US History- Socratic Seminar Rubric

Questions Due:

Inner Circle Date:

Outer Circle Date:

Points Possible: 70 (40 inner circle, 20 outer circle, 10 pre-seminar questions)

Background:

The Socratic method of teaching is based on Socrates' theory that it is more important to enable students to think for themselves than to merely fill their heads with "right" answers. Therefore, he regularly engaged his pupils in dialogues by responding to their questions with questions, instead of answers. This process encourages divergent thinking rather than convergent.

Students are given opportunities to "examine" a common piece of text, whether it is in the form of a novel, poem, art print, or piece of music. After "reading" the common text "like a love letter", open-ended questions are posed.

Dialogue is exploratory and involves the suspension of biases and prejudices. Discussion/debate is a transfer of information designed to win an argument and bring closure. Socratic Seminar is a dialogue among students, NOT a discussion/debate. The goal of this exercise is to build on one another's ideas, not "win".

Participants in a Socratic Seminar respond to one another with respect by carefully listening instead of interrupting. Students are encouraged to "paraphrase" essential elements of another's ideas before responding, either in support of or in disagreement. Members of the dialogue look each other in the "eyes" and use each others’ names.

Pre-Seminar Question-Writing:

Before you come to a Socratic Seminar class, please read the assigned text (novel section, poem, essay, article, etc.) and write at least one question in each of the following categories. Questions should be typed.

WORLD CONNECTION QUESTION: Write a question connecting the text to the real world.

Example: If you were asked to write a set of laws for a new colony, what resources might you use to help you? (after reading the Mayflower Compact)

CLOSE-ENDED QUESTION: Write a question about the text that will help everyone in the class come to an agreement about events or characters in the text. This question usually has a "correct" answer.
Example: What was the reason citizens were given the right to bear arms? (after reading the Constitution)

**OPEN-ENDED QUESTION:** Write an insightful question about the text that will require proof and group discussion and "construction of logic" to discover or explore the answer to the question.

Example: Why would people interested in religious tolerance rely so heavily on the Christian Bible for justification for their laws? (after reading the Mayflower Compact)

**UNIVERSAL THEME/ CORE QUESTION:** Write a question dealing with a theme(s) of the text that will encourage group discussion about the universality of the text.

Example: After reading the Mayflower Compact, what role do you think its writers believed the rule of law had in founding a new colony?

**Seminar Format:**

In-class seminars will last for two days. Each student will have a turn sitting in the “inner circle” and the “outer circle”. While in the inner circle, the student will be expected to actively contribute to the discussion. While in the outer circle, she will be expected to take notes and write reactions to the dialogue, which she will turn in at the end of the hour. Students MAY NOT SPEAK OUT while in the outer circle. Students in the inner circle will be given five tokens. Every time a student wishes to speak, she will put one of her tokens in the box. When a student runs out of tokens, she may no longer speak except to ask questions of clarification (questions of clarification do not require tokens). Students in the inner circle will address the questions provided by the instructor, which will be drawn from the students’ pre-seminar questions. After the students have thoroughly discussed a question, the instructor will introduce a new question to the group. The instructor will not speak except to introduce questions, answer questions of clarification about the format, or remind students of the format guidelines. It is the responsibility of the students in the inner circle to keep the dialogue flowing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conduct</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrates respect for learning process, has patience with different opinions and complexity, shows initiative by asking others for clarification, brings others into the conversation, moves conversation forward, speaks to all participants, avoids talking too much.</td>
<td>Generally shows composure but may display impatience with contradictory or confusing ideas, comments but does not necessarily encourage others to participate, may tend to address only the teacher or get into debates.</td>
<td>Participates and expresses a belief that his ideas are important in understanding the text, may make insightful comments but is either too forceful or too shy and does not contribute to the progress of conversation, tends to debate not discuss.</td>
<td>Displays little respect for the learning process, argumentative, takes advantage of minor distractions, uses inappropriate language, speaks to individuals rather than ideas, arrives unprepared without notes, a pencil, and perhaps even the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking/Reasoning</td>
<td>Understands question before answering, cites evidence from text, expresses thoughts in complete sentences, logical and insightful, moves conversation forward, makes connections between ideas, resolves apparent contradictory ideas, considers others' viewpoints not only his/her own, avoids bad logic.</td>
<td>Responds to questions voluntarily, comments show an appreciation for the text but not an appreciation for the subtler points within it, comments logical but not connected to other speakers, ideas interesting enough that others respond to them.</td>
<td>Responds to questions but may have to be called upon, has read the text but not put much effort into preparing questions and ideas for the seminar, comments take details into account but may not flow logically in conversation.</td>
<td>Extremely reluctant to participate even when called upon, comments illogical and meaningless, may mumble or express incomplete ideas, little or no account taken of previous comments or important ideas in the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Pays attention to details, writes down questions, responses take into account all participants, demonstrates that s/he has kept up, points out bad logic, overcomes distractions.</td>
<td>Generally pays attention and responds thoughtfully to ideas and questions of other participants and the teacher, absorption in own ideas may distract the participant from the ideas of others.</td>
<td>Appears to find some ideas unimportant while responding to others, may have to have questions repeated while not having confusing comments restated, takes few notes during the seminar.</td>
<td>Appears uninvolved in the seminar, comments display complete misinterpretation of questions or comments of other participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Thoroughly familiar with text, has notations and questions in the margins, key words, phrases, and ideas are underlined, possible contradictions identified, pronounces words correctly.</td>
<td>Has read the text and comes with some ideas from it but these may not be written out in advance, good understanding of the vocabulary but may mispronounce some new or foreign words.</td>
<td>Appears to have read or skimmed the text but has not marked the text or made meaningful notes or questions, shows difficulty with vocabulary, mispronounces important words, key concepts misunderstood, little evidence of serious reflection prior to the seminar.</td>
<td>Student is unprepared for the seminar, important words, phrases, ideas in the text are unfamiliar, no notes or questions marked in the text, no attempt made to get help with difficult material.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>