

Active and project-based learning is essential to teaching in SCLA 101 and 102. Students thrive when they take ownership of their learning in creative ways. Variety is key. Please do not merely rely on discussion alone. They need to be actively engaged with the material. In addition to the ideas below, please peruse and bookmark this site [The K. Patricia Cross Academy \(kpcrossacademy.org\)](http://The K. Patricia Cross Academy (kpcrossacademy.org))

You will find videos on how to use such active learning methods as:

- The 3-minute Message
- Team Jeopardy
- Dyadic Interviews
- Role Play
- Digital Storytelling
- Inventing the Quiz

And numerous other group activities for your students. The website also addresses common teaching problems.

Examples of Innovative Teaching Techniques Submitted by Faculty

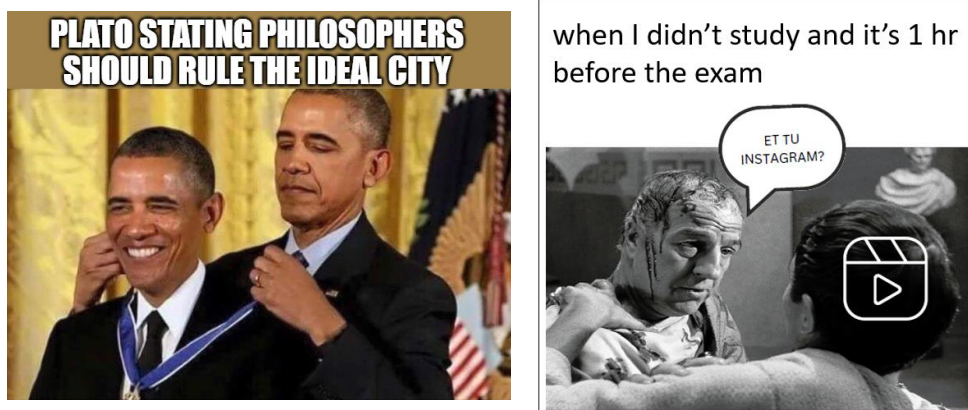
Professor Brandon Rdzak:

1. Cornerstone (CS) Reading Room Scavenger Hunt (group activity)

When there are about 4-6 weeks of the semester remaining, I take students on a "field trip" to the [CS reading room](#) for the day. We meet in front of the library. I introduce them to the reading room and what it has to offer. I also use the field trip to turn students' focus toward research and their upcoming final papers. Beforehand, students are assigned to watch the video series on the [Foundations of the Research Process](#). I tell them that this is preparation for an [information literacy quiz](#) that they must take later. To that end, I instruct students to complete a shortened practice quiz as a group within the reading room. To make the activity competitive and fun, I divide the class into four groups and award a prize (e.g., extra credit) to the group that gets the most correct answers; but I also add some heavily weighted scavenger hunt questions with riddles [at the end of the practice quiz \(p. 3\)](#). Among other things, this activity gets the students exploring the reading room and puts Cornerstone library texts in their hands.

2. Meme contest

A copy of the form and instructions for students can be found [here](#). Spring 2024 was the second time I conducted this contest, and I have found it to be a fun way to end the course on a high note. For a little extra credit, I ask students to submit a meme of their own making based on course texts. On the last day of the semester, I leave the final 20 minutes of class to look through the submissions on the big projector screen together, followed by a class vote on the best meme. The submissions garner a lot of laughs, and I melodramatically announce the winner. Since the memes are based on course material, they effectively serve as inside jokes for the whole class, which fosters a positive, shared experience.



Two student submissions for the 2024 Meme Contest, based on Plato's Republic and Shakespeare's Julius Caesar

3. Julius Caesar reenactment (group activity)

In the days leading up to this activity, the class covers Act III of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and watches the associated portions of the 1953 film adaptation with Marlon Brando. For the activity, students are split into four groups and tasked with reenacting a portion of Act III in competition with other groups for a prize. The segments I suggest in class are a) the assassination of Caesar, b) Brutus' speech to the Roman plebians, and c) the first or second half of Antony's speech to the Roman plebians. The group that gives the best performance wins. Winners are determined by a class vote once all groups have gone. I begin by having students come up with a Roman name for their group. They decide what they will reenact and prepare to give their performance. To spice things up, I bring props for the groups to use (laurel wreaths, makeshift togas, retractable daggers, etc.). I also give the students freedom to embellish their reenactments with a thematic style, supplementary music, and sound effects. This naturally leads to [humorous results](#), like one group of students who adopted a "country" or "southern" style for their performance of Brutus' speech.

Professor Tina Irvine:

4. Ceremonial Speech: Toast or Roast

Prepare to raise your glasses in celebration, or brandish your skewers for critique, as you explore the enduring pillars of power that shape our society. In this ceremonial-style speech, you have the option to either offer a toast to a specific power structure or societal entity, celebrating its contributions and influence, or deliver a roast, subjecting it to critical scrutiny and satire. Drawing inspiration from the themes explored in *Brave New World* and *Player Piano*, your speech should reflect your chosen approach—be it a celebration or scathing critique—while delving into the entity's impact on our collective existence.

As you craft your speech, consider the following guidelines:

For Toasters:

- Select a power structure, institution, or societal entity that you wish to celebrate and analyze. This could range from governmental bodies and economic systems to cultural institutions and technological advancements.
- Begin by setting a tone of reverence and admiration in your introduction, capturing the significance and grandeur of the chosen entity.
- Offer insights into the inner workings and mechanisms of the entity, highlighting its positive contributions to societal dynamics and individual lives.
- Reflect on the implications of the entity's influence, acknowledging its strengths and positive aspects.
- Conclude with a heartfelt toast, expressing gratitude for the entity's contributions and enduring legacy.

For Roasters:

- Choose a power structure or societal entity that you wish to critique and subject to satire. This could be an institution, system, or aspect of society that you believe warrants critical examination.
- Begin with a humorous or satirical introduction, setting the tone for a lighthearted yet incisive critique.
- Highlight the flaws, shortcomings, and negative consequences of the chosen entity, using wit and humor to drive home your points.
- Offer insights into the societal impact of the entity's shortcomings, drawing attention to issues such as inequality, injustice, or oppression.
- Conclude with a humorous yet thought-provoking call to action, challenging the audience to consider the need for reform or change.

Whether you choose to toast or roast, strive to deliver a speech that is engaging, insightful, and thought-provoking. Embrace the ceremonial atmosphere as you deliver your address, infusing your words with sincerity, passion, and conviction. And of course, raise your glass at the end.

5. Active Learning Collaboration with Oral Report

I break students into small groups. I give them a problem to solve together related to an event, theme, interpretation, or issue found in the transformative text. Students must work together collaboratively to solve the problem. They may use technology such as cell phones and laptops to look up information that may be useful. Then they put away all devices and discuss potential solutions. Once they have agreed on a response to the problem, the small group (5-6 students) prepares a brief oral report which they deliver to the class as a whole. Once each group has reported its response, the whole class in a circle discusses the problem/question informally in a free-flowing discussion.

6. Self-Reflection Writing Activity with Sharing by Mutual Invitation

Students are given a writing prompt that requires them to reflect on their own life experiences. (Example: "Franz Kafka's central character Gregor experienced alienation and exploitation from those around him. In *Metamorphosis*, Gregor is transformed into an insect to symbolize his experience of alienation. Based on your life experiences so far, what animal or creature would you choose to transform into if you were writing *Metamorphosis*? Explain why you selected this animal or creature.") Students are only given 15-20 minutes to compose a paragraph responding to the writing prompt. We form a large class circle, and I then invite one student to share their paragraph with the class. When this student has shared, anyone may comment or react to the paragraph. Then the student who shared invites another student to share their paragraph with the class. We continue with the invitations until time has expired. If a student is invited to share but feels uncomfortable doing so, they do not have to read their paragraph. They must still, however, invite another student to share in the class circle.

7. Quotes to Affirm or Challenge

I find key quotes from the transformational text and copy them on slips of paper. The quotes should be significant, controversial, or in some way central to the appreciation of the text. I then place them in a cup or jar. I break the class into small group stations of 5-6 students each. Each station has a cup or jar. A student draws one of the quotes from the jar and reads it to their group. The student then either affirms the quote and explains why or why they challenge the quote and explains why. Others may then react to the quotation. A different student then draws another quote and repeats the process. Each student takes a turn until all the quotes are shared. All the stations have the same 5 or 6 quotations. In the last 15-20 minutes, the class comes together in a large circle and students may share their reactions to the quotes in a large group discussion. (A variation I have used on this activity is to have the students find a significant quote and copy it onto a piece of paper. They form small groups, and the groups exchange their quotes. These quotes then become the content for discussion.)

Professor Lindsay Hamm:

8. "Getting to Know You"

At the beginning of the semester, I always ask my students to fill out a "getting to know you sheet." At the bottom of the sheet this semester, I told them that one thing we do in SCLA 102 is "tackle the big questions." I asked them to give me a big question (like "what is the meaning of life") they would like to discuss with their peers, explaining that I was going to put them in a container and pull them out randomly during class. I have this container in my bag every day and have pulled it out a few times during lulls in the conversation. We've had some interesting discussions!

9. Utopia Proposal Group Project and Video

This can be done with any utopian literature. In this SCLA 101, students read More's *Utopia*, Voltaire's *Candide*, and Gilman's *Herland*. First, watch these final products by Prof. Hamm's students:

Yetemari Geneti - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGryaaa4RO4>

Elysium Eternis - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIHlxXBMQf8>

Bandla - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_LpxXy-6Vs

The Proposal:

Students work in a group to write a proposal for a new utopia. I assign these groups. Each member will be a Secretary of a Cabinet in their new government and will elect a leader that will earn extra credit for the additional work they will do to pull everyone's portions of the proposal together.

Each cabinet member will turn in their own 1,500-2,000-word paper, excluding a bibliography, about the institutions of the utopia they oversee (3-6 double-spaced pages). The leader will write an introduction and conclusion in addition to their own cabinet paper. The leader will also pull the full bibliography together in APA format.

Scaffolded Breakdown of the Paper:

1. **Proposed Cabinet Position** due in Group Discussion Board (5% of paper grade)
2. **Final Utopia Cabinet and Chosen Location** posted in in Group Discussion Board (5% of paper grade)
3. **Outline with a Full Bibliography** due in Brightspace (10% of paper grade)
4. **First Draft of Your Individual Portion of the Utopia Proposal** due in Brightspace (5% of paper grade)
5. **Second First Draft of Your Individual Portion of the Utopia Proposal AND Peer Review Comments in Circuit.**

1. Draft (6% of your paper grade)
2. Comments (14% of your paper grade)
6. **Revision Memo** based on Your Circuit Feedback due in Brightspace (5% of paper grade)
7. **Individual Portion of Your Group's Utopia Proposal** due in Brightspace (40% of paper grade)
8. **Full Group Utopia Proposal** (everything pulled together with an introduction, connections, and conclusion) due in Brightspace (10% of paper grade)
9. Every individual submits an **assessment** of their own contributions to the proposal, their assessment of their leader/s, and how they believe the extra 10% should be distributed.

Professor Jody Watkins:

10. Greek-style tragedy plays

In conjunction with having students read a tragedy play (usually *Oedipus the King* or *Medea*), I divide students into small groups and have them create and perform their own Greek-style tragedy plays. They incorporate the characteristics of tragedy spelled out by Aristotle in *Poetics*. In the spirit of the Festival of Dionysus, we have a little competition and declare a winner with some inexpensive prizes. While some plays were on more traditional or timeless themes, others brought in subjects such as COVID, the dangers of technology (featuring Amazon's Alexa device), the downfall of someone who became a star on TikTok, and a same-sex relationship between an IU football player and a Purdue football player that went more full-on Shakespearean than ancient Greek tragedy at the end - I was just glad that they did not play the same-sex relationship for laughs.

Professor Bill White:

11. The Hollywood Pitch

I invite Mr. Frederick Douglass into the classroom (I am the stand in) after we have finished his *Narrative*/autobiography. Each group must "Hollywood pitch" Mr. Douglass on what they would include from his book in a made-for-TV 90-minute story of his life. They cannot tell every story in the book so they must "guess" which stories he deems most important and why. They also must explain to him the tone of the show and what they hope America in 2024 takes from it.

Professor M. Zook:

12. Final Research Project Paper for SCLA 101

The final research paper in SCLA 101 asks students to create something new and innovative such as the design for a new video game, a graphic short story, or even a consumer product that is inspired by one or more of their transformative texts. Their paper is designed as a pitch to investors or executives who might sponsor their product. Students must have a full understanding of the texts that inspire their product as well as the supporting data on their audience, market, and competition.

Sample topics:

- Designing a video game [for example, combine ideas from *The Road* and the *Inferno*]
- Creating a new guide to happiness based on the ideas in *Candide* and *Siddhartha*
- Designing graphic short story [for example, based on two or more of Dante's adventures in *Inferno*, or Macbeth's encounters with the weird sisters]
- Creating an action or animated film [*any of our readings would work*]
- The design for a new theatrical interpretation [*Macbeth* or *Candide*]
- A new podcast series based on transformative texts

Professor Claire Mason:

13. Final Oral Presentation for SCLA 102

Like the above project for 101, Professor Mason has her students pitch an adaptation of any of the transformative texts read that semester. Their pitch must contain:

1. Six Sentence Argument for your product
2. The reasoning for your adaptation
3. Why this is a transformative text
4. Ethical implications of your product
5. The projected cost of implementation
6. Demographics and projected interest
7. Evidence of feasibility

They then hold a poster session where they have to garner as many investors as possible within a twenty-minute period. They incorporate the feedback from the poster session into their final submission (a sample or prototype of the product).

Professor Stacy Sivinski

14. Fictional Dinner Party Assignment Guidelines

Professor Sivinski organized her SCLA 101 around food. For the final assignment of the semester, students complete **ONE** of the prompts listed below. Each option includes two parts: a creative piece and a short write-up of 250-300 words.

I) *Fictitious Dishes* Photography

- a. **The creative piece:** This assignment is inspired by Dinah Fried's *Fictitious Dishes*. In this book, Fried "serves up a delectable assortment of photographic interpretations of culinary moments from contemporary and classic literature." You must pick a text that we encountered during the semester, select a passage that focuses on food, and create your own "photographic interpretation" of the fictional meal in the same style as Fried's work (i.e., the camera aimed directly over the food set-up). You can explore more about her book here: <https://fictitiousdishes.com>.
- b. **The write up:** In 250-300 words, explain the decisions that you made while creating your photographic interpretation. Consider what you wanted to emphasize about the text and how you were able to convey that through your image. You must also include a short passage copied from the work that inspired your photograph (this does not factor into the 250-300 words).



Fictitious Dishes by Dinah Fried

II) Fictional Dinner Party Cartoon Strip

- a. **The creative piece:** Select 3-5 authors or fictional characters that we came across during the semester and imagine that you've invited them all to a dinner party. Create a cartoon strip that depicts this group at dinner and include some speech bubbles so that viewers get a sense of their interactions. The cartoon strip must have a minimum of six panels, and the authors/characters that you select must come from different texts/films.
- b. **The write-up:** In 250-300 words, explain the decisions that you made while creating your cartoon strip. In particular, consider the connections that you were trying to make between the different texts and how you went about conveying those links in the cartoon.



Garfield by Jim Davis

III) Fictional Dinner Party Menu

- The creative piece:** Select three texts/films that we encountered during the semester that you think pair together in interesting ways. Then, create a menu with a first course (appetizers), a main course, and a dessert. Each course must have at least two different options and have a strong link with one of the texts (ex. first course links to *Titus Andronicus*, second course links to *Babette's Feast*, and third course links to "This Is Just to Say"). **The menu design must also be engaging and help connect the different texts.**
- The write-up:** In 250-300 words, explain the decisions that you made while making your menu. Which course links up with which texts? What are your food choices meant to draw out from the texts? How does your menu bring the texts in conversation with one another? How does the menu design help draw out these connections?



Professor Tulin Tosun:

17. Tiny Love Stories (based on the *New York Times* column):

Students will write a 100-word love story based on a text [like *Pride and Prejudice*] or from their own life and add a picture.

Samples from the NY Times:

'I Can't Believe You Heard Me' by Allie Ceccola

Three days into my coronavirus hellscape: It was 2 a.m. My sweet, sleep-deprived husband dozed in the living room of our Brooklyn apartment while I writhed in pain in our bed. As my temperature crept past 102 degrees, I couldn't find the strength to get up for a cold compress. I called his name, hoping he was awake. I heard the floor creak under his footsteps. Relief washed over me. "I can't believe you heard me," I said. "Actually, I didn't," he said. "The dog heard you." My knights in shining armor.



My husband and our dog would regularly peek through the door to check on me while I was in quarantine.

Boys, Bikinis and Cubed Fruit — Maggie Chen

I grew up with bowls of cut fruit — soft mangoes, vibrant dragon fruit. In our Chinese-American household, my parents chopped up big issues to make them easier for us to swallow. Misunderstandings sometimes led to raised voices — arguments fueled by generational divides, boys, bikinis, teenage selfishness. Sometimes misunderstandings led to silence. But there was always a bowl of cut fruit waiting. No problem, no question was too big to be sliced apart to eventually reach a core of understanding. Amid the cultural complexities of our Asian immigrant family, love is unspoken but unconditional in a bowl of neatly cubed apples.



Mangoes and dragon fruit, sliced.

Melinda S. Zook, Germaine Seelye Oesterle Professor of History and Director of Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts, Purdue University (revised, 2024)