

Critical Thinking About Social Media

Lesson plan for CTSM_1: Introduction. Adapted from

<https://www.plato-philosophy.org/teachertoolkit/exploring-existential-angst-self-social-media/>

This lesson plan uses activities called *think-pair-share*, *spiraling conversation*, and *for-and-against*. In a think-pair-share activity, students first spend 1-2 minutes thinking to themselves about a question posed by the instructor. They then spend 1-2 minutes talking about the question with another student. Finally, they share the results of that conversation with the class.

In a spiraling conversation, intermediate steps are interposed between pairing and sharing. At each step, the students “spiral” outward (either clockwise or counter-clockwise) to pair with other students, before returning to their original pairs.

In a for-and-against activity, the class is divided into two groups, one of which is focused on finding good arguments in support of a position, and the other on finding good arguments against it.

Objective: Students will be exposed to the ideas of a *community of inquiry* and a *pedagogy of trust*. These ideas are introduced in the context of conversations with one another about social media use. The methods of *think-pair-share* and *spiraling conversation* are introduced.

1. Lecture (10 minutes): cover the information about social media, mental health, and political polarization from the start of the lecture.
2. Activity (10 minutes): The Wason-selection task. Have them raise their hands for each answer, and record the results.
 - Introduce *think-pair-share*.
 - Pair with another and discuss why they picked the answer they did. Record their answers again.
 - Introduce *spiraling conversation*, by going back to their original pair and spiraling out once. Record answers again.
 - Then, have a group conversation about what the answer is, and why.
 - **NOTE:** *We are famously bad at the Wason-selection task, but the right answer tends to be convincing, so when groups can talk it over they tend to converge on*

the right answer. I would expect this to occur here, as a nice illustration of the strength of dialogical conceptions of critical thinking, but this is the first time I'm trying it.

3. Lecture (10 minutes): The teacher should introduce the following concepts:
 - To think: a big topic (explicit or implicit, intuitive or reflectively)
 - To judge: to stake a claim about the way things are
 - To infer: to extract information from judgment
 - To reason: to look for good grounds for inferring, and so judging
 - Argument (premises, conclusion): a reasoned sequence of inferences, meant to persuade one to accept a judgment.
 - Solitary Mind vs. Dialogical accounts of reasoning
 - Community of Inquiry
 - Pedagogy of Trust
4. Activity (20 minutes): Survey about Social Media. Create three line graphs. This activity would work well with PearDeck or other internet-based program, but it is also quite effective of paper. Students should circulate to each graph and indicate their answer with an anonymous sticky note.
 - Graph One: "I spend time on social media to see how other people's lives compare to mine." (0 would indicate "not at all true" while 10 would indicate "Absolutely true".)
 - Graph Two: "It is important to me that I receive feedback on social media." (0 would indicate "not at all true" while 10 would indicate "Absolutely true".)
 - Graph Three: "Most of the information I receive from social media is accurate" (0 would indicate "not at all true" while 10 would indicate "Absolutely true".)
 - Class discussion about time spent on social media. Keeping in mind that this is a choice you are making, do you consider your time on social media as something that enhances or detracts from your life?
5. Journal Question:
 - Do you think you will consider changing your social media habits as a result of today's lesson? In what ways? If not, why not?