

Active Learning in Political Science

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The 'digital native' generation of political science students engage with knowledge in different ways to the Gutenberg generations. Have you ever sat at the back of a lecture/seminar room and watched their online habits? How many students come to seminars having read and understood the requisite texts?? How can we move from a passive teaching emphasis on outcomes to an active learning emphasis on deep engagement in contemporary political science education???

Over the past three decades active learning pedagogies have developed in response to innovations in educational psychology; the need to break free from the problems of rote learning and assessment in university education; and the changing learning skills of the social media generation. The seminar's learning goal is to ensure participants understand both the pedagogic and practical aspects of an Active Learning approach that answers the learning needs of contemporary political science students.

The seminar is divided into a pair of two-hour sessions: 'What is Active Learning?' and 'How to create Active Learning?' Each session will consist of dynamic exercises where participants will experience and design learning activities for use in political science. The greatest challenge that progressive teachers of political science face is not understanding the merits of Active Learning; it is moving from theory to practice. This seminar is therefore designed to help teachers move from Passive Teaching of the 'industrial era' to Active Learning for the 'knowledge era'. Each activity is also designed to illustrate the dynamics of learning activities from individual to group responses, discussion, explanation, exchange, and reflection.

AM: What is Active Learning?

The first, two-hour session will focus on [1] understanding the pedagogic basis of Active Learning; [2] examining the evidence for Active Learning pedagogy; [3] explaining the key features of Active Learning; and [4] setting out a path from passive teaching to Active Learning.

PM: How to create Active Learning?

The second, two-hour session will focus on designing and practicing learning activities, including [5] the use of simple techniques; [6] the development of more advanced strategies; and [7] the realisation of an Active Learning pedagogy.