Strategies for Increased Student Engagement:

1. Pre-lecture [required] material (medium: video/audio) provide prerequisite content to build upon via discussion.
2. “Interactive windows” allow for small-group discussion & build comfortability among peers.
3. Open-ended prompts indicate neutrality on behalf of the instructor.
4. Building upon & challenging student responses elicits an atmosphere of reciprocity, equality, & respect.
5. Intentional engagement of shy learners (i.e. students who do not contribute) provides “perspective of the bystander”.

Facilitation of Critical Dialogue in Higher Education

A research-based tool for instruction in the classroom setting

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Importance & Impact:

Engagement in critical discussion improves retention of material because students are personally relating to (and building upon) the ideas & perspectives of their peers, as well as their instructor.

What is known about the problem?

- Empowerment of students’ positive self-concept contributes to their level of engagement in in-class discussion.
- Students’ inclination to contribute to discussion is attributed to their perception of their instructor (i.e. evidence of power dynamic or intimidation via sense of authority).
- The conduct of an instructor indicates the climate of a classroom, & therefore, engagement of students.

What solutions are working?

- Circular lecture halls allow students to face one another, as well as their instructor. This reduces students’ uncertainty, & induces a sense of equality & comfortability.
- Acknowledgement of differing intersectionalities among audiences fosters an atmosphere in which all perspectives are pertinent for discussion.
- Observations of differing engagement behavior, misbehavior, & lack of behavior (i.e. learning styles) allows the instructor to contour lesson structure according to specific classroom atmosphere.
- The intentional conduct of an instructor indicates students’ perception regarding reciprocity & respect. Students tend to mimic their professor’s behavior due to an intuitive power dynamic in academia.
- Lesson structure “scaffolds” the extent of contribution on behalf of students.

References:


How is the problem addressed by professionals?

- Many professionals do not enact approaches that are conducive for eliciting a critical dialogue in the large lecture hall setting.
- Research contends that many professionals are unaware of the importance of their classroom conduct (as it relates to student retention & success).

Further Research Required:

Workshops & educational sessions (for instructors) may be the most successful medium for conveying the importance of in-class facilitation of critical discussion. Further research is needed to indicate the most effective content & structure of such lessons.