

# Facilitating for The Messy Mind

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## Abstract

### Short Description

Through a partnership between english composition and library faculty, a composition course focused on the exploration of discourse communities and led to student engagement with the ACRL frames, authority is constructed and contextual and scholarship as conversation. The faculty aimed to incorporate components of contemplative pedagogy into the course through the use of highly-facilitated classroom discussions to tackle the messy mind. These facilitated activities tasked students explicitly with exploring types of authority and author credibility while implicitly guiding them through mindful speaking and listening behaviors.

## Learning Outcomes

- Recognize that authoritative content may be packaged formally or informally and may include sources of all media types (Knowledge Domain)([edu](#))
- Identify both opportunities and barriers to entering scholarly conversations (Knowledge Domain) ([edu](#))
- Give examples of the tools available to access and share authoritative content (Comprehension Domain)([tax](#))
- Consider ways to contribute to scholarly conversations at an appropriate level (Evaluation Domain)([edu](#))

# Lesson Plan

This lesson plan was designed for a 50-minute english composition course (general education requirement) with mostly freshmen and sophomore students enrolled across disciplines. Emphasis was placed on highly-facilitated short activities and discussions for initial engagement around the concept of scholarly sources and authority. Discussion activities were also designed to support both convergent and divergent thinking. For activities geared toward convergent thinking, sample prompts are also provided. This first session supported the english composition faculty in their efforts to engage students around the concept of discourse communities.

WHO	TIME	ACTIVITY
Individual	2 mins.	<p>Silent brainstorm</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> Brainstorm about your hobbies, skills, or experiences where you might have built expertise or been recognized for your authority on the subject. Choose something you're comfortable sharing with the class today.</p> <p>If you can't think of anything right now, reflect on your authority of being a college student as you envision talking to middle or high school students who want to learn about getting into college.</p>
Individual	2 mins.	<p>Silent written reflection</p> <p><b>List</b> (without judgment) all of the resources or places that you consulted to learn and also where you be might share your expertise with others. Be thinking of both physical and digital spaces/tools.</p>
Partners	2 mins.; 1 min. each	<p>Pair and share.</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> Take 1 minute each to briefly tell your partner about your area of expertise.</p>
Librarian	1 min.	<p><b>Clarify</b> roles + expectations of speakers and listeners.</p> <p>Intentionally done after the first pair and share to allow students to reflect on first conversation.</p> <p>Here are some ideas for consideration:</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b> Give your complete and sincere attention to your listener. Speak for the full assigned time and on the topic provided. Consider your listener. What do you need to tell them to help them understand? If you aren't sure what else to say at any point, you can ask your partner to ask you questions to help you delve deeper. They will not coach you or talk about themselves. Share information that will support a report out to the class.</p> <p><b>Listeners:</b> Give your full and sincere attention to the speaker. Consider how you will nonverbally let them know that you are listening. Take notes on what they say to help you stay focused and to share with the class later. Only ask questions for true and deeper understanding. This is not the time for coaching or sharing your own opinions or experiences. Be mindful about framing neutral questions, and only ask questions if speaker struggles to share their thoughts for the full allotted time.</p>
Librarian	2 mins.	<p><b>Share</b> a personal example to demonstrate different resources.</p> <p>Provide specific examples of tools used in both physical and digital spaces.</p> <p>Here are some examples that can be shared to get students started:</p> <p><b>Physical Spaces:</b> Books (From libraries? Bookstores, etc.); Informal Meetups (where? Organized by someone? Held in private or public space?)</p> <p><b>Digital Spaces:</b> Video (On youtube.com? DVD? What did you need to access them?); Blogs (Who hosts? Did you pay to access the content?)</p>

Figure 1: First Half of the Lesson Plan

**NOTE:** for *Librarian Example* above.

Ideas of **Physical** Spaces: Patterns or Designs, Maps, Newspaper articles, Informal Demonstrations, Formal Trainings

Ideas of **Digital** Spaces: Social Media Accounts, Videos, Blogs, Interactive Figures, Games, Photographs, Forums

<b>Partners</b>	11 mins.; 5 mins. each	<b>Prompt:</b> Speakers will work to identify all of the tools that you have accessed or used to build and share your expertise. Listeners can assist in asking questions to help speaker identify as many as possible and to fill in the specifics about those tools.
<b>Partners</b>	4 mins.	<b>Prompt:</b> Select the resource you find most intriguing or unique that your partner shared. Write that resource on the whiteboard for the class to read. Whiteboard chosen to allow movement break. Alternate: Can ask to do verbal report out and have 1 notetaker.
<b>Individual</b>	4 mins.	<b>Read</b> examples on the whiteboard. <b>Place</b> an X next to any that were on your list.
<b>Librarian</b>	5 mins.	<b>Lecture.</b> Introduction to traditional information resource types permitted for English assignment.
<b>Partners</b>	6 mins.; 3 mins. each	<b>Prompt:</b> Compare your lists to the list of traditional scholarly lists. <b>Questions</b> to consider: What stands out? What's similar? What's different? Who is considered credible? Does your access to these change as a college student? Do you know anyone who can't access these? Who decides what is published or credible?
<b>Class</b>	9 mins.	<b>Report</b> out. Observations? How did it feel to have time facilitated for speakers or listeners?

Figure 2: Second Half of Lesson Plan

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**Traditional Scholarly Sources Covered** Scholarly Encyclopedias  
**in Lecture**

Peer-reviewed scholarly articles via Library

Databases

Government Documents

Grey Literature, including patents or  
conference proceedings

Dissertations or Theses

Historical Primary Sources

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### **Supplies:**

- Whiteboard + whiteboard markers
- Projector to show slides re: traditional scholarly sources, librarian's example of personal area of expertise, and ideas for learning and sharing about area of expertise in both physical and digital spaces
- Stopwatch (or app). Although optional, using a stopwatch was found to be much easier during facilitating than a timer or clock.

## **Course Context**

The faculty aimed to incorporate contemplative pedagogy into the course through the use of highly-facilitated classroom discussions to tackle the messy mind. These facilitated activities tasked students explicitly with exploring types of authority and author credibility while implicitly guiding them through mindful speaking and listening behaviors.

The English faculty member dedicated the lecture session before the library's information literacy class to content about discourse communities and also gave an introduction to the ACRL frame, authority is constructed and contextual. Prior to the class, the English faculty shared the slides with the Library faculty for review. Similarly, librarian shared lesson plan and ideas about facilitating the library session with the English faculty member.

## **Potential Pitfalls and Teaching Tips:**

- Time dedicated to discussion and the roles of speakers and listeners was highly structured to facilitate for greater equity in pair and share activities. While designed as a

contemplative activity, the students' feedback noted that the highly structured conversations helped to actively confront some of their frustrations with pair/share and other active learning strategies. Students noted that they appreciated not receiving unsolicited advice from their peers or being interrupted or otherwise experiencing a partner monopolize the conversation.

- Faculty were mindful not to highly control content or require “tracking” behaviors from the students. Prompts were provided to help spark ideas and conversations around issues of authority and to introduce scholarship as conversation frame. Facilitated times and roles were designed to give each student within a pair enough time to reflect on and mindfully share and absorb information from each other.
- Information privilege([pri](#)) was a concept introduced by librarian that students mentioned regularly entered their conversations. It may be advised to cover this concept in the lecture-based session prior to the library session when authority frame is first introduced.
- Rotating of student partners was tried in one session. Here are some observed pros and cons of rotating:

Pros: encouraged students to interact with multiple students; differing levels of comfort and knowledge more broadly circulated

Cons: hard for students to get the context of a new area of expertise quickly enough; additional time was needed to allow for physical rotations of students and time to make introductions before jumping in.

- Uneven number of students in one session meant that a group of 3 students was formed. It was difficult to facilitate for equal time with the group of three while also facilitating for pairs. In the future to avoid this pitfall, the English faculty or a TA may be asked to partner for even numbers.

## Tags

contemplative pedagogy

discourse communities

scholarship as conversation

authority is constructed and contextual  
english composition

## References

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Image of Bloom's Taxonomy. [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/24/Blooms\\_r\\_ose.svg/240px-Blooms\\_r\\_ose.svg.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/24/Blooms_r_ose.svg/240px-Blooms_r_ose.svg.png). URL [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/24/Blooms\\_r\\_ose.svg/240px-Blooms\\_r\\_ose.svg.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/24/Blooms_r_ose.svg/240px-Blooms_r_ose.svg.png). Accessed on Mon, November 06, 2017.