

The Claremont Dialog

The Claremont Dialog helps students reflect on their curricular experience, whether assignment, activity, reading, or service. Many reflection models, such as the [DEAL \(Describe, Examine, and Articulate Learning\) Model for Critical Reflection](#) and [Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle](#), ask students to consider and make sense of their experiences. Students start their reflective journey by describing, for example, a field study, both objectively and personally. During a dialog, participating students may do just this – reflect and share with a group of peers without judgment or comment – on their field study work. If students do not wish to share, they may “pass” their turn around the circle.

The Claremont Dialog is an example of contemplative pedagogy, an increasingly “hot topic” in higher education. [The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society](#) explores a number of practices that draw upon mindfulness and reflection techniques from both religious and secular traditions, such as the practice described here. The Claremont Dialog takes advantage of some conventional discussion tools such as agendas and clear objectives to facilitate dynamic and focused learning. However, it is structured to counteract some of the issues sometimes associated with classroom discussions, such as giving ample opportunity for quiet or shy students to voice their opinions.

In general, the Claremont Dialog draws from questions such as, “How does ___ feel?,” “What was your experience with ___?,” and “What did I learn about myself from ___?” The dialog is also considered confidential, and there is no judgment either during or after the experience. It allows for critical self-reflection in a supportive group environment.

In practice, the class:

- Forms a circle
- Takes a moment of silence/meditation
- The leader/instructor (who is part of the circle), explains the rules for the Claremont Dialog as well as the objectives of this particular dialog (perhaps including a guiding question)
- The leader shares his/her experience or response to the guiding question
- Students are given opportunity to participate by sharing their experiences as the dialog moves around the circle

Resources:

<http://www.contemplativemind.org/>

<http://educationprogram.duke.edu/uploads/assets/DEAL%20reflection%20questions.pdf>

<http://academic.regis.edu/ed202/subsequent/kolb2.htm>

Submitted by:

Freya B. Kinner, Instructional Developer

Coulter Faculty Commons

Western Carolina University

<http://www.wcu.edu>