Ideas for Active Learning Assignments

Engaged learning ideas are plentiful, but from time to time, instructors may seek inspiration for their classroom practices. Below, we offer a list of active learning assignments and activities that may be used in class

- **Annotated Bibliographies**:
  - Students compile a list of scholarly articles or books on a topic and write summaries and critical analyses for each source, demonstrating their understanding and evaluation of the literature. Task students with utilizing the databases at the University of Detroit Mercy Library to ensure the sources are credible; encourage the use of the Research Guides for tailored search results.
- **Blogs/Vlogs**:
  - Students create regular blog posts or video logs discussing course-related topics. This allows them to engage with the material creatively and share their insights with peers. Students may download and utilize the YuJa application to ensure quality video and captioning (encouraging best accessibility practices are in place).
- **Case Studies**:
  - Students analyze real-life scenarios related to course content, identify key issues, propose solutions, and discuss outcomes to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- **Case Study Analysis**:
  - A detailed examination of a specific case study where students identify problems, propose solutions and reflect on the outcomes and implications for the field.
- **Collaborative Writing**:
  - Students work in groups to co-author papers or reports, learning to collaborate, divide tasks, and synthesize different viewpoints into a cohesive document. Microsoft One Drive is an efficient way for students to save group writing projects and track changes made by each group member.
- **Concept Mapping**:
  - Students create visual diagrams that connect and organize concepts, helping them understand relationships between ideas and retain information better.
- **Debates**:
  - Structured arguments in which students are divided into groups to take opposing sides on an issue, research their positions, and engage in a formal debate to develop argumentation skills. Debate topics can be focused on ongoing conversations and/or controversies within course discipline, or, connect a current event to course content.
- **Digital Storytelling**:

    - Students create multimedia stories that combine text, images, audio, and video to explore and present course concepts in a narrative format.
- **Discussion Boards**:
    - Asynchronous online forums where students discuss course topics, share insights, and respond to peers' posts, fostering a collaborative learning environment. While discussion boards in the past have been limited to text submissions, Blackboard allows participants to include media such as audio, video, and other digital items. Consider having students present video responses for more dynamic and engaged discussions.
- **Exit Tickets**:
    - Quick, informal assessments at the end of a class where students write brief responses to questions, summarizing what they learned or identifying areas of confusion. This activity is helpful in the in-person course but can also work in a synchronous online course.
- **Fishbowl Discussions**:
    - A small group of students discusses a topic in the center of the room while the rest of the class observes. Observers then join the discussion, providing a dynamic and inclusive discussion format. This activity can work in the online synchronous class session by utilizing break-out rooms.
- **Flipped Classroom**:
    - Students watch lectures or complete readings at home and engage in interactive, hands-on activities in class, allowing for deeper exploration of the material during class time.
- **Gamification**:
    - Incorporating game elements like points, badges, and leaderboards into the learning process to increase student engagement and motivation.
- **Group Discussions**:
    - Small groups of students discuss a topic or question and then present their conclusions to the class, promoting collaboration and deeper understanding. This activity can work in the online synchronous class session by utilizing break-out rooms.
- **Interactive Polls/Quizzes**:
    - Real-time polling or quizzing using tools like clickers or apps to engage students and assess their understanding instantly. This activity can work in the online synchronous class session by utilizing poll function in Blackboard Collaborate.
- **Interactive Videos**:
    - Videos with embedded questions and activities that students can interact with, enhancing engagement and comprehension. The YuJa application makes developing such videos quick and easy; quiz scores can be integrated into your Blackboard Grade Center.

- **Jigsaw**:
  - Students are divided into groups, with each group member becoming an expert on one part of a topic. They then teach their part to their group members, promoting peer teaching and collaboration.
- **Journals**:
  - Students maintain regular written entries reflecting on what they have learned, connecting it to their experiences, and expressing their thoughts and questions about the material. The electronic journal function can be found on Ultra and Classic Blackboard course sites.
- **Learning Stations**:
  - Rotating stations are set up around the classroom with different activities or topics for students to engage with, allowing for varied learning experiences.
- **Peer Assessment**:
  - Students review and provide feedback on each other's work using rubrics or structured guidelines, promoting critical analysis and constructive feedback skills.
- **Peer Teaching**:
  - Students prepare and teach a concept or topic to their peers, reinforcing their own understanding and developing teaching skills.

Photo by Keira Burton:
https://www.pexels.com/photo/cheerful-diverse-classmates-studying-in-park-6146970/

- **Problem-Based Learning**:
  - Students work in groups to solve complex, real-world problems, developing critical thinking, research, and collaboration skills.
- **Role-Playing**:
  - Students act out roles in a given scenario to explore different perspectives and practice real-world skills in a controlled environment.
- **Rubric Creation**:
  - Students and the instructor discuss project guidelines and directions and develop clear criteria for evaluating student work, to guide their efforts and ensure transparent grading.
  - Computer-based or real-world simulations where students practice skills or apply knowledge in a realistic but controlled setting.
- **Socratic Seminars**:
  - Discussions are based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and illuminate ideas, often centered around a text or philosophical question. While instructors can lead such seminars, they can also create an assignment that asks students or groups of students to lead the seminar.
- **Think-Pair-Share**:
  - Students think about a question individually, pair up to discuss their thoughts, and then share with the larger group, encouraging individual reflection and collaborative discussion.
- **Virtual Labs**:
  - Online simulations of laboratory experiments that allow students to conduct experiments and practice techniques in a virtual environment.
- **WebQuests**:
  - Guided online research activities where students follow a structured path to explore a topic, gather information, and synthesize their findings
- **Workshop Model**:
  - Short mini-lessons followed by student work time, where the instructor provides individual or group support, allowing for differentiated instruction and hands-on practice.

Integrating these activities and assignments into the curriculum can enhance student engagement, deepen understanding, and promote critical thinking and collaboration.