

Seminar guidelines*

PRINCIPLES

Oppression exists

The existence of oppression (racism, classicism, sexism, abilism, homophobia/heterosexism, etc.) is real, even when we try our best to avoid it. The seminar should be a space where oppression is acknowledged and actively confronted.

Open minds only

Participants should leave their personal agendas at the door when they are in a group discussion. This doesn't mean that you have to abandon your personal interests and needs—it just means that you should be open to the possibility of learning from other members of the seminar.

We all have knowledge—and ignorance

Every member of the seminar has expertise in something. During a seminar everyone should be able to learn from one another while bringing their knowledge into the community of learners.

STRATEGIES

Be aware of time

The average seminar—which lasts 1 to 2 hours—includes plenty of time to explore points and ask questions. It does not allow time for speeches or storytelling that do not address the collective pursuit of knowledge. Be mindful of your fellow seminar members, and make sure to leave room for their contributions.

Use the “Whoa”

If at some point during the seminar a participant does not understand what has been said, strongly disagrees, or has something vital to share (like the fact that the room is on fire), it can be useful to raise your hand and say “Whoa.” The “Whoa” should be used sparingly, but it can be an important way to slow the pace of the conversation so that an important issue can be addressed. Remember: If you're confused, it's likely that someone else is, too.

Step up, step back.

Participants who like to talk should “step back” and create a space for those who are quiet. Quiet people should “step up” and contribute to the group so that everyone can learn from their expertise. All participants should have an equal opportunity to speak, and listen.

* Adapted from Project South, “Guidelines for creating a community of learners”
<http://www.projectsouth.org/>

Resources

Academic Advising Webpage on Seminar Basics

<http://www.evergreen.edu/advising/seminars.htm>

- Provides some basic questions and answers about Evergreen seminars

First Peoples' Advising

<http://www.evergreen.edu/firstpeoples/home.htm>

- A group of advisors dedicated to helping all students address issues of multiculturalism, both in and out of the classroom

The Writing Center

<http://www.evergreen.edu/writingcenter/>

- Tutors at the Writing Center can help you develop strategies for preparing for seminar and completing seminar assignments

The CARE Network

<http://www.evergreen.edu/studentaffairs/care/home.htm>

- If a conflict arises in seminar that you don't know how to address, the CARE network can help provide you with support and strategies.

Your faculty!

- The most important person to talk to about seminar is the person facilitating that seminar. Make sure to tell your faculty about things that might make you uncomfortable in seminar, and to ask for their help and feedback in developing your skills.