

9 Pedagogies Explained—and How to Use Them in Your Course

Easy-to-implement strategies designed for any classroom





Every course is different. The aim of this guide is to illustrate how various pedagogies can be used in the classroom to fit the needs of any instructor.

You'll get easy-to-implement strategies and insights into how you can apply different pedagogical teaching styles in your course. You'll also understand why and how having a clear and concise pedagogy can support your curriculum.

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Inquiry-based learning

DEFINITION

Inquiry-based learning encourages students to ask questions and complete research while learning various concepts. The pedagogy focuses on helping learners develop the skills necessary to develop their own ideas, as well as question themselves and group members in a constructive way.

5 WAYS TO USE IT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

- ▶ **First-person experiences:** Students take on the identities of people actively involved in an event or era they have chosen to research.
- ▶ **Inquiring minds:** Students are organized into small groups based on research topics they have selected. They then brainstorm three-to-five questions they hope to answer through their research.
- ▶ **Oral history project:** Students are asked to research the personal histories of an individual of their choice, conduct interviews with the person, and create a presentation that includes artifacts, a feature article, a personal memoir, and a photograph.
- ▶ **Transmediations:** After reading a text or source in class, students are encouraged to change the medium of the work from its original form (ie, a poem to a picture book).
- ▶ **Travelogues:** Have your students record virtual visits (in a variety of mediums) to countries where a novel or text they are reading is set or a historic event has occurred.

WHEN AND HOW TO USE IT

Disciplines: Works in all disciplines, but can be especially beneficial in humanities courses

Course type: Online, blended and face-to-face

Socratic method

DEFINITION

The Socratic method is named after Greek philosopher Socrates, who taught students by asking a series of questions. The principle underlying the Socratic method is that students learn through the use of critical thinking, reason and logic.

5 WAYS TO USE IT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

- ▶ **Fishbowl:** Arrange students in inner and outer circles. The inner-circle engages in discussion. The outer circle observes while taking notes. The outer circle then shares their observations and questions the inner circle with guidance from the instructor.
- ▶ **Triad:** Students are arranged so that each participant has two other participants sitting behind them on either side. The center participant takes part in the seminar discussions. At any time during a triad conversation, group members can switch seats and any one of the participants can sit in the center seat.
- ▶ **Simultaneous seminars:** Students are arranged into multiple, small groups and engage in discussions. Each small group may have a different text to read and discuss.
- ▶ **Moral dilemmas:** Provide students with a moral or ethical dilemma. Then ask them to explore potential solutions as a group.
- ▶ **This or that:** Instructors distribute a list of provocative statements before class and students are asked to indicate whether they agree, disagree or are neutral on the topic. In class, have students of differing opinions share their views—and then encourage one or two members in each group to defend their position amongst a new group of students. Repeat as necessary.

WHEN AND HOW TO USE IT

Disciplines: Works in all disciplines, but can be especially beneficial in humanities courses.

Course type: Online, blended and face-to-face

Problem-based learning

DEFINITION

Learners acquire knowledge by devising a solution to a real-world problem. As they do, they acquire knowledge, as well as communication and collaboration skills.

5 WAYS TO USE IT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

- ▶ **Concept mapping:** Divide the class into teams and present them with a course-related problem. One team member writes down a solution and passes the sheet of paper along to the next team member, who builds upon that idea and then passes it along to the rest of the team. In the end, a spokesperson can present their ultimate solution.
- ▶ **Affinity mapping:** Place students in small groups and pose a broad question or problem to them. Ask students to generate responses by writing ideas down, then have them group their ideas into similar categories and discuss their grouping choices.
- ▶ **Debate:** Propose a topic or issue to your class. Group students together according to the position they take. Ask the groups of students to come up with a few arguments or examples to support their position, then use these as a starting point for discussion.
- ▶ **Philosophical chairs:** A statement that has two possible responses—agree or disagree—is read out loud. Students move to one side of the room or the other, depending on their stance. After everyone has chosen a side, ask one or two students on each side to take turns defending their positions.
- ▶ **Real-world scenario:** Present students with a scenario taken directly from current events that can be related back to your course. Then, ask students to analyze its historical significance, what its impact was, what led to it, etc.

WHEN AND HOW TO USE IT

Disciplines: Effective in all disciplines

Course type: Requires some modifications to be used in online and blended courses

Collaborative pedagogy

DEFINITION

Collaborative pedagogy rejects the notion that students can think, learn and write effectively in isolation. Collaborative pedagogy strives to maximize critical thinking, learning and writing skills through peer-to-peer interaction and interpersonal engagement.

5 WAYS TO USE IT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

- ▶ **Improv games:** Improvisational games encourage students to think quickly and step outside their comfort zone. Here's an example: Pair up students and ask them to figure out the most unexpected things they share in common
- ▶ **Synthesis:** Help students connect course concepts by leaning on prior knowledge and experiences. Ask questions such as "How can this idea be combined with _____ to create a more complete or comprehensive understanding of _____?" Students can then discuss these questions in their small teams
- ▶ **Gallery walk:** Set up stations or posters in a few locations around the classroom. Divide students into small groups and have them rotate between each station together sorting their observations into categories. Finally, ask them to write down a list of questions about the source material they are viewing.
- ▶ **Pub quiz:** Divide students into teams. Ask a multiple-choice trivia question and give teams 60 seconds to discuss and agree upon an answer.
- ▶ **Brainwriting:** After you tackle a complex lecture topic, give students time to individually reflect on their learnings. Then, encourage them to share their views either through an online discussion thread or a conversation with peers during class time.

WHEN AND HOW TO USE IT

Disciplines: Effective in all disciplines

Course type: Requires some modifications to be used in online and blended courses

Integrative pedagogy

DEFINITION

Integrative learning is the process of making connections between concepts and experiences so that information and skills can be applied to novel and complex issues or challenges.

5 WAYS TO USE IT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

- ▶ **Community service:** Holding fundraisers, volunteering at local schools or eldercare homes or preparing meals for those experiencing food insecurity can help students take part in community service activities.
- ▶ **Lab work:** Engaging in hands-on experiences in STEM courses help students learn scientific concepts and enhance interest, motivation, practical skills and problem-solving abilities.
- ▶ **Listening to guest speakers:** Guest speakers can provide students with insight into different careers and perspectives.
- ▶ **Cross-discipline research projects:** Give students the chance to develop critical thinking expertise, as well as effective analytical and communication skills by leveraging cross-discipline research projects.
- ▶ **Hypothesis testing:** Ask students to combine concepts from a number of their classes to develop a hypothesis to test for STEM programs or a thesis for an essay for social sciences or humanities programs.

WHEN AND HOW TO USE IT

Disciplines: Effective in all disciplines, though best suited for comprehensive specialized programs (like dentistry, medicine, education, physiotherapy)

Course type: Requires some modifications to be used in online and blended courses

Reflective pedagogy

DEFINITION

Reflective pedagogy encourages the instructor to reflect upon lessons, projects, and assessments, with the goal of improving them for future use. Students are also encouraged to reflect on their performance on assessments and look for areas where they can get better.

5 WAYS TO USE IT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

- ▶ **Conversation stations:** Share a list of discussion questions pertaining to a course reading, video or case study. Put students into groups and give them five to ten minutes to discuss, then have two students rotate to another group. The students who have just joined a group have an opportunity to share findings from their last discussion, before answering the second question with their new group.
- ▶ **Make it personal:** Divide students into small discussion groups. Ask the groups a question like “How did this impact your prior knowledge of the topic?” to encourage students to reflect on their personal connections to the course concepts.
- ▶ **Dialogue journals:** Students submit loose-leaf pages from a dialogue journal bi-weekly (or at other intervals) for the instructor to read and comment on.
- ▶ **Directed readings:** Directed readings are a way to prompt students to consider their learning experience within a broader context of social responsibility and civic literacy.
- ▶ **Small group week:** Schedule reflection sessions so that only a small number of students need to attend. The group should consist of no more than 10–12. The rest of the class will be scheduled to attend other class periods, using this period for whatever you want them to be doing outside of class.

WHEN AND HOW TO USE IT

Disciplines: Effective in all disciplines, but particularly beneficial in introductory courses

Course type: Requires some modifications to be used in online and blended courses

Constructivist pedagogy

DEFINITION

Constructivist teaching strategies help students understand the meaning of their learning materials, instead of just asking them to passively ingest content. Rather than focusing on the subject or lesson being taught, educators are encouraged to focus on how the student learns.

5 WAYS TO USE IT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

- ▶ **Role-playing activities:** By immersing themselves in course content, students are able to engage on a deeper level.
- ▶ **KWL(H) Chart:** Get an overview of student progress throughout the term by having them fill out a chart with the following fields: What we know, What we want to know, What we have learned, How we know it
- ▶ **Mind mapping:** Students list and categorize concepts and ideas relating to a topic in a more visually expressive way.
- ▶ **Videos/multimedia elements:** These provide visual context and appeal to students who possess different learning styles.
- ▶ **Experimentation:** Students individually perform an experiment and then come together as a class to discuss the results.

WHEN AND HOW TO USE IT

Disciplines: Best for social sciences and humanities

Course type: Online, blended and face-to-face

Critical pedagogy

DEFINITION

Critical pedagogy asserts that issues of social justice and democracy are not distinct from acts of teaching and learning. It is a theory and practice that helps students question and challenge prevalent beliefs and practices—and achieve critical consciousness.

5 WAYS TO USE IT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

- ▶ **Flipped classroom:** This strategy aims to increase student engagement and learning by having students complete readings at home and then work on live problem-solving during class time.
- ▶ **Ungrading:** In lieu of numerical grades, have students write reflections during a course in which they outline and examine what they've learned.
- ▶ **Present alternative views:** Present two sides of an argument to students. Have them discuss both and encourage them to draw their own conclusions.
- ▶ **Change the classroom dynamic:** Rather than having students sit in rows facing you, set up the desks so that they are facing each other in a semicircle or circle. This challenges power structures and allows for better conversation in the classroom.
- ▶ **Social media campaign:** Encourage students to engage in critical activism outside the classroom by making a social media campaign that champions their favorite cause.

WHEN AND HOW TO USE IT

Disciplines: Effective in all disciplines, but particularly beneficial in introductory courses

Course type: Requires some modifications to be used in online and blended courses

Culturally responsive teaching

DEFINITION

Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to and celebrates fundamental cultures, and strives to offer equitable access to education for students from all cultures.

5 WAYS TO USE IT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

- ▶ **Use student vocabulary:** Keep student attention by using their vocabulary to build understanding before moving to academic diction. Alternatively, use a sports analogy to demonstrate a particular course concept.
- ▶ **Learning stations:** Whether due to culture, socialization, preference or learning needs, students respond differently to a variety of content. You can provide a range of material to each student by setting up learning stations where students can play a game or watch a video.
- ▶ **Call and response:** By asking students frequent questions, you can encourage them to share thoughts, opinions and personal experiences.
- ▶ **Study time:** Free study time typically appeals to students who prefer independent learning, but many cultures prioritize learning in group settings. You can meet both preferences by, for example, providing audiobooks with content relevant to your course, creating a game station for small groups, or keeping a dedicated quiet space for students to take notes and complete work.
- ▶ **Peer teaching:** Encourage students to discuss and rationalize concepts in their own words in order to understand course topics in a way that makes sense for them.

WHEN AND HOW TO USE IT

Disciplines: Effective in all disciplines, but particularly beneficial in introductory courses

Course type: Requires some modifications to be used in online and blended courses

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