

Tips for Practicing Ignatian Pedagogy: Reflection Assignments

Students might reflect on any number of aspects of their learning experience, from the *content* of their learning, to the *process* of how they learned it, to the ways they might *apply* this learning (to their own lived experience, to future learning, etc.). Research on meta-cognition indicates that good reflection on the processes of learning can deepen that learning. The following tips will help you to build reflection activities into your course curriculum.

- 1) Be clear about what you mean by “reflection” and what goals you want it to serve in your class. Make distinctions between different kinds of reflection (and their different purposes).
- 2) Make the elements of Ignatian pedagogy explicit, so students can see that reflection is crucial to *acting* on learning.
- 3) Practice reflection in class together, explicitly.
- 4) Provide examples of strong and weak reflections. Structure reflection assignments so that there is scaffolding built in (i.e., have students consider the features of a strong reflection, help them to consider the implied stages in the process of reflection, etc.).
- 5) Provide students with Bloom (or other taxonomies), to help them reflect on their own stages / degrees of learning.

Sample Activities for Students

- At the close of a lesson or section, ask your students to identify what they think was the main idea. Alternatively, have students in small groups discuss their own perspective on the main idea of the lesson just completed. This provides them with the opportunity to think aloud as they reflect on the lesson. Give them room to make interpretations. In addition, ask your students to explain *why* this is a main idea. This represents not only a review, but a quest to really figure out what is at the heart of the matter.
- Pose a problem or a question, and tell your students that you do not want an immediate answer. You want students to take some time before answering, and you want them to do some research and reflection along the way. One approach is to pose the “Question of the Week.” Students have time to do some reading, to discuss the question with each other, find experts, etc. Each student should write down their thoughts in order to bring focus to the discussion. The question or problem posed should relate to the context of the ideas, skills, knowledge, and values being studied by the class. This type of activity allows students to make connections as you build in a reflective component to the course of study.

- During class time, pose a question to your students. Give them a few minutes to write down their thoughts. After they have had time to think through their ideas alone and commit those ideas in writing, place the students in discussion pairs. Allow students to share their ideas with their partner. Now expand the discussion groups so that two pairs are put together to form groups of four. After students have had an opportunity to share in a group of this size, move to groups of 8, 16, and finally to full class size. By the time you reach full class size, every student will have had ample opportunity to think about and discuss the question, thus providing several rehearsals for the discussion in which you lead the entire class. This repeated practice underscores the fact that discussion questions must be probing questions that are worth going over several times.
- In a blended or online course, have students keep blogs in which they reflect on *what* they've learned and/or on the *process* of learning a concept or skill in your class. Blogs have the advantage of being completed outside of class time, where you really want them reflecting on their learning, as well as of some other advantages: you can comment on them and push the reflection to an even deeper level, and they can build all semester, so both you and your students can look back to earlier lessons and deepen the connections between different moments of reflection and learning.

Additional Information

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