LP² COORDINATOR HANDBOOK

1. INTRODUCTION: PEER LEARNING

Peer learning, the fundamental principle of the Lifelong Peer Learning Program, creates an environment that is unlike the traditional classroom. In peer learning, the coordinators are not necessarily experts in the subject of the study group. Rather, they are following a particular interest, gaining expertise while preparing the study group, and engaging with the group in exploring the subject. Coordinators define the topics and the resource materials and develop strategies for active and creative engagement by, and with, participants.

Participants, in turn, prepare for study group sessions by reading, viewing or listening to the assigned materials so they can engage with peers, including the coordinator, in interactive learning. Study group members become learning resources themselves. They might also be encouraged to give presentations or reports, present information about relevant public events such as lectures and museum exhibits or advise the coordinator about interesting articles or web links that may be of interest to participants.

These peer learning concepts are applied by the Curriculum Committee when it considers study group proposals. Considerations include whether: (i) the subject matter, including texts and other written materials, is appropriately challenging, (ii) study group content is clearly described, and (iii) participants will have a clear understanding of their role as active participants in the learning process.

Again, a peer learning study group is not a conventional lecture class (although there may be a lecture component). Instead, having already studied the subject in depth, you will encourage the development of ideas through discussion and/or other forms of participation.

2. PEER LEARNING IN A ZOOM ENVIRONMENT

Navigating in the world of Zoom creates challenges unlike the customary face-to-face classrooms. Because it is more difficult to gauge body language via Zoom, it is important to be explicit and to manage group discussion. It is advisable for coordinators to set guidelines with participants during the first session. It's best to be consistent, but flexible, and to respond to suggestions from the class. All coordinators should have taken the training offered by the LP[2] Workshops to become proficient in using the Zoom tools.

The day before the study group begins, send participants an email with the Zoom link or meeting invitation. While using a computer provides the most functionality, participants may also join on a mobile device. Recommend that your participants join the meeting ten minutes early in order to sort out any technical issues that might arise.

Begin the session by informing participants that you will be muting everyone to prevent distractions. You can select Manage Participants at the bottom of the Zoom window, and then click on Mute All at the bottom of the Participants window. Advise participants to unmute themselves when they are called on to speak, and to mute themselves again when they are finished. Remember to give participants time to unmute themselves to join the discussion. The silence online may seem longer than in the physical classroom as members gather their thoughts.

Whether muted or unmuted, participants can use a variety of tools to participate, depending on your Zoom settings (setting instructions are available on the technology page on the Zine). By clicking on the "Participants" button, they can see a list of all participants in the Zoom session, and by clicking on either the "Reactions" button or the buttons at the bottom of the participants list (again depending on your settings), they can choose to raise their hands, answer yes or no, clap, or use the Chat option. You may wish to provide guidance in using these features appropriately. If you plan to have participants interact with each other in small groups and feel comfortable using this feature, click Breakout Rooms on the lower right side of your Zoom window. See also Part 7, CONDUCTING THE SESSION, below.

Strategies for Discussion and Asking Questions:

- Pause before calling on someone (5-10 seconds) or before responding to a comment—it will give people a chance to process the question or to use electronic hand raising.
- When appropriate, validate responses and ask if anyone has a follow up or different perspective before moving on.
- Aim for open-ended questions, often beginning with How? What? Why?
- Aim for questions that extend discussion and create opportunities for others to speak by asking follow-up questions that elicit other perspectives on an issue or offer a summing up.

Some examples of questions that clarify and extend discussion are:

- o Why do you think that? What do you mean?
- o Can you explain that a bit more?
- o Can someone elaborate on that point?
- o What evidence do you have from the reading?
- o What might the consequences be?

3. **OPERATIONAL MATTERS**

Study Group Materials:

Reading materials for your study group may include:

- One or more books.
- Attachments and links in emails sent to participants, and/or
- A website (*e.g.*, Google Sites) set up with week-by-week assignments and materials.

The materials that participants will need to prepare for the first session should be available several weeks in advance. If you are using email or a website, set up the site and and/or organize any mail links and attachments well in advance.

Most coordinators who have used a website use Google Sites. Technical assistance for using this site is available, either through the LP^2 Technical Committee or through your Curriculum Committee contact or another member of the Curriculum Committee.

Group Email List:

Once you have received your study group roster, create a group email list. You may wish to copy each email address and paste it into a Word (or other word processing program) document and then, as needed, copy and paste the list into the email address bar. You may also be able to use your email program's group feature, if one is included in that program.

Welcome Email:

Send a welcome email to participants, preferably a few weeks before the first session. Request a response only to the coordinators, confirming that you have their correct and preferred email address and request that they do not use "Reply All." Follow-up with any participants who do not reply.

Send out an updated syllabus, if necessary.

Ask participants to let you know if they have trouble accessing online materials.

Give the assignment for the first session. Use this opportunity to remind participants of the particular editions of books that you plan to use. Include links to online materials and your website, if you have set one up.

4. STUDY GROUP SESSIONS

Supporting Participants:

Attendance: Ask members to email you if they will be absent from a class session. Then, take attendance at each session, taking note of any member who was expected, but did not attend the session. If a member is absent for two consecutive weeks without prior notice, please notify Jan Adler at jadler@gc.cuny.edu and CC Mariel Villeré mvillere@gc.cuny.edu so they can contact the member.

Learning Names: Do all that you can to help yourself and your participants to learn each other's names. You can see member pictures in the Zine, which may be helpful for linking names and faces.

Introduce new LP² members: At the first session, introduce new members so they will feel welcomed into the community.

Introductions: Some coordinators ask all members to introduce themselves in the first session. You might ask each member to make a short statement maybe explaining why they signed up for the study group or why the subject matter is of interest. Control this practice, as too much time spent on this exercise takes away from class discussion time.

Logging in: Encourage group members to log on 10 minutes early to check that the technology works and to socialize.

Guests: Only registered LP² members are permitted to regularly attend study group sessions. Occasional guests may be allowed, with the permission of the coordinator.

Adds and Drops: Members are allowed to add and drop study groups before the third study group meeting. You will be notified of any changes in your study group roster by the Graduate Center office. Sometimes, however, members decide to leave a study group without officially notifying the office; if you think this may be the case, speak with the participant and/or let the office know.

Policies: To prevent or stop participant inappropriate behaviors, set policies on the first day. If a problem arises, send a private text to the individual, discuss the issue at the beginning of a class session, or send an email after a session.

Feedback: Some coordinators request feedback via email from study group participants at the beginning of the semester. If you do not choose this option, you may ask for study group

members to provide feedback via email during the third or fourth week of the semester. If you wish to provide anonymity, you might choose a trusted assistant to manage the emails.

Announcements: All LP[2] announcements are in the weekly Observer. It is therefore not necessary to make announcements in class unless specifically requested to do so.

5. GENERAL INFORMATION

Audio/Visual. Get help if you feel you need it. Many of your LP[2] colleagues have the appropriate expertise. Some coordinators identify a study group member who can run the Zoom process for them. You can also check with a member of the Tech Committee. Technical training will be provided through workshops or other arrangements scheduled on a semester-by-semester basis.

Library Usage. Librarian Mason Brown is the LP[2] point person at the Mina Rees Library at The Graduate Center. He is available at mbrown3@gc.cuny.edu to help members navigate Open Educational Resources/Open Access Materials and other resources available through the New York Public Library. An extensive list of these resources is available on the Zine in the Library Resources tab.

Jstor.org. JSTOR is a valuable digital library of academic journals, books, and primary sources. You can access JSTOR by using your New York Public Library card. You can download and print from JSTOR.

Cancellation. If you must cancel a study group session, notify both the LP[2] office and your participants as soon as possible. A make-up session should be arranged, which normally would be in the 13th week.

6. PREPARING FOR A SUCCESSFUL DISCUSSION

While study group content and coordinator style vary widely, in all cases, even those in which there is a significant lecture component, coordinators should seek an appropriate amount of participant discussion. These are some tips and "best practices" that coordinators have generally found to be helpful for generating discussion and helping participants, as a group, to feel they have had a good experience. If you are new to coordinating, you should take advantage of one of the "how to lead a discussion" workshops. The Curriculum Committee may ask one of the participants in your study group, who is an experienced coordinator, to be available to you as a resource.

In the first session, introduce yourself, your interest in the subject matter, and your objectives for the semester. Consider asking a few questions to involve participants in thinking about the general subject. For example, if you are discussing literature, ask what themes the participants identified in the first reading; if history is your subject matter, you could ask participants what they know about the period or the subject.

If you are using slides as an organizational aid, aim for short bullet points that guide the discussion. Avoid narrative paragraphs and extracts from books. In general, do not read the slide to participants, but use it as a guideline.

If you plan to request participant reports, bear in mind that the quality of the reports affects the quality of your study group; so, consider whether you want to ask a few participants in advance to prepare a particular presentation or whether you want to ask for volunteers on a particular subject. It is important to give clear directions about what you expect from participant reports. Participant presentations are generally five to ten minutes in length, but could be longer if the particular circumstances warrant.

Speak loudly enough for everyone. Ask participants to let you know if they are having trouble hearing you.

For each session, prepare more material than you think you'll need, including a good set of discussion questions. The number of questions depends, of course, on the nature of the material and the extent to which the subject matter calls for a lecture. The end result should be enough questions to pace the discussion through the material you want to cover, with some questions left over for the next session, or merely not used. Questions should be open-ended and/or designed to bring out the content that you want to cover. But bear in mind the objective is discussion and/or other forms of participation, not a subject matter test.

Everyone at LP² wants you to succeed as a coordinator. Take advantage of the good will of the community as you embark upon the challenging and rewarding task of coordinating a study group. Many members have said that coordinating is the highlight of their LP² experience. We hope that will be true for you.

7. CONDUCTING THE SESSION

Ground Rules for Discussion:

- Remind participants to wait until called upon and not to expect to be called on every time their hand is raised.
- Ask participants to stick to the topic under discussion, to be courteous and respectful of others' opinions., and not to personalize, label or stereotype.
- As a reminder, to prevent or stop participant inappropriate behaviors, it is best to set policies on the first day. If a problem arises, send a private text to the individual, discuss the issue at the beginning of a class session, or send an email after a session.
- Everyone should avoid personal anecdotes, unless they are especially relevant.
- Remind participants that any noise in their immediate surroundings ,such as ringing telephones, a partner's conversation or other background noise ,is audible to everyone in the Zoom class. So, everyone should silence cell phones and land lines and should not text or rustle papers—remind the group each session.

Statement on Diversity

- As a program of The Graduate Center, CUNY, LP^2 has instituted goals regarding diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism. These include infusing our work with a greater awareness of intolerance and injustice; convening safe spaces for dialogue and action; and evaluating our policies to ensure that they align with the Graduate Center's diversity and equity goals. The LP^2 Advisory Board has unanimously adopted this commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. (A statement of this commitment is in the Zine, and a copy is appended to this Handbook.)

Coordinator Role

- Although you want an informal atmosphere, you are in charge. Participants will expect you to ensure that others are courteous, allowed to speak, and are free to disagree (without being disagreeable).
- Calling on everyone who has hand raised to answer a question may not be possible in the interest of moving the discussion along.
- Avoid calling on the same participant too often; explain the need to give others a chance to speak.
- Zoom has some special considerations, including:
  - Decide on use of Hand Raising: physical or electronic or combination of both; with a large class, the consensus is that electronic hand raising is useful, especially if you can't see everyone on one screen
  - Use Mute and Mute All features of Zoom when needed; with a large class it's especially important to use the Mute function and return to Mute after a class member speaks.
  - Remind participants to raise their hand to make a comment and to unmute themselves when they have something to say. (If using the Zoom Hand Raising function, lower hand after speaking).
  - Use your trusted assistant to help identify those with hands raised, either physically or electronically.
  - Explain the Chat function—what it is and how you may use it— to type names or references, or for participants to post questions. Underscore that it should be used judiciously. You can also disable the Chat function in your Zoom settings.
  - Make sure participants understand use of Gallery View and Speaker View functions.
  - Encourage group members to log on 10 minutes early to check that the technology works and to socialize.
  - Advise participants to look at the camera when they speak, rather than straight at the screen; computers or iPads should be placed on a stable support with the camera at eye level.

Using Supporting Materials:

- The use of slides (PowerPoint or Google Slides) or Video clips helps participants stay engaged in the Zoom world.
- Practice the Share Screen function or have the tech assistant help. Slides or video should be open on your desktop before the class session.
- Learn to Stop Share as quickly as possible, for discussion purposes, so you can go back to Gallery View and see the class members.
- Practice toggling back and forth between Share Screen and Stop Share.
- Keep slides simple; avoid putting too much information on one slide.

Some Issues to Consider for Zoom Sessions:

- Covering material—a report from Harvard Business School, stated that their faculty should be prepared to cover only 75% of the prepared material in Zoom.
- Encouraging participation and interaction—may be more challenging in Zoom because participants may tend to be more passive or inattentive, so consider the use of different strategies and multimedia.

Zoom provides us with a wonderful way to stay intellectually and socially connected and engaged! We're all in this together, and with support and a bit of practice, you will have a terrific time and a super study group!

For any questions or concerns about coordinating skills, now or after your first session, email: Linda Anstendig, lanstendig@gmail.com

8. LP² COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

LP² is a multicultural secular organization whose membership is dedicated to the pursuit of lifelong learning and fellowship. In our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, we agree to respect the rights and sensibilities of all members.

LP²'s goal is to expand diversity, which includes gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, politics, culture, socio-economic status and disability.

We have adopted this Commitment to ensure these goals. We seek a community and culture that is respectful, open, curious and thoughtful. We challenge ourselves to continue learning within a supportive and dynamic environment.

We will confront overt and implied bias, exclusion and prejudice if and when they occur.

We treat all members respectfully and acknowledge their equal rights and intellect.

We avoid stereotyping and coded language.

While we may study past or present usage, we do not use derogatory terms or slurs to describe or refer to any group or person.

We respect our membership's diversity and avoid comments that presume all members share the same religion or culture.

As members of LP², we agree to support and practice these principles.