



Humanitas Teacher Training with Nate Antiel

Lecture 5: On Teaching Primary Texts from Discussion

Outline:

Teaching primary texts effectively involves maintaining focus on the text, allowing students to explore and self-correct errors, modeling intellectual humility, and fostering deep engagement through Socratic dialogue. The goal is to guide students toward independent critical thinking and intellectual refinement.

Maintaining Focus on the Text

- **Encourage direct engagement with the text:**
 - Emphasize quoting and supporting arguments with the text.
 - Redirect discussions that deviate into anecdotes or external references.
- **Avoid tangents:**
 - Discourage comparisons to pop culture unless highly relevant.
 - Refocus discussions back to the primary text when students stray.

Handling Student Mistakes

- **Allow students to be wrong:**
 - Resist the urge to correct immediately; let students explore and self-correct.
 - Use open-ended questions to guide discovery of errors.
- **Adapt approach to genre:**
 - For poetry, highlight use of synonyms and layered meanings.
 - For philosophical texts, focus on precise language and definitions.

Balancing Authority and Authoritativeness



- **Model intellectual humility:**
 - Normalize admitting when you don't know something or when you are wrong.
 - Foster an environment where mistakes are part of learning.
- **Demonstrate authority through questioning:**
 - Persist in asking thoughtful questions to deepen student understanding.
 - Avoid imposing answers; prioritize prompting students to think critically.

Promoting Socratic Dialogue

- **Encourage iterative refinement of ideas:**
 - Use the Socratic method to refine student theses through questioning.
 - Highlight examples like Socrates' dialogues (e.g., *Euthyphro*).
- **Clarify through dialectic engagement:**
 - Use back-and-forth questioning to help students articulate and refine their thoughts.
 - Accept when students abandon incorrect ideas as part of the learning process.

