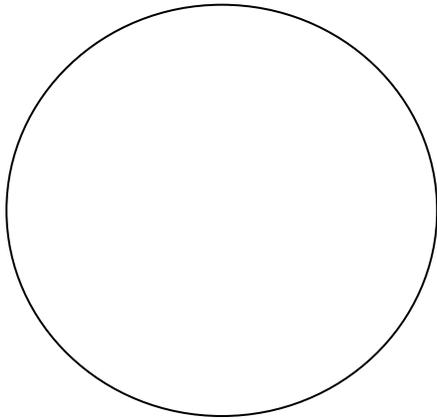


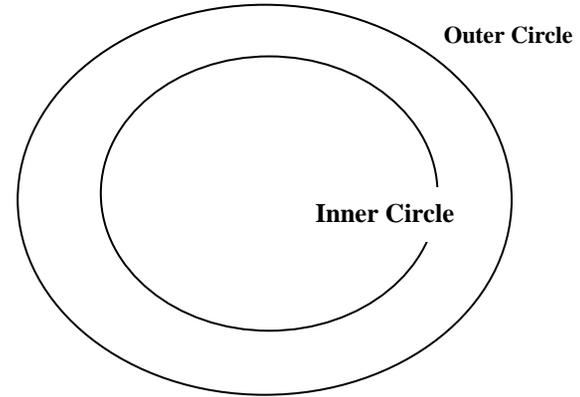
On Demand Module Handouts

Socratic Seminar Sample Class Arrangements

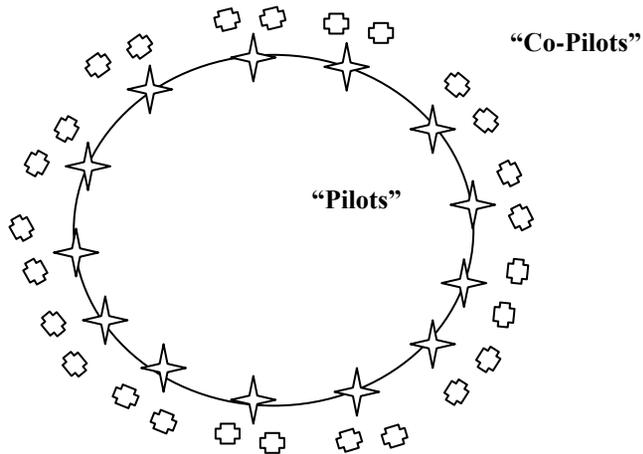
One Large Seminar



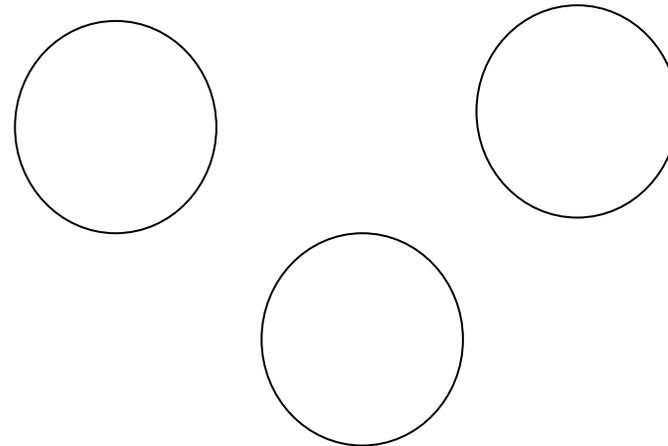
Inner/Outer Circle or Fishbowl



Triad



Simultaneous Seminars



Inner/Outer Circle or Fishbowl: Arrange students in inner and outer circles (a "fishbowl") where the inner circle engages in a dialogue and the outer circle observes, taking notes on the seminar process and new understandings about the text. The outer circle can share their observations as part of the debriefing process, with the teacher guiding how to offer constructive criticism rather than judgments. Students in the outer circle can keep track of comments/points made to which they would like to respond if the circles switch places or as part of the debrief. Members of the outside circle can also use the "Socratic Seminar Observation Checklist" or the "Socratic Seminar Observation Notes" form to monitor student participation in the inner circle. These tools provide structure for listening and give the outside students concrete details to use when they share observations in the debrief.

Triad: Arrange students so that each individual student in the inner circle (called a "pilot") has two "co-pilots" that sit behind and on either side of him/her. The pilot and two co-pilots form the triad. Pilots are in the inner circle and speak; co-pilots are in the outer circle and only speak during consult times. The seminar proceeds as normal, writing and sharing questions, discussion, etc. At a certain point during the discussion, the leader pauses the conversation and directs the triads to talk to each other. Sometimes they talk about something that is being discussed in the circle and needs more depth. Sometimes the triads talk about a question posed by the leader. Sometimes the leader asks the triads to come up with a new question or direction for the seminar--it just depends on how things are progressing in the seminar. Anytime the triads are speaking, they can move seats and one of the co-pilots can move into the pilot seat. But only during that time is switching seats allowed.

This variation is helpful because it gives students who may not yet have the courage to speak in a large group the chance to practice in a triad. It also involves the whole class, as opposed to the inner/outer circle which may not include all students speaking in one seminar sitting

Simultaneous Seminars: Arrange students in a few small group circles as far from one another as possible in the classroom (to cut down on noise interference from groups speaking at the same time). Adhering to all of the regular guidelines and expectations of Socratic Seminar, students engage in their small group dialogues. Simultaneous seminars are usually done with experienced students who are able to maintain their own discussions with minimal teacher assistance. This is an especially good structure to use if the teacher wants to engage the class in exploring multiple texts around a core topic or concept. Each small group might have a different text as the focus of their Socratic Seminar. This also creates the opportunity for a larger Socratic Seminar that then discusses how the texts resonate with one another.

Arrangement for Mapping (a debrief process)

Mapping the seminar: One way to process the seminar dynamic is to assign a student to map the seminar prior to beginning. This student uses either a large sheet of paper that can be displayed on the wall or a regular sheet of paper that can be displayed on a document camera to keep track of the flow of the dialogue in the seminar. The student draws a large circle and an X or little boxes to indicate each student in the speaking circle. As the dialogue starts, the student draws a line from the first speaker (who asks the opening question) to the second speaker, the third, and so on. He/she continues to draw the lines through the whole seminar. At the end, the class analyzes the map and makes observations. They determine patterns: who has the most lines (did they dominate the conversation?); who has the least lines; are there many lines back and forth between two people; etc. Based on the map, students can set goals for the next seminar.

Mapping the dialogue: Another option, in addition to mapping the flow of the conversation, is to assign students in an outside circle to keep track of what is actually said. One outer student can be responsible for scripting the dialogue of one or two inner students. This allows the class to analyze the quality of the dialogue.