SCHOOL OF **BUSINESS**
Kokomo

20/20 on Teaching, Learning & Research Symposium

Socratic Case Dialogues: Engaging Students in Critical and Applied Thinking

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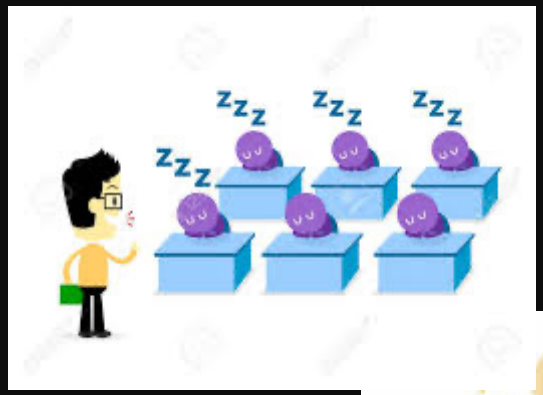
Questions are the engines of learning

Problems with lecturing

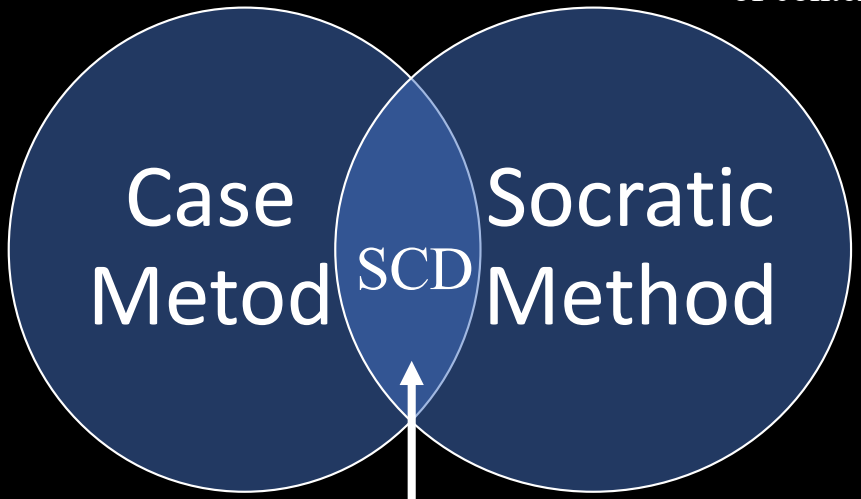
Students absorb but rarely wrestle with ideas.



Socratic Case Dialogues (SCD)

Case-based learning encourages students to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations, building transferable skills (Herreid, 2011).

Socratic method emphasizes inquiry, critical thinking, and collaborative reasoning rather than passive absorption of content (Overholser, 1991).



Socratic Case Dialogues transform cases from static exercises into dynamic, evolving conversations that mirror the ambiguity of professional decision-making.

PART I – DOING IT IN PERSON

Step 1: Set Up the Case

Purpose: Model classroom start

Robinhood

It was the second year of Robin Hood's rebellion against the Sheriff of Nottingham. What began as a small, tight-knit band of outlaws had grown into a sprawling encampment deep in Sherwood Forest. New recruits poured in from all over England, drawn by Robin's reputation and his promise of justice for the oppressed. Yet, success brought new problems. Food was becoming scarce, discipline was declining, and even Robin admitted he no longer recognized many of his own men. With resources strained and their operations increasingly visible, Robin faced a troubling realization: the band's old methods of robbing the rich to aid the poor might no longer be sustainable.

To restore stability, Robin proposed replacing outright robbery with a fixed "transit tax" on those who passed through Sherwood Forest. The new system, he argued, would preserve their finances, reduce waste, and keep the people on their side. But his lieutenants fiercely resisted, insisting that taxation betrayed the Merrymen's core values and would alienate their supporters. As Robin listened to their objections, he knew a decision had to be made—one that could define the future of his band and the very meaning of their mission. Should he hold fast to their founding motto, or adopt a new, more practical strategy to survive?

PART I – DOING IT IN PERSON

Step 2: Small-Group Inquiry

Purpose: Collaboration

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PART I – DOING IT IN PERSON

Step 3: Socratic Dialogue

Purpose: Demonstrate questioning

Brookfield's CLOSE-UP Framework

Question Type	Description	Examples
Clarity	Questions that ask students to clarify their thinking.	What problem is Robin truly trying to solve (moral, economic, or strategic)?
Linking	Questions that ask students to link different parts of content.	How does the issue of food scarcity connect to the decline in discipline?
Open-Ended	Questions that are broad and do not seek a single response.	How might Robin's choice redefine loyalty among his followers?
Synthesis	Questions that ask students to summarize key points.	What are the major trade-offs Robin faces between principle and survival?
Evidence	Questions that ask students to support their argument or position.	Which part of Robin's argument for taxation seems most persuasive and why?
Understanding	Questions that ascertain whether or not students understood content properly.	What does this case tell us about how missions evolve over time?
Priority	Questions that ask students to prioritize the key concepts or most important points made in the discussion.	If you were advising Robin, which issue would you address first and why?

PART I – DOING IT IN PERSON

Step 4: Reflection

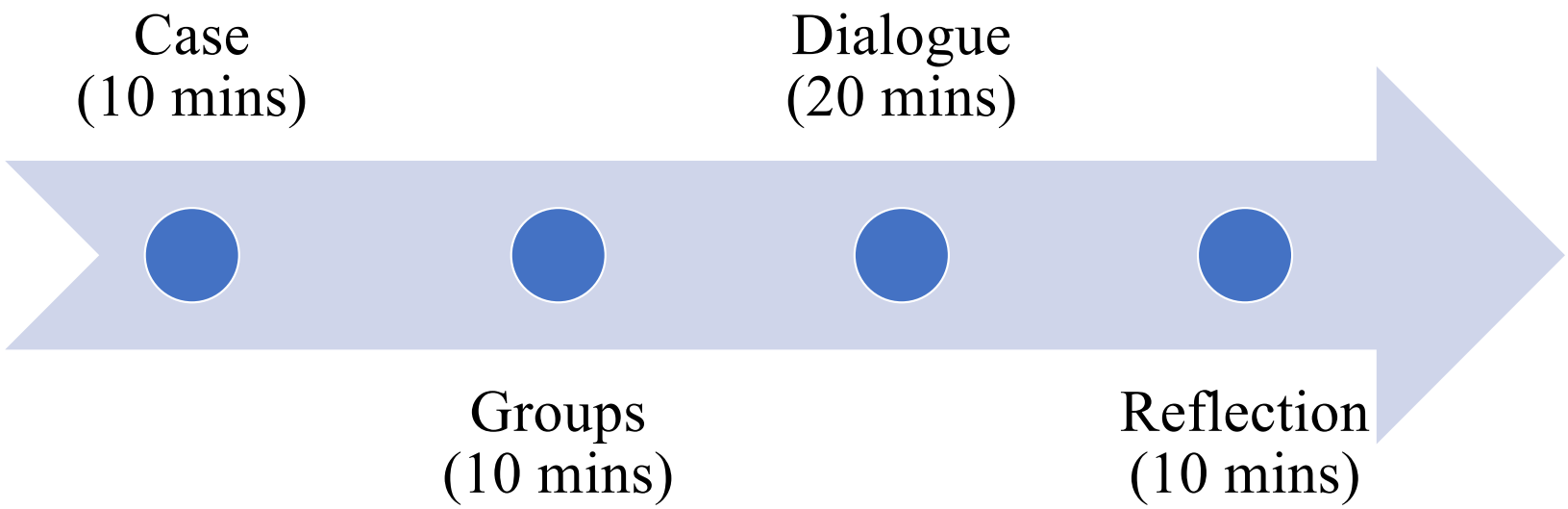
Purpose: Consolidate learning

What remains unresolved?

Given Robin Hood's situation, what remains unresolved about his leadership and the group's future?

- What moral or strategic tension still lingers after the discussion?
- What might this dilemma teach us about balancing values and pragmatism?
- If you were in Robin's position, what question would still trouble you tonight?

Full In-Class Flow



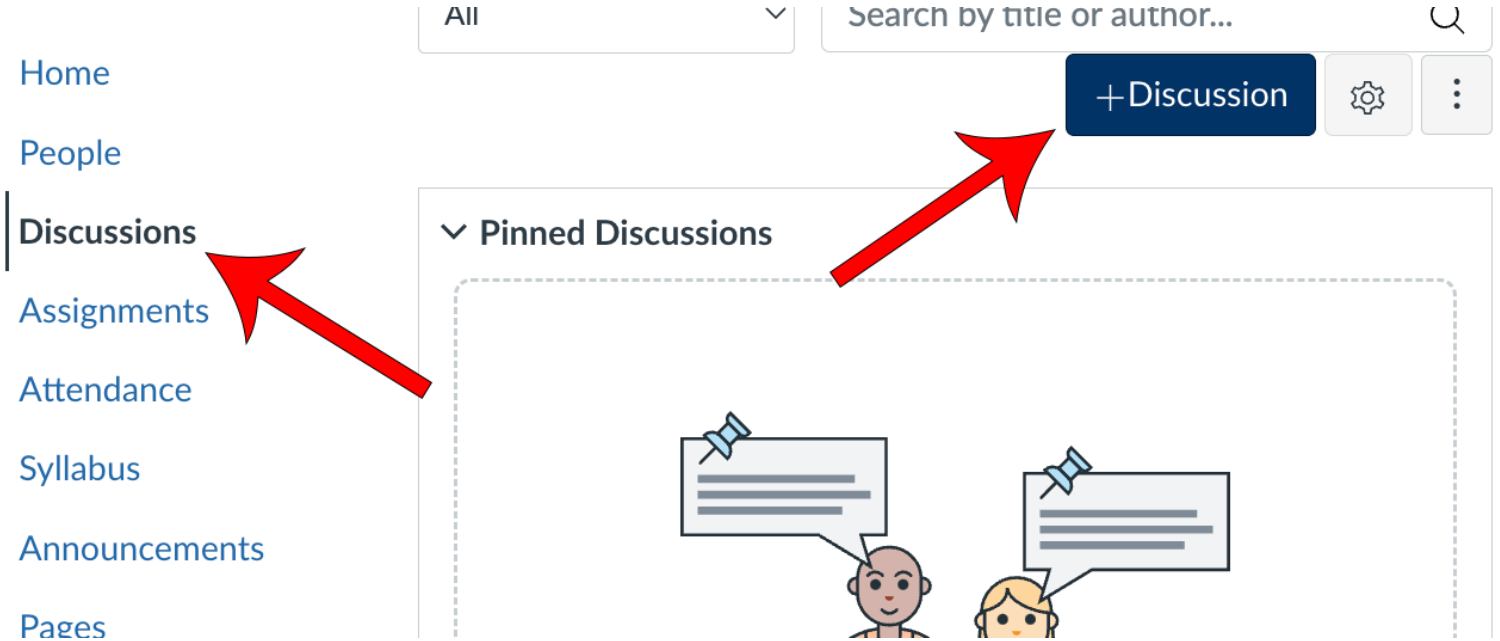
Common Pitfalls & Fixes

Pitfall	Fix
Fuzzy questions	Plan questions (but plan to feed off their response)
Silence	Pause
Dominant voices	Rotate respondents

PART II – DOING IT ONLINE

Why It Works Online Too

Keep the same structure , but stetch it over a week.



PART II – DOING IT ONLINE

Step 1: Prepare the Text or Case

Purpose: Select materials

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PART II – DOING IT ONLINE

Step 2: Forum 1 – Clarify

Purpose: Stage 1 questioning

Why is Robin dissatisfied with his band's growth?

Start with factual understanding.

PART II – DOING IT ONLINE

Step 3: Forum 2 – Analyze

Purpose: Stage 2 questioning

How does taxing conflict with the merrymen's motto?

Encourage comparative reasoning.

PART II – DOING IT ONLINE

Step 4: Forum 3 – Evaluate

Purpose: Stage 3 questioning

What assumptions guide Robin Hood's decision to tax travelers instead of robbing the rich?

Encourage students to critique reasoning and apply it to new contexts.

PART II – DOING IT ONLINE

Step 5: Peer Questioning (CLOSE-UP)

Purpose: Model peer engagement

Each student posts two probing questions and replies to one peer.

PART II – DOING IT ONLINE

Step 6: Instructor Synthesis

Purpose: Close the loop

Model reflection: summarize patterns, contradictions, and new insights.

Impact

Class will feel like a conversation, not a quiz.

Students will report higher engagement and deeper learning.

Call to Action

Start with one case and one good question.

Which version will you try first—in-person or online?

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Thank You!

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