*CP 9: Text-based Discussion Preparation*

 For the end of our *Odyssey* unit, you will be participating in a text-based discussion. We will be holding a *practice* text-based discussion in order to prepare you.

For our actual seminar, the class will be split up into two groups, each discussing a different issue. For our practice Socratic Seminar, you will all be discussing the article “Should Students Grade Their Teachers?”. You should prepare for this discussion as if it were a true grade, and not just a homework and class participation grade.

**To score well, you must be**

1. **Prepared**- Did you bring notes with you? Do you have your book with you?
2. **Knowledgeable about the Text-** Since this will be counting as a test grade, I will be looking for you to make *references to the text specifically* (i.e.: “If you look at page 678, Odysseus says….which shows that he is a good leader because…”)
3. **Respectful-** This also means knowing when to allow others to speak. You may have a lot of ideas, but it’s important to get others involved. It is up to *you* as a group to keep the conversation going.
	* 1. **A tip:** Use phrases like “I agree with (Student X) because…” or “I have to disagree with you, (Student Y) because…” or “(Student Z) what do you think about Odysseus as a leader?
		2. **This also means you are talking to and making eye contact with your classmates, not your teacher.**
4. **A Participating Audience Member**- You will be assigned one classmate to score when you are not participating in the discussion. We will also have a “hot seat” that you can jump into to make a point. **You will lose points, however, if you are talking to a friend or not paying attention to the conversation.** I will take 5 points off of your test grade each time I notice this.

***\*You must be present for your Socratic Seminar in order to participate. If you cut class, you will receive a zero, and if you are absent, you will need to provide a note excusing that absence. See me with questions/concerns.***

**Should Students Grade Their Teachers?**

July 25, 2011 by *Cindy Long*

Educators curious about what their students think of them can log on to [RateMyTeachers.com](http://www.RateMyTeachers.com) where teachers are rated on a scale of 1 to 5 in the categories of Clarity, Helpfulness, Popularity, and (controversially) “Easiness.” They can also fill in a comments box, where remarks range from positive and constructive to downright nasty and mean.

Students can be fickle, and the comments reflect that – one day a teacher is loved, and on the next, reviled, maybe because of a pop quiz or a poor grade. That’s why educators are relieved that the site’s anonymous critiques aren’t considered in their official evaluations. But in some districts, student surveys, fickle or not, could become part of how teachers are assessed.

Starting this fall, Memphis school teachers will be evaluated not only by their principals, but also by their students – whose input, called “stakeholder perceptions” by the district — will count for five percent. Other measures include student growth data, classroom observations, and a teachers’ content knowledge.

Keith Williams, president of the [Memphis Education Association](http://www.gomea.com/), told the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, that the union agrees that teachers need to be evaluated on multiple measures, but he raised concerns about the accuracy of student perceptions.

“How well can a first- or second-grader do on this? Will it be favoritism? Will it be based on popularity or will it be some objective data?” he asked.

In Palm Beach, Florida, the school board proposed a “Secret Student Survey.”

According to an editorial in the *Palm Beach Post*, the anonymous evaluation includes five questions that ask students to rate teachers on a scale of 0-5, with 0 being “NO” and 5 being “YES.” The five questions are:

1. Does your teacher treat you fairly?
2. Does your teacher treat you with respect?
3. Does your teacher answer your questions well?
4. Is your teacher consistent in how he/she teaches and relates to you with or without and administrator present?
5. Do you behave in class?

There also are three essay questions:

1. What difference in the teacher’s behavior do you notice when an administrator is present in the classroom?

2. How could you and/or the class have acted differently in order to help the teacher do his/her job more effectively?

3. Give your teacher a letter grade and explain how he/she earned it.

Educators from around the country have varying opinions about incorporating student feedback into official evaluations. Some think it’s a good idea, while others think it’s a dangerous model when educator jobs are on the line.

Karen Hoover, a teacher in Washington, D.C., believes student input should definitely count in evaluations. “As long as they are made aware of the meaning, value, and importance of honest opinions, and there is some sort of checks and balance system in place, I think it’s a really good idea,” she says.

Alan Sutliff, an educator from Kent, Washington, agrees that the feedback is useful and important, but only if it’s used for improving teaching and not for high-stakes decisions.

“Evaluations are high-stakes documents because they impact employment,” he says.

Nicole Germann agrees. She’s a teacher from Watseka, Illinois, who invites feedback from students and welcomes it, but would not welcome having them officially evaluate her performance.

“Many students would evaluate fairly, while many might not,” she says. “Would the kids evaluate their administrators as well? Would it count for five percent of *their* evaluation?”

**Your thesis: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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| **(At least 2) Reasons why you hold this opinion:** | **(At least 2) Counterarguments that others may state, and your rebuttal (response)** |
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