

Socratic Circle Final

Socratic seminars (a.k.a. Socratic Circles) are formal discussions, based on a text, in which the leader asks open-ended questions, and participants are encouraged to engage in thoughtful reflection that collaboratively builds meaning. Reflecting Socrates' belief that the answers to all human questions and problems reside within us, Socrates was convinced that the surest way to discover those answers and attain reliable knowledge was through the practice of disciplined conversation. He called this method the dialectic. A Socratic Circle is not a debate, and all actively engaged participants are "winners." Importantly, the point is not to determine "right or wrong," rather, to thoughtfully share, listen, and develop meaningful dialogue.

The text we will discuss is, *Art Since 1900*. Each student is asked to sign up to be an expert on a specific artistic style studied this semester, then re-reading the text covering your self-assigned style thoroughly and closely.

Prepare for the Socratic Circle by identifying (with title, artist, and date) two exemplary works of art that demonstrate the characteristics of the style or moment in which you are an expert. Bring large images of these two works to the seminar. Finally, outline or summarize significant points, dates, and facts concerning the style/moment. You will submit this summary of knowledge at the end of the discussion.

Here's how the Socratic Circle will work:

- Students will be arranged in an inner circle and an outer circle, each composed of about ten.
- The inner circle will be asked an open-ended question, and participants will develop understanding fluidly. Meanwhile, participants in the outer circle will observe and create new questions, which will be asked during the following round.
- After 10 minutes of discussion, participants will switch from inner to outer circle, and vice versa.
- Discussion (questioning, "piggy-back" responses, communal problem-solving) will be encouraged over debate (rebuttals, persuasive rhetoric, taking sides).
- Participants are encouraged to offer interpretations and analysis of works, to respectfully expand critical thinking, and to offer alternative views. Remember that Socrates loved playing "Devil's advocate" and feigning ignorance of a topic to delve deeply into a subject.



Ai Wei Wei, *Never Sorry*, 2012.