Socratic Seminar:
“Why Rich Countries Should Care About the World’s Least Healthy People”
Lawrence Costin

Purpose: The purpose of this student-lead discussion is to have students reflect on the various crisis’ developing countries face, the possible causes of these problems, and to discuss why it is important for developed countries to assist them. This seminar would be a good way to wrap up a unit about the Millennium Development Goals 2015, but can also be used as an introduction to thinking about development aid.

Structure:

1. Students will be required to read the following text prior to the seminar:
   http://global.wisc.edu/development/resources/diprete-brown-costin.pdf
   “Why Rich Countries Should Care About the World’s Least Healthy People,” Lawrence O. Gostin
   Prepare the document for discussion. On the original copy, mark with numbers each separate paragraph so it will be easy for students to refer to specific points in the text and it will help other students find the text quickly.

   Assign this reading at least a day prior to the discussion. Students will be required to complete the attached ‘ticket’ for homework. Check that each student has the ticket completed prior to sitting down in a desk; students who have not completed the ticket will not be allowed to participate and will subsequently lose a majority of discussion points for the day. They will still be allowed to monitor the participation of others, but will not be allowed to discuss.

2. Arrange the classroom in a fishbowl style. (Having a small inner circle of desks, 12-15 depending on class size, and a larger outer circle with the remainder of the desks). The inner circle will include all students having the discussion. Students sitting around the outer circle will not be allowed to talk, but will be monitoring student participation using the following chart:

   http://www.journeytoexcellence.org/practice/instruction/theories/miscideas/socratic/observation.phtml

   Have students place name cards on their desks to ensure they address one another by name.

3. Students should have been briefed the day prior to discussion about the framework of the discussion, but it will be important to remind them of the instructions and rules.
   Journey for Excellence
   (http://www.journeytoexcellence.org/practice/instruction/theories/miscideas/socratic/) does a good job outlining these requirements:

   Start by explaining the Socratic Seminar to the students.
   - Explain that the conversation is theirs, and that your question is a starting point which they can move away from as they pose ideas and questions that are more interesting to them as long as the new ideas and questions can be discussed in terms of the text
Tell the students to direct their comments to other students and explain to them that you will not comment on what they say, since this will cause them to talk to you rather than to each other. It may help if you look down or avoid eye contact until the discussion takes off on its own.

Encourage the students to think before they talk, try to comment, or add on to what others have said. Listen to others.

4. Toss out the question: “What responsibilities do well developed countries have towards developing countries?” You may want to write this up on the board. Usually about 12-15 minutes per group.

(http://www.journeytoexcellence.org/practice/instruction/theories/miscideas/socratic/)

Students have learned to be passive, and this activity can be risky for some students, so it may take time for some groups to catch on. The conversation is likely to have stops and starts, but it is crucial that the teacher not step in and try to rescue the conversation. If the conversation goes dead, wait. Students will find the silence unbearable before the teacher does. Your silence also indicates your level of commitment to the activity.

If students ask you a question, throw it out to the group or ask the questioner what his/her opinion is. Answer factual questions only if there is no way around it.

Teacher Behavior

- Keep students from having side conversations.
- Ask students to cite support from the text of the conversation begins to wander.
- Invite students to participate.
- Keep conversations from becoming debate or debasement of others.
- Ask students to question their assumptions.
- Manipulate the amount of participation. For example, if only a few students are speaking, the teacher might say, "Everyone who has spoken so far, look at the clock, and don't jump in for five minutes." Or if one gender is dominating the conversation, ask for the other to speak for the next five minutes.
- Use the outer circle to your advantage if the conversation is truly dying out prematurely. Ask the students sitting there to summarize or comment on what they have heard. Ask them to re-introduce the points they thought were especially good or prematurely dropped. This strategy can often reignite the conversation.

5. Give students a 2 minute heads up prior to ending conversation at the appropriate time. Prior to allowing students from the outside to enter the inside, do a brief student critique. Go around the outside circle and have them share their observations and reactions to the seminar format.

6. Switch seats and allow the new students to begin their discussion.
Socratic Seminar Ticket: _______________________

“Why Rich Countries Should Care about the World’s Least Healthy People” Lawrence Costin

1. What are 3 major reasons to care about development aid to unhealthy countries?

2. How does international health need to be structured in order for it to be most effective?

3. List some examples of national interests in regards to global health

4. List some examples as to why health inequalities are unethical?

5. Do you believe that health inequalities are unethical? Explain.

6. What is your personal response to this article?

7. What do you think is the article’s strongest argument? Explain why.