4.8: Question of the day

Activity Guidelines

Suggested course level

Upper and lower level undergraduate

Activity purpose

• Students will develop their writing skills and writing voice through low-stakes writing practice.

Materials required

• Learning management system

Activity instructions

1. Question of the Day is part activity, part assignment and part classroom culture strategy. It’s designed to encourage students to play with language and connect with each other through low-stakes writing.

2. Every day from Monday to Friday, post a question on the Learning Management System. I do this by creating a forum called ‘Question of the Day’ each week, then setting up posts to be released at midnight from Monday to Friday.

3. Students respond to the questions by Sunday night.

4. If they respond to a question, they get 1 point. To get 100%, they must answer 40 questions per semester. In a 13-week semester, this works out to just over 3 a week. Here are some sample questions:

   ◦ Do you believe in ghosts? Why or why not?
What’s something that’s happened to you that you believe hasn’t happened to anyone else in the class?

Take a walk through your neighbourhood and write about something interesting that you saw.

Tell me about a time you overcame something difficult.

5. I answer every question, which tends to increase the response rate.

6. I make Question of the Day worth 5% of their grade, which means that students can choose not to do it without too much penalty.

7. The key to Question of the Day is to allow students to talk about their own lives in a safe way. The questions do not require any research or prior knowledge. They should also be fun. Because they don’t have to answer every question, students can avoid answering questions that make them uncomfortable. At the end of the week, I reply to a few responses on each thread.

Activity variations

- If Question of the Day is too much, you can have a Question of the Week.

Tags: routine messages, writing mechanics, grammar, style, tone, concision, writing process, discussion, individual, small group, creating a product or document, self-reflection, low-stakes writing, classroom building, online communication