

## Assessment Techniques for Discussion Sections

You can assess—or get feedback on the effectiveness of a discussion—AT ANY TIME, not just the end of class.

### *Things to do at the beginning of class:*

- **Conception/Misconception check:** This is a technique focused on uncovering prior knowledge or beliefs that may hinder or block further learning. Examples might include:
  - recognizing provisions of the Bill of Rights;
  - responding true or false to questions about the ethnic makeup of Americans, their church-going habits or consumer habits;
  - identifying “which of the following are medically recognized treatments for depression?”
  - Technique has advantage of convincing students they *do* know something but there is probably need for further clarification.
- **Answer a question in writing anonymously as a discussion starter;** (e.g. What is the possible political fallout, both pro and con, for the Bush administration if it supports a reinstatement of the military draft?)

### *Things to do at the midpoint:*

- **Listing exercise:** how many different points of view on “X” have you heard in the discussion up until now?
- **Precision exercise:** “We’ve been using the term ‘race’ in our discussion of the Civil Rights movement. Distinguish between these two common uses of the word.”
- **Mid course correction:** “Have we resolved anything in our discussion of how to structure the department of Homeland Security? What kind of data or evidence would we need to support our recommendations?”
- **Application cards:** After students have dealt with an important principle, generalization, theory or procedure, the TA hands out an index card and asks them to write down at least one possible, real-world application for what they have just learned.

### *Things to do at the end of the hour:*

- **Muddiest point:** Ask students to identify what term or relationship mentioned in lecture they still feel unclear about.
- **Clearest point:** What do you understand now that you didn’t understand before?
- How has your **thinking about “X” changed** in the course of the discussion?