

Purpose

We would like to investigate whether Socratic Seminars are an effective teaching method for increasing critical thinking, verbal communication skills, and content knowledge in an introductory psychology course. We will assign two of four classes to prepare for the seminar in small groups, providing another facet for analysis.

Procedures

The study will be a quasi-experimental nonequivalent groups design. Two of the sections are traditional face-to-face classes, while other two sections are hybrid classes.

All four classes will be required to participate in Socratic Seminars throughout the semester. We will give them a topic to guide their research. Half of the class will sit in an inner circle and discuss the given topic, while the outer circle will observe and take notes. After 20 minutes, the groups will switch places. For the next 20 minutes, the two groups' roles will reverse. After the seminar, all students will reflect on their preparation and participation. This basic seminar structure will be the same for all four classes.

We will collect data using a critical thinking inventory, content-specific quiz, and attitudinal survey. The critical thinking inventory will be completed at the beginning and end of the semester. The content-specific quizzes will be given before and after each seminar, on the day of the seminar. The attitudinal survey will be completed at the end of the semester. In addition to these quantitative measures, student reflections regarding their preparation and participation will be reviewed for qualitative indicators of progress in critical thinking, verbal communication skills, and content knowledge.

The knowledge gained from this study could benefit the field of higher education by clarifying whether the Socratic Seminar is an effective teaching method for undergraduate students. Additionally, the results could indicate whether undergraduate students benefit from being assigned to research groups.