephen Brookfield and Stephen Preskill)



- It helps students explore a diversity of perspectives
- It increases students' awareness of and tolerance for ambiguity or complexity
- It helps students recognize and investigate their assumptions
- It encourages attentive, respectful listening
- It increases intellectual agility
- It helps students learn the processes and habits of democratic discourse
- It affirms students as co-creators of knowledge
- It develops the capacity for the clear communication of ideas and meaning
- It develops habits of collaborative learning
- It leads to transformation

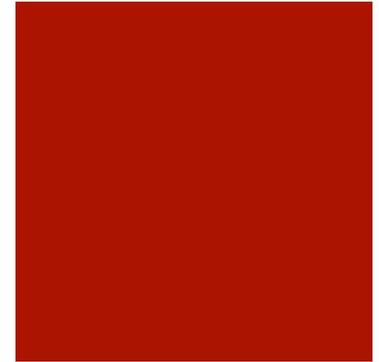
# Preparing discussion:

## Mistakes to be avoided



- Don't lecture
- Don't be vague
- Don't answer your own questions
- Don't fear silence

# Preparing discussion:



- Lecture as a model for democratic dispositions
- Assign to do critical pre-reading
- Frame the discussion around student questions
- Ask students to choose a concrete image/scene/episode from the text that stands out and comment on it
- Respond to contentious statements/quotes
- Use “hatful of quotes”
- A sentence completion exercise

# A sentence completion exercise



- What most struck me about the text we read to prepare for the discussion today is...
- The question that I'd most like to ask the author of the text is..
- The idea I most take issue with in the text is...
- The most crucial point in last week's lecture was...
- The part of the text that I felt made the most sense to me was...
- The part of the text that I felt was the most confusing was....

# Preparing discussion:



- **Discussion in the Round: Hearing all Voices**

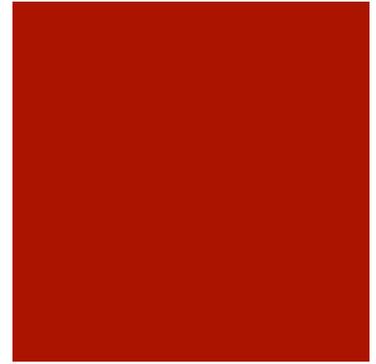
- **The circle of voices**

(3-min, participants talk about other people's ideas expressed and their reaction to it)

- **The circular response method**

(Speakers in the circle make a brief summary of the preceding speaker's message and use this as a springboard for their own comments)

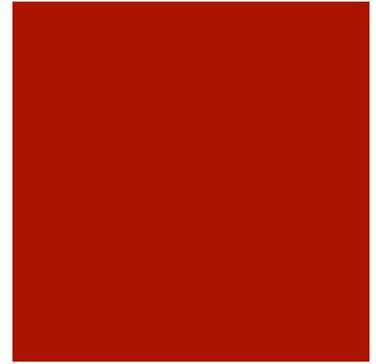
# Keeping discussion going



- Questioning
- Listening
- Responding

# Keeping discussion going:

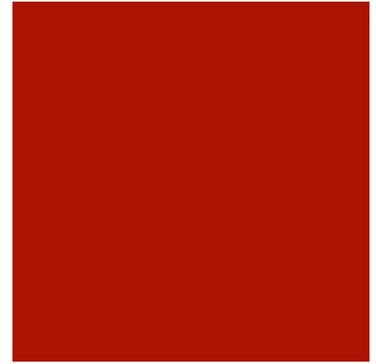
## Conversational moves



- Ask a question or make a comment that shows you are interested in what another person has said
- Ask a question or make a comment that encouraged someone else to elaborate on something that person has said
- Make a comment indicating that you found another person's ideas interesting or useful. Be specific as to why this was the case

# Keeping discussion going:

## Conversational moves



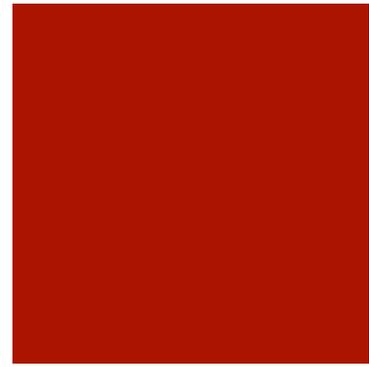
- Contribute something that builds on or springs from what someone else has said.
- Make a comment that at least partly paraphrases a point someone has already made.
- Ask a cause-and effect question: Ex: “Can you explain why you think it’s true that...”
- Disagree with someone in a respectful and constructive way.

# Keeping discussion going through creative grouping



- Relaxed buzz groups
- Structured buzz groups
- Rotating small group stations
- Snowballing
- Critical debate
- Stand where you stand
- Role playing
- Group discussion with a student-leader/expert

# Relaxed buzz groups



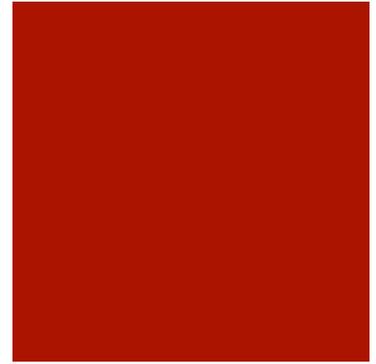
# Structured buzz groups



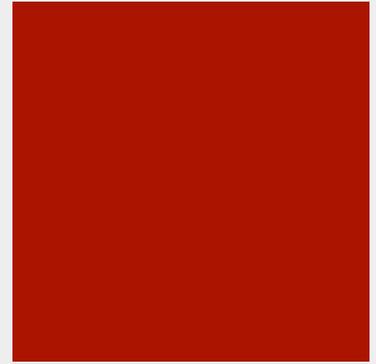
# Rotating small group stations



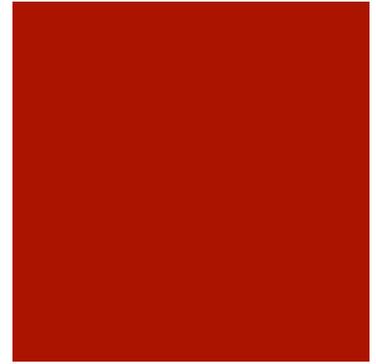
# Snowballing



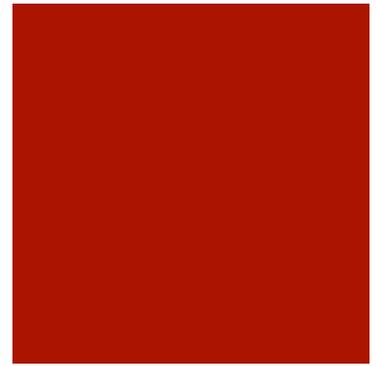
# Critical debate



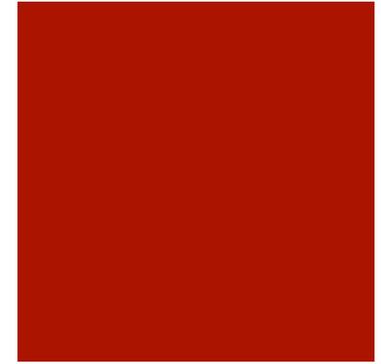
# Stand where you stand



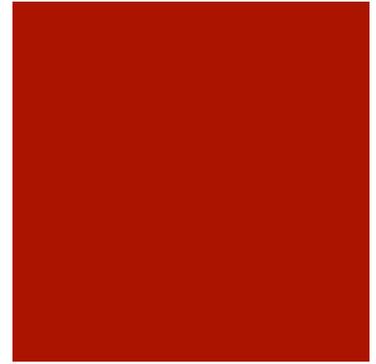
# Role playing



# Group discussion with a student-leader/expert

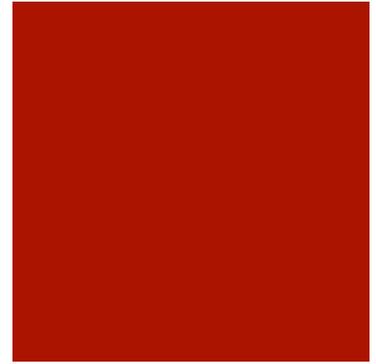


# Online discussion



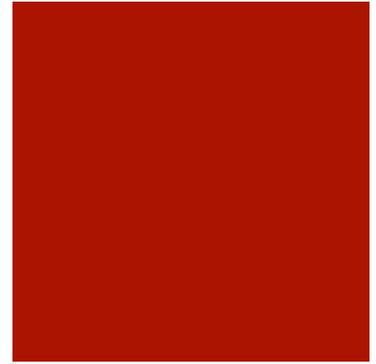
- It helps to initiate the discussion in class
- to give students who are too shy to speak in class an opportunity to express their opinions/positions
- to practice low-stake writing
- to encourage students to develop ideas for future research
- it encourages student-student feedback, as well as teacher-student feedback
- it practice 4 Rs of discussion-based teaching: research, responsiveness, respect and relationships

# Evaluating Discussion



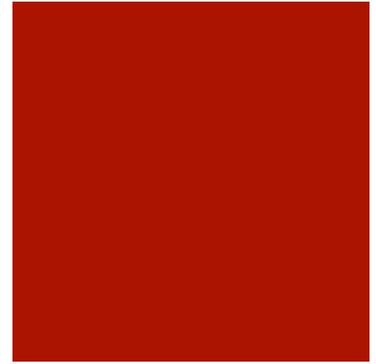
“Discussions are like marriages – no two are alike, and no one on the outside can ever really understand what’s going on inside. Because discussions are always contextual – always shaped by the cultural backgrounds, social classes, genders, experiences and personalities of its participants – they can only be evaluated from the inside.”

# Evaluating Discussion



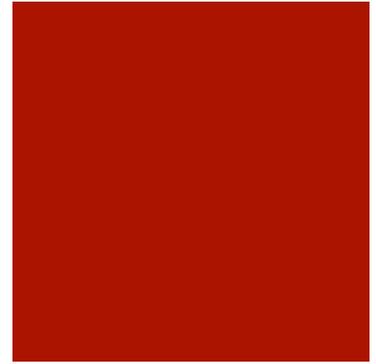
- List the assumptions that you held about the topic of the discussion that were uncovered or clarified for you
- Of all these assumptions, which did you feel were most challenged by the discussion?
- What different perspectives on the topics were suggested for you by our discussions?
- What's the most important learning you've taken from this week's discussion?

# Evaluating Discussion



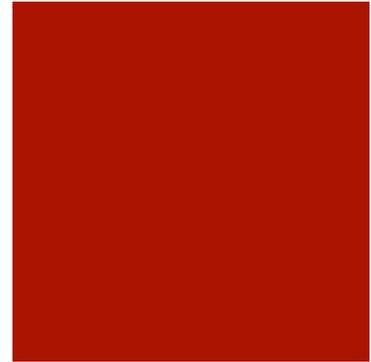
- What do you know as a result of participating in this discussion that you didn't know last week?
- What can you do as a result of participating in this discussion that you couldn't do last week?
- What could you teach someone to know or do as a result of participating in this discussion that you couldn't teach them last week?

# Conclusions:



- Discussion challenges our easy assumptions and makes us think critically
- opens us to diverse views and voices
- trains us in democratic discourse
- It can be much fun!!!

# Literature



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