# Mitigating AI Through F2F Group Work That Faculty and Students Actually Enjoy!

CFDI's
MidWeek Mentor Series
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# Learning Objectives

1. Understand how incorporating structured face-to-face group discussions reduces students' reliance on AI-generated work.
2. Design or revise classroom activities that are mostly resistant to students' reliance on AI.
3. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of existing assessments to modify course designs to promote students' original ideas.
4. Facilitate meaningful peer-group interactions that support critical thinking, problem solving, professional communication skills, and student accountability.
    - Group discussions are a minor solution to feelings of loneliness or isolation students can often feel.

# Why This Workshop?

AI tools can generate summaries, questions, and even “student-like” responses.

But **AI cannot replace**:

- Social discussion
- Critical thinking and problem solving in real time
- Perspective sharing
- Group collaboration and decision-making
- Students *will* use AI for brainstorming in the workplace—our job is to help them develop **professional communication skills** now.

# What Students Dislike About Group Work

I. Uneven work or “free riders”
II. Coordinating schedules with other busy students
III. Clash of personalities
IV. Social discomfort or anxiety

To avoid these pitfalls, course design includes:

i. Have no group grades, every Question and Group Discussion are individually graded
ii. Meet only in-class, no outside classroom obligations
iii. Design, with students' taking the lead, group norms that convey expectations for behavior
iv. Ice breakers at the start of the semester with low-stakes Group Discussion grades (motivates for participation and attendance)

# What Educators Dislike About Group Work

I. Students arriving to class unprepared

II. Poor-quality discussion (looking at each other, unsure where to start)

III. Imbalanced participation

IV. Group conflict

V. Hard to assess equity

To avoid these pitfalls, course design includes:

i. By submitting Questions within the Discussion Board on Blackboard before the start of class, students have accessed and thought about course materials (even if only briefly)

ii. Students are graded on Group Discussions, the Questions submitted and accessible within the Discussion Board point at where to start discussing

iii. Group norms can help establish questions to get even quieter voices involved

iv. Remind students the semester will be over within X weeks. Most student feedback suggests they made friends or opened up with someone they'd "probably never talk to."

v. Discussions are observed by instructor during time in the classroom and Group Evaluation submitted at the end of the semester

# The Real "Why" Behind Group Work

- Critical thinking and problem solving through dialogue
- Interpersonal communication; potential for low-stress public speaking
- Leadership + facilitation
- Professional workplace behaviors (writing and collaborating)
- Social reasoning + perspective taking
- Asking high-quality questions to help process one's own learning

**The real purpose of group work isn't the product—it's the *process*.**

# Designing individual Questions coupled with Group Discussions

- Instructions are explained in the syllabus, on Blackboard, and students are provided grading rubrics
- Expectations are continually communicated throughout the duration of the course
- Students must **submit original Questions** into the Discussion Board on Blackboard before the start of said class period.
- Points earned for Question(s) are tied to 1) statement of comprehension (provides context) for the reading/video; as well as 2) wording of the question and its contents
  - Post a thoughtful question that is open-ended to generate conversation. Consider starting a question with "how," "why," "explain," "let's discuss," etc.
  - Your Question must not answerable with one word: yes, no, agree, etc.
- Group Discussions occur **in-person, during class time, only**. With full class conversation at the end to ensure important concepts are fully grasped.
- Discussion points tied to **preparedness, professionalism, and peer engagement**.

# Designing individual Questions coupled with Group Discussions (con't)

- General AI course policy, as explained in the syllabus: AI use permitted **for brainstorming only**, not for producing graded material.
- These assignments (Questions and Group Discussions, and later a Self and Peer Group Evaluation) emphasize:
- Critical analysis of course materials/topic
- Workplace professionalism in written and verbal communication
- Development of group norms creates learning environment where respect and accountability are prioritized

# AI Avoidance Through Discussion

To ensure student work is *authentic*:

- Require **question creation before class**
- Evaluate questions for:
  - Preparation
  - Comprehension
  - Depth of thought
  - Discussion potential
- Facilitate **in-class dialogue** where AI cannot intervene
  - Requires oral participation, meaning the student must be present
- Use peer evaluation and professionalism points to motivate real engagement

# Effective Group Work Can Look Like

- ✓Groups of 4-6
- ✓Clear discussion objectives
- ✓Pre-class question submission to demonstrate preparedness, full points cannot be earned during Group Discussion, if Question(s) are not submitted before the start of class
- ✓Instructor moves around the room to listen and intervene strategically

Dedicated time for:

- ✓Breaking the ice to get discussion going
- ✓Clarifying concepts
- ✓Comparing interpretations
- ✓Analyzing evidence
- ✓Participation points tied to group engagement

# Designing High-Quality Questions

Encourage students to ask questions that:

- Demonstrate understanding of the course materials
- Require interpretation, not fact-recall
- Cannot be easily copied from AI
- Will lead to discussion, for example share that they can begin with prompts like:
  - “What do we make of…”
  - “Which factors contributed to…”
  - “How should we interpret the evidence that…”
  - “What are the implications of…”

# Structuring Discussions to be Graded

- ✓Require students to bring notes (not scripts)
- ✓Walk around the room "not to police, but to be available for inquiries" and grade individuals' contributions
- ✓Limited device usage
- ✓Quality and frequency of contributions
- ✓Ability to name one idea a peer shared that influenced your thinking
- ✓Provide **rubrics** for: Questions & Discussions = transparent grading, clear expectations (elaborates on instructions)
- ✓Build norms and let groups self-govern:
  - Respect
  - Preparedness

# Assessment Ideas That Discourage AI Use

**What I do:**

- Pre-discussion questions
- Question-to-Dialogue Tasks: requiring groups to choose one question to pose to the entire class.
- Class discuss at the end of group discussions
- Self and peer evaluations at the end of the semester

**Other options:**

- Short reflection handwritten after group (or class) discussion
- Application to Local Context: referencing campus life, local community, or classroom dynamics frustrate AI because the context isn't online.
    - "How does this concept show up at SIUE? Give a concrete example from student life or campus work."
- More ideas?

**Participation score can tied to:**

- Active listening
- Asking follow-ups
- Staying engaged with peers during discussion
- Free from device distractions and engaged the entire class period

# Takeaway: Skill Development for the Future Job Market

Group discussion builds:

- Confidence speaking to colleagues
- Decision-making skills
- Real-time reasoning
- Leadership and collaboration skills
- Professional communication
- Critical thinking and problem solving independent of AI

These are all **career skills** necessary for professional futures

# Final Workshop Reflection

What is *one policy* you'll adopt to reduce AI dependence?

What is *one improvement* you'll make to group discussions?

# Thank You!

I'm Liz Stygar, please reach out if you want to ask questions or learn more.

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