

Lesson title: Small Group Work in Political Science

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Summary: Students work together to define key complex and ambiguous political terms. This classroom exercise engages students with other learners in order to make the day's lesson more dynamic and get students involved in their own learning process.

Objectives:

1. Core concepts: Students will have a basic competence in the core concepts of each of the five disciplines, including an awareness of how these disciplines frame problems, and how the disciplines can complement one another.
2. Skills: Students develop core liberal arts skills: reading unfamiliar information and making sense of it; thinking critically about what they're reading; synthesizing material; coming to a conclusion about it; and articulating that conclusion verbally and in writing.
3. Representation: Students develop a recognition that all acts of representation are always partial—that they are shaped by the questions asked and the perspectives of those creating the representation. Therefore, students will be more critical consumers of such representations in the future.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students collaborate with other learners to create new knowledge
- Students use and develop interpersonal skills as well as an appreciation both for other learning styles and for other points of view.
- Students are actively involved in learning the material at hand. They create answers to the day's questions through their own reasoning and reflection.

Materials Required: None.

Lesson Activities:

1. Put students in small groups.
2. Assign each group a term like "terrorism" or "democracy." Ask each group to come up with a clear definition. Assign one student to keep track of the group's process.
3. Have a spokesperson for each group read the definition aloud to the rest of the class, or write it on the board, or both.
4. Ask each group in turn why they decided to define the term the way they did. What possible elements of the definition did they decide to reject, and why?