**Brainstorming Questions**

This activity gives students practice in generating and evaluating questions for conceptual problems. It primes them both for class discussion and for choosing research topics, ensuring that they see themselves as responding to a real and immediate audience.

**Materials**

You will need to compile and copy students’ questions. You’ll also need a board to record students’ choices of questions. You may want to appoint a scribe.

**Process**

1. Assign students to formulate three questions about an issue or a reading. They can use the T-Q-S procedure in 1.1-1.2 (“I am writing about _____ in order to find out . . .”). The questions are due the afternoon or evening before class, so that you can compile them into a master list. It is easiest if you have students e-mail their questions to you.

2. Compile the questions into a list. Group closely related ones, putting all questions unsuitable for argument in a group. (It is a useful exercise to explain why they are unsuitable.) Add any that students do not propose but you would like them to consider.
3. In class, put students into groups. Have each group pick the three or four questions they think are most promising. The group can revise a question before proposing it.

4. Reconvene the class and compile a list of the questions chosen by each group. As a group proposes a question, ask them to explain why they selected it. Keep track of questions selected by more than one group.

5. If you intend to use these questions only for class discussion, you can either start in right away or assign students to prepare answers to the top five questions for the next class. If you intend them as paper topics, you will get better questions if you go on to a second round.

6. For paper topics, assign students to reformulate one or two questions based on what they learned in the first round. Have them turn in the questions the afternoon or evening before class. Once again, compile a master list.

7. In class, put the students into groups. Have each group pick the two most promising questions on the master list. The group can revise a question before proposing it.

8. Reconvene the class and compile a final list of proposed questions for papers. Veto questions likely to give students too much trouble.