Lifelong Learning
COLLABORATIVE

Collaborative Learning Guidelines

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What is Collaborative Learning? Why is it Our Preferred Learning Style?

LLC is a lifelong learning organization devoted to the principle of collaborative learning. This means that our courses are smaller, seminar-style classes designed to actively involve all course participants. We believe that working together to learn something improves the learning experience for all.

Our course leaders are peers, not "teachers," who may or may not be expert in the field of the course topic; they are referred to as "coordinators." They organize the course, devise a syllabus, and suggest print and on-line resources; they do not lecture. Most often the coordinator will ask each course participant to lead a portion of a class meeting. This leader, known as the "session leader," will research a topic selected from the syllabus, present key material, and then lead a discussion. Occasionally session leaders bring in a guest speaker or show a relevant video before leading the discussion.

The coordinator may organize the class in another way, for example by suggesting readings for each class session, which are then discussed. Expectations of class members will be clearly defined in the course description. The important point is that everyone shares in the success of the learning experience. This is the essence of collaborative learning.

Sometimes new members report feeling a bit intimidated by the expectation for active participation, but almost everyone comes to enjoy this style of learning.

The Advantages of this Method of Learning

- Promotes the sharing of diverse views and opinions, based on participants' varied life experiences.
- Encourages discussion and questioning, often leading to new or unexpected perspectives.
- Creates opportunities for learning communication, public speaking, and technology skills.
- Provides connection to peers and opportunities for new friendships.
- Requires active learning, which leads to improved memory and deeper understanding of subject matter.
- Stimulates reading, research, learning, and social interactions beyond the classroom.
- Builds confidence and a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.
- Leads to self-discovery and self-actualization.

Testimonials from our Members

"I joined LLC a couple of years ago. I started with a Memoir Writing class; hearing everyone's stories and sharing mine created some wonderful friendships. I also participated in two theatre classes and expanded my horizons there as well. I now enjoy dinner and theatre with my LLC friends. Recently I took the plunge and facilitated a course on The Nature of Spirituality. I was nervous at first, since I have no qualifications in the field, but I had a great co-coordinator and learned a lot. I look forward to each LLC semester to see what interesting courses are offered. LLC has enriched my life." DTF, retired speech/language pathologist

"I came to Providence newly retired (for the love of a woman--that old saga), knowing no one in the city, and not knowing of any outlets for the intellectual stimulation I sought. I stumbled upon LLC. I was able to delve into a broad array of fascinating courses (with no degree requirements and no grades!), and I suddenly found myself in close connection with many incredibly wonderful people from Providence and surrounding towns. LLC has been nothing short of a godsend for me. Come join us!" GH, retired corporate lawyer

"When I was young, I studied sciences and psychology in preparation for my career. I missed the opportunity to learn about art, music, history, literature, and philosophy. Now retired, I am getting my 'second liberal arts education', studying all those subjects I missed out on the first time around. I actually do work hard (by choice), but I get tremendous enjoyment and satisfaction. Discussions in class, including people with varied life experiences, are always enriching. I love LLC!" CC, retired physician

"I joined LLC about three years ago. It was in the memoir class that I realized the full potential of all that LLC has to offer. Simply put, LLC changed my life. Through writing my memoirs, I began to live fully in the present and to anticipate an exciting future. I made many new friends and expanded my social network. I actively serve as a coordinator in art-related courses. My advice to anyone considering joining LLC? Don't wait. Do it now. Sample a variety of classes until you find the ones that fit you best. It will change your life, too."
SKL, writer/photographer

"I joined LLC two years ago and have taken two courses since, both of which I hugely enjoyed. Learning takes place in a congenial environment among small groups of like-minded people who nevertheless bring diverse backgrounds to the subjects being discussed. I find these discussions informative and the exchange of ideas always stimulating. For me, taking an LLC course is a thoroughly pleasurable experience." AB, retired military officer

"What makes LLC collaborative? Everyone participates! What makes it fun? Everyone participates! What makes it Lifelong Learning? It's fun, so you'll come back for more. Everyone comes to LLC to enjoy a shared learning experience. Best of all, the days of competing for grades are long gone, so participants are supportive of and helpful to each other as they explore a topic together." EB, lifelong learner

Role of the Coordinator I - Developing and Planning the Course

All Lifelong Learning Collaborative (LLC) courses are conceived and developed by LLC members with the help of the Curriculum Committee. The Curriculum Committee is charged with offering well-planned seminars of general interest on a variety of subjects each semester, but the committee depends on the entire membership to suggest and coordinate these courses. The role of the coordinator is, thus, the most important one in LLC; without members willing to propose and lead courses, there could be no LLC.

The Curriculum Committee is always ready and willing to provide guidance and support in helping LLC members develop ideas for courses and to turn these ideas into viable course designs. There is a form on the LLC website for submitting a course idea that can be accessed by clicking on the "Propose a Course" link at the LLC website. Any LLC member can email or hand a course proposal to any Curriculum Committee member at any time, and the Curriculum Committee will enthusiastically and gratefully receive it.

Locating Ideas for Courses: The "Light Bulb"

Any topic that interests you will interest others as well. Have you read a fascinating book lately that you would like to discuss in detail? Would you like to really think through an issue or an historical era? Have you ever wished you had the time and motivation to figure out a scientific principle? Would you like to have the background knowledge to appreciate the performing arts or film? Well, design a course and you will achieve your goal!

There is no need to be an expert or to have worked in the field of the course you propose; all our courses are designed and led by peers. Sometimes people who have special expertise are interested in updating their knowledge or sharing what they know with others, but expertise is not a prerequisite for a great course. All that is required is an interest in the topic and willingness to do the research and learn where to find the answers to questions that come up in the course of the class. Local authorities from colleges, public libraries and other organizations are often happy to provide assistance.

Initial Planning

Once you have an interesting idea, please share your thoughts with the Curriculum Committee. You may send an email with your course suggestions directly to the Curriculum Committee at info@lifelonglearningcollaborative.org, or you may fill out and submit the first part (or both parts if you're ready!) of the Propose a Course. A Curriculum Committee member will soon contact you to discuss your ideas. Please note that during this initial planning stage, some LLC members may have an idea for an interesting course but are not certain they want to serve as a course coordinator. That consideration should not stop you from submitting your idea. The Curriculum Committee wants to know the membership's ideas for courses.

Planning the Course

The next step in planning a course is to shape the initial ideas into an LLC class format. The second part of the "Propose a Course" form is designed to help in this process. Also, a member of the Curriculum Committee can help address these course-planning decisions, too. Here are the questions that need to be addressed during the planning process.

1. Course length. How might the subject matter be divided into study units? Most courses are ten weeks in length, but perhaps the subject matter is more appropriate for a four-, six-, or eight-week course. Does it lend itself to a two-semester project?

2. Co-coordinator. It is often helpful, but not necessary, to have a co-coordinator. A co-coordinator can help facilitate course planning and join in leading the class. Sometimes the person who came up with the idea is the lead coordinator; other times the two are equal partners. The exact arrangement can be worked out between the two. The co-coordinators can also cover classes for each other if there is an unexpected event, such as illness, injury, etc. Curriculum Committee members know the interests and experience of the membership and can help find a co-coordinator, if you want one. Members are not charged for courses they coordinate. There may be up to three co-coordinators per course.

3. Reference material. Is there a book that would make a suitable text? Will the text be used as a basis for common knowledge that participants should read before the course starts or will it be read chapter by chapter as the class progresses? If there is no single suitable text, you may suggest various books and websites for participants to choose from. If the topic is controversial, make sure the readings present all points of view; this helps people to ponder and question their preconceived viewpoints. (Role of the Coordinator II – Selecting and Using a Text)

4. Course format. Think about how you will organize the course in such a way that it will involve all participants. LLC courses are collaborative. Members expect to be involved and in most classes lead a session or part of a session. The form of leading a session can vary. The classic LLC method is for a session leader to research the topic, prepare a presentation and/or lead a discussion. The duration of a presentation is different from class to class. In most classes there is a shorter presentation with more emphasis on follow-up discussion. Teaming among session leaders is an option that works well in some classes. It's up to you as coordinator.

5. Class size. Class size depends, to some extent, on the format you choose. Most LLC seminars have a maximum of 20 participants. Coordinators of writing classes, where each participant shares his/her writing each week, prefer smaller classes. Courses where there are many guest lecturers, typically our art, music, and performing arts classes, can accommodate larger numbers. ***(See "Class Size Policy")***

6. Course title. Choose a title that succinctly defines the course and attracts the attention of members. Sometimes a sub-title is useful for further definition.

7. Course Description. Prepare a clear and concise description of about 120 words that summarizes the subject matter of the course and why it is of interest. It is not necessary at this point to have the course completely planned week by week. Sample syllabuses, available on this website, provide models for the course description.

Submit a Proposal

Once you have completed initial course planning or brainstorming, it is time to submit an official proposal. There is a form on the LLC website for submitting a proposal, which can be accessed

by clicking on the “Propose a Course” link (under “Courses” tab on the LLC website). Or you can email a proposal to any Curriculum Committee member. However you want to do it, your proposal will be enthusiastically and gratefully received by the Curriculum Committee.

Included in the proposal are the course description; course format; the coordinator(s); the proposed text, if there is one; expenses other than the text (field trips, concert or theatre tickets, etc.); course length; and what semesters and days of the week you are available to coordinate the course. At this point, you can still change anything. The purpose of the proposal is to give the Curriculum Committee members an idea of your interest and when you are available, so they can plan the up-coming semesters.

A member of the Curriculum Committee will be in touch with you soon after your proposal is submitted and will be available subsequently to provide help and support. All proposals are of interest to the Curriculum Committee; there is no topic that is rejected out of hand. Curriculum Committee members will work with you to make the proposal suitable and of interest to the membership. The Curriculum Committee must come up with a well-balanced curriculum each semester, so, if the Curriculum Committee receives two similar proposals, they may suggest that the two potential coordinators get together or postpone one course until a later semester.

Role of the Coordinator II - Selecting and Using a Text

In LLC classes, a "text" is not usually a book that schools use as a textbook. It is a resource used to give participants a common background. It might not even be a book. It could be a series of on-line articles, a TED talk on You Tube, or a reprint of an article in a magazine or newspaper. The "text" should be something that will give the participants some basic information and provide some inspiration for discussion.

Selecting the Text

The "text" should have most of the following qualities:

- It provides a base of knowledge to be expanded upon.
- It has a thesis, or central argument, explored neutrally or with a point of view.
- Its content is analytical.
- It is readable and has a broad appeal.
- It will stimulate thought and views about the subject.
- It is readily available in libraries, in bookstores, or online for less than thirty dollars.

Using the Text

The right "text" can be used interpretively as a starting point for discussion. For example, a literary work can be used as a prism for viewing a society or an era. It can also be used analytically. For example, a work of history or of science may be used to promote understanding of a pivotal point of high interest with application to the present. In a cover note to the syllabus, it is important to explain how the text will be used.

The "text" can be used in the following ways:

- It may divide the subject into topical and presentation units.
- It can help frame discussion questions.
- It can be read as a whole before the class starts to serve as an overview.
- It can be read chapter-by-chapter to introduce each day's topic.
- The presentation should expand upon material in the text, not just repeat it. The text can be used to suggest topics for presentations.

Role of the Coordinator III - Developing the Course Calendar

Time spent on constructing a good syllabus will be rewarded by ease in conducting the remainder of the course. A well-written syllabus will help class members understand the overall goals of the class, how to prepare for each session, and ready to participate actively. One critical component of the syllabus is the course calendar, a weekly plan for the course that informs participants about the specific topics that will be covered during each class meeting.

Tips for Developing the Course Calendar

Below are several steps in the development of a great course calendar and thereby a great course.

- Begin by reviewing the course description and make a list of the topics that you mentioned in the description; the class participants will expect this.
- Also keep the learning goals of the course in mind. What two or three concepts do you want the participants to remember? Decide when and how you might discuss, explain and review these concepts.
- Next, make a rough outline of the way the listed topics will be covered over the course of the weeks. Will they be organized chronologically? Thematically? Will they follow the chapters of a text? Sometimes a course will study certain topics (or essays or stories) that do not have to be covered in any specific sequence; in such a case, the syllabus may just be a list of topics that participants can select from and present to the class on a date that is convenient for them.
- Now list the dates of class meetings and for each date fill in the topics, along with other helpful descriptive content. Include a list of sub-topics or pose questions that amplify each topic. Provide structure while allowing flexibility and choice for the participants.
- Also provide text chapters or other print and online resources to guide the class members, both the session leader and the other participants, who may wish to pursue particular topics in detail, to go beyond the suggested reading for the week.

Well-written course calendars can be found in these sample syllabuses.

The course calendar and the other elements of the syllabus (including the course description, the class format, your contact information, and list of texts &/or readings) should be completed about a month before classes begin (although minor changes can be made up to the beginning and even during the course of the semester), and it is a good idea to send the completed syllabus to course participants via email three to four weeks before the first class meeting. This engenders enthusiasm and gives participants a chance to start reading and planning for the session that they will lead. Class members will be better prepared to participate actively in the course if they start reading and thinking about the topic before the classes begin. Coordinators can also line up session leaders in advance for the first few classes, giving them the opportunity to prepare well in advance. Coordinators will receive directions from the LLC administrator for accessing the class roster via the LLC website. (The roster is a list of LLC members registered for the course that includes email addresses for each participant).

Funds for Conducting Classes

Coordinators will be reimbursed for obtaining a paid Zoom account during the months in which their Zoom-based course occurs.

In addition, each course carries a $150 budget for its coordinator(s) which they may use for class expenses.

Expenses which are **eligible** for reimbursement include:

- Honoraria* for guest speakers. (No more than $50 per speaker unless advance arrangement has been made with the chair of the Curriculum Committee.)
- Fees/donations for docent/guide tours when they are assessed to the group as a whole.
- Copying costs.
- The cost of reference books which the coordinator(s) have purchased to assist them in developing the course, or which will be shared with members of the class as reference materials.
- The cost to rent or buy videos which the coordinator plans to show in class to supplement other forms of learning in the course.

Expenses which are **not eligible** for reimbursement include:

- The purchase or rental of films or books which everyone in the course is expected to buy/rent/borrow.
- Food or drink; class parties.
- The cost of a Netflix, Prime, or other comparable membership.
- Individual admissions for class members to tours/museums, etc.

If course coordinators plan a guest-heavy course, a large amount of copying, or other expenses which are likely to cause the course to exceed significantly its $150 budget, they should address the likelihood of these issues with the Curriculum Committee chair prior to the publication of the course in the LLC catalog. The Curriculum Committee may wish to adjust the tuition for the course to cover such expenses.

Requests for checks and/or receipts for class expenses may be submitted to LLC (info@lifelonglearningcollaborative.org) at any time during the semester.

**An honorarium is a gift which acknowledges an external individual who shares his/her experience and perspective to enrich the learning of LLC members. Honoraria should not be given to anyone who could benefit from his/her engagement with LLC (such an author who may sell a book to class members) or to those in public office. Usually, an honorarium is given as a check from LLC, but books or other appropriate materials (with a maximum cost of $50) may also be used.*

Role of the Coordinator IV – Getting Off to a Great Start

Managing an LLC class is the shared responsibility of all class members. The coordinator defines the course's themes, develops the syllabus, and then encourages each class member to take a turn serving as a "session leader" by giving a presentation, leading a discussion, or otherwise engaging with a selected topic. In addition, LLC coordinators seek ways to involve members in setting ground rules for the class, especially rules to guide class discussion and the essential elements of presentations. The coordinator's special role is to monitor and help carry out such rules. The coordinator should remain watchful and tactfully intervene if necessary.

Advance Preparation

Prior to the first class meeting, coordinators should attend to the following tasks:

- Upon receiving the class roster via email: Take note of the class participants who are *new members of LLC*. E-mail or telephone to them to welcome them to LLC and to your course. Answer any questions they may have and briefly chat about their interests. If appropriate, suggest appropriate topics for the sessions they might lead.

- One month ahead: Distribute a welcome email and copies of the syllabus to all class members, to set a welcoming tone and to give participants time to read and think about the course content and their preferred area of focus. Also highlight the way you prefer to have participants contact you (email and/or telephone).

- Two to four weeks ahead: Consider asking two or three experienced participants to be session leaders during the first (and possibly the second) class meeting. If carefully selected, these volunteers help set the standard for the rest of the semester's presentations and/or discussions.

- One week or a few days prior to the first class meeting: Send a final welcome email, reminding participants of the classroom location, of any parking problems (if this applies), and with a request for nameplates or nametags. Name-tent cards or nametags that are visible to all class members aid in developing an interactive class and help prevent the embarrassment of "senior moments." Name tent cards are an excellent option for classes that sit at tables, and the cards can be easily made by purchasing Avery tent cards #5305. Microsoft Word's "tools" menu has a drop-down to "labels" for printing a name on each card. If you are not comfortable printing the cards, simply bring the cards to class with some felt-tipped pens and ask the class to make their own.

First Session Tasks

The First Hour: Introductions; a brief course preview; setting rules and procedures.

1. Begin the class with brief personal introductions all around. Introduce yourself first so that the others will know the appropriate amount of time for an introduction. You may want to ask participants to share their expectations for the class or to mention the reason why they registered for it. (Monitor the time, however; in some classes such introductory statements by each class member could take up all of class time.)
2. Briefly discuss the goals, central issues, and topics listed in the syllabus. Briefly review

the course calendar, so that participants can see how the semester will proceed; respond briefly to any questions about the calendar.

3. Explain how the text and/or other readings will be used in the class and suggest sources for further research.
4. Discuss class procedures. Agree on a method of monitoring use of time. Establish appropriate hand raising practices; this will depend on the size and nature of the group and is subject to change during the course of the semester, if necessary. Note that cross-talk or private side conversations during any class can be very distracting and disruptive, so it is important to establish a rule for eliminating them.
5. Discuss "house rules." At Temple Beth-El, food is not permitted in the classrooms and should be confined to the break room. Beverages are permitted in the classrooms but must be in covered containers. This is a good time to explain where the bathrooms are located.

The Second Hour: Define and model a "session."

1. Discuss the role of the session leader. You may want to distribute the appropriate documents from the LLC Guidelines at this time. If weekly topics have not already been allocated, have participants select their topics and establish dates.
2. Review the elements of a typical class presentation or a discussion session. You may want to distribute (or discuss) sources for research and a template for session leaders to follow when it is their turn to lead the class. Also, highlight the portions of this Guidebook that have step-by-step suggestions for the development of presentations and discussions.
3. Hold a content session: *A major portion of the first meeting should be devoted to a "model" or "demonstration" presentation or discussion session* (or two sessions, if there is time). This model session should contain all the elements of a "good" session, including content review, appropriate analysis and a time for class response or participation. In some classes, experienced volunteers lead the session; in other classes the coordinator serves as a role model. In any case, be sure to follow the procedures set up earlier.
4. Have fun, so the other class members will relax and enjoy themselves as well.

You are off to a great start!

Role of the Coordinator V – Supporting Session Leaders

Supporting the Session Leader

The session leader has a number of roles, including preparing a presentation, conveying information, leading a discussion, and maintaining ground rules. The job of the coordinator is to unobtrusively assist the session leader if and when it may be necessary. New members may need to be assured that being a session leader is not overwhelming and that it can be a lot of fun.

Assisting Session Leaders in Preparing a Presentation

- Refer session leaders to the relevant sections of these Guidelines
- Discuss relevant resources, including books, journals, websites, etc.
- Suggest videos and other visual aids. Be prepared to help with the use of the equipment for Power Point, YouTube, website access, etc. You may prefer to designate another more tech-savvy member of the group to perform this service. LLC courses on the use of classroom equipment are offered each semester and addressed during the pre-semester coordinator orientation.
- Ask session leaders to relate their presentation to the "text" or other assigned material for the week.
- Check with the leaders for the following week's sessions to see if they would like to announce their topics and reading assignments to the group in advance.

Facilitating Good Presentations and Discussions

- Monitor fair division of time between presentation and discussion.
- Ask the session leaders at the beginning of the presentation whether or not they wish to be interrupted with comments or questions.
- Make sure the presenter and participants can be heard at all times. Use the microphone if necessary.
- Be prepared with your own questions, if they are needed, to invigorate a faltering discussion.
- Be alert to the level of participation of individuals, encouraging quiet participants to enter discussions that seem dominated by more active members.
- Show appreciation of each session leader's effort.

Maintaining Ground Rules

- Monitor time use as agreed upon in the first session.
- Assure fair participation in discussion by:
  - Inviting comments from as many members as possible, especially new members.
  - Thanking over-talkative persons for their views and then adding, "let's hear from someone who hasn't had a chance to speak."
  - Reminding members of the hand raising policy agreed upon during the first session.
- Attend to individual differences by:
  - Dealing respectfully with inappropriate interruptions or provocative interactions by stepping in and suggesting that it might be time to move on.
  - Providing gentle help with the presentation if a session leader seems to be struggling.

- Being flexible in monitoring ground rules in order to accommodate different personalities as much as possible, while still maintaining order.
- Helping participants to agree to disagree.
- Helping the class to avoid getting bogged down and stuck in an argument going nowhere.

Role of the Coordinator VI - Technology Options

Technology is part of the LLC environment. Most members read the course catalogue on the LLC website and enroll online. Coordinators use email and some coordinators use a blog to communicate with their classes, to post assignments and distribute relevant materials. Session leaders may use classroom computer screens to display slide shows, movies and YouTube clips for presentations. Obviously, class leaders have a lot of choices in using technology to deliver a quality course, especially if they choose the right technology option for their purposes, and if they use that technology to its best advantage.

To help with technology choices, here are several technology options that facilitate communication with the class, namely: Email, e-discussion, a class blog and a class website.

Email

At the start of registration for each semester, coordinators are provided with a link, username/password, and instructions that show how to access our online registration software (ProClass), where they can download current course rosters at their convenience. The coordinator can then communicate via email, welcoming participants, previewing the class, and distributing class documents (such as the syllabus) via the email attachments feature. To facilitate continued communications, the coordinator can set-up a 'contact list' or 'contact group' within in his/her email contacts directory, enabling rapid emailing to the entire class. This kind of email contact group is best used for class announcements and for distributing documents.

> User tips: Keep your messages relatively short; make the message relevant to the whole group (rather than to just one or two people); and preview the contents of any attachments.

Email Discussion Groups ('e-discussion')

E-discussion groups facilitate on-going discussion among all members of the class beyond the walls and time limits of the classroom. In an e-discussion group, an email message posted by anyone automatically goes to everyone in the group, as do the responses to such postings, because the group (or 'list') has *its own address* (and is not based in the coordinator's computer contact list). The advantage and excitement of an e-discussion group is that participants can continue to discuss course content and ideas at any time—before and after the face-to-face sessions, and even between semesters. Also, discussions on several different course-related topics can occur at the same time. E-discussion increases the social nature of the class and gives participants more time to share ideas and analyze material together. Sometimes participants who are quiet in class are more forthcoming in an e-discussion environment.

> User tips: The coordinator sets up the membership list. The coordinator's email provider—such as Google, Yahoo or Cox Cable Co.—provides the group's online address and instructions. Usually, the coordinator starts the e-discussion with a welcome email and an opening discussion question, but the energy and array of topics usually shifts to the group, itself. Members should be urged to keep their messages relatively short, to the point and friendly. They should write to the whole group (rather than to just one or two people), and the messages should invite more discussion rather than trying to end discussion.

Class Blog

A “blog” is a diary kept on-line rather than on paper. Just like in a paper diary, a blog is a place to make regular, dated entries; each dated entry usually describes and reflects on daily or weekly experiences--for example, on the class's weekly meetings. In addition, weekly blog entries offer coordinators an easy way to post assignments and to announce upcoming class events. Because the blog is kept on-line, blog writers can easily add photos, images, links and even sound files to the weekly record of class meetings. Importantly, a blog can be set up so that it is viewable and written by class members--and **only** by class members, thus offering privacy to the group. In addition, blogs usually offer a "comments" option in a side bar, so that a few class members can continue to discuss specific ideas and items of interest just to them.

Blogs are easy to set up, fun for class members to read, and easy for approved writers to add content. *Usually within less than an hour*, a coordinator can set up a blog, enroll all class members, and set limits (or not) on the ways class members can contribute to the writing of the entries. Three free, popular and easy-to-use blog services are: Blogger.com; Tumblr.com; Wordpress.com.

> User tips: As the semester goes along, the best weekly entries usually mix factual information and assignments with more personal thoughts and reflections on class-related subject matter. The most interesting blogs also add visual materials and photos that are relevant to the class. An absolute rule of thumb: Short entries are more likely to be read than long entries.

Class Website

A class website is a terrific resource for an LLC class because it makes course content and materials easily and always available to class participants, including the official course description, the syllabus, readings, videos, sound clips external links, downloadable documents, and other relevant materials. In addition, a good website presents all of this information in a visually appealing and clearly organized fashion, so that class members can quickly find specific information about the class, as well as get a general feeling about the nature of the class, its themes and its coordinators. Finally, because websites are so ubiquitous, most LLC members are familiar with how websites work and how to navigate from page to page.

The most daunting aspect of a class website might seem to be setting up the site. This is not the case, however. Several companies offer predesigned web pages that allow a coordinator simply to add content to each page, and then allow the coordinator to link these pages together as a website, constructed on the home computer. When ready, the coordinator can then upload the completed site to its home base on the Internet. LLC has agreed to host LLC class websites within LLC's website *for free*. Two easy-to-use website building services are Sandvox.com for Mac users and Weebly.com for pc users.

> User tips: Have good content! Coordinators should write up the content for each page of their website before starting to fill out each webpage. Here is a list of five basic pages for an LLC class website; generate the content (the written text) first:
> 1. Home page with the course description
> 2. Coordinator's page with a photo and short introduction to each coordinator
> 3. Course syllabus page
> 4. Course calendar with a list of dates for assignments, readings and presentations

5. Presentations page that lists options for presentations and other choices for participation.

Here is an example of how pages look on an LLC class website: <www.lifelonglearningcollaborative.org/philharmonic>

Computer Technology Available in LLC Classrooms at Temple Beth-El

The computer technology available for LLC classes at Temple Beth-El has been assembled for ease of use and for flexibility. The set-up is equivalent to a full laptop computer with a large, flat screen monitor for display. It is an Apple Mac mini with complete access to the Internet. A CD/DVD player and audio speakers are also available and easily plugged into the Mac mini. A microphone is also available.

Coordinators, session leaders and other class members who want to use computer technology for presentations and other purposes should not bring their own laptops to the classroom. Instead, they should bring a flash drive or a thumb drive loaded with their media, ready-to-go. The Mac mini will accept the plug-in drive and can display PowerPoint slide shows as well as Apple display programs. Each semester at the coordinators' orientation, LLC offers an introduction to the computer technology available in LLC Classrooms at Temple Beth-El.

Role of the Session Leader I

In LLC, we all learn together. In most courses, each participant will be asked to enhance the learning experience by leading a portion of a class meeting. This expectation will be made clear in the catalogue description. Although this may seem intimidating at first, most of our members find that they learn the most when they prepare to lead a session.

Most often, session leaders will research a topic selected from the syllabus, present key material, and then lead a discussion. Prior to the class, the session leader may assign reading material and/or hand out a list of questions for the class to ponder. Occasionally, session leaders bring in a guest speaker or show a video before leading a discussion. Sometimes several class members will cover their assigned sessions as a team. Different subject matter and classes provide other kinds of opportunities for leading a session.

The coordinator is always available to help and advise.

In addition to preparing content, session leaders should use a few simple techniques for leading a stimulating session:

- **Observe time limits**: Rehearse the presentation or edit the video to make sure that it fits within the timeframe. This is very important in order to leave time for discussion and in fairness to other presenters.
- **Limit the amount reading from a prepared text**: Remember that reading more than two pages of text without a pause can become boring to the class. Instead, try to develop an outline or note cards rather than reading an entire presentation. Presenters who choose to read should plan to take pauses for questions and discussion.
- **Use presentation technology**: PowerPoint, audio clips, videos, photos, and images can dramatically enhance presentations. These technologies get easier to use all the time and LLC members will have many opportunities to learn how to use them. If you use presentation technology, be sure you are familiar with the equipment available in the classroom and use the technology appropriately. The class coordinator should be able to help.
- **Be sure you can be heard**: We have microphones in the classrooms and urge you to use them if you have difficulty projecting your voice or if the class is large.
- **Focus on two or three stimulating questions**: The most interesting presentations and discussions are not compendiums or summaries of everything known about the topic. Instead, they focus on the most prominent points of controversy and/or new research relevant to the topic. They provide the necessary background information so that the class can understand those interesting controversies and new developments.
- **Share your sources**: After a stimulating session, class members may want to learn more. It can be very helpful to share a short list of print and Internet sources (which can be sent out via email).

Role of the Session Leader II - Researching a Topic

Your job as a session leader is to bring the class information about a topic so the group can discuss it. You will want to explain the main facts and ideas, and you will also want to explore a range of opinions about them.

Once you have selected your topic, write down a few basic questions you might want to answer about it. Make up questions which begin with words such as what, who, where, how, when, and why since these often help to organize research. Simply put, ask yourself two questions: What is this topic really about? Why is it interesting?

The session leader will dig into the topic and become very familiar with the most relevant aspects, such as its history, its prominent personalities, its methods of analysis, its controversies, and so on. Along the way, session leaders should explore a variety of sources, taking note of issues and themes that might prompt interesting discussion during class. The coordinator is always available to make suggestions about resources that may be helpful in exploring subject matter.

Now you are ready to begin browsing to get an overview of what is available to answer your questions. You might:

- Go to a bookstore, a library, or an online vendor such as Amazon. See what writers have published about your topic. Try to find current material.
- Go to Google or Yahoo or wherever you are most comfortable on the Internet and type in your basic questions. Get an idea of what information is available online. You might find a mini-lecture on YouTube or an article on a website that seems promising.

Now, select some material to actually read, or listen to, or watch. Most people find one or two hours of sustained study every day for a week or so is enough to bring a topic into focus.

Take notes, being particularly careful to make note of your source. Good research includes not only what you learn, but also where you learned it. You might need more time or less, but the key is to allow yourself plenty of time to think about your topic and to become really familiar with it. Then you will be well prepared to decide how to facilitate a good class discussion.

Will you read a brief statement about it? Will you speak using notes from an outline? Will you show something you found online? How will you make your topic come alive?

You won't be able to tell the class everything you learned about your topic, but you will want to touch on the major themes surrounding it. You will want to explain why those themes are key to understanding the topic. The rest of the important material will emerge in the discussion. Keep that in mind as you do your research.

Role of the Session Leader III - Developing a Great Presentation

Presentations by class members are a core component of many LLC classes. In an art class, for example, a session leader might present a slide show with informative commentary. In a literature class a session leader might present her analysis of a story while also presenting information about the author. In a current issues class, session leaders might share data, examples and the history of a problem while building an argument in favor of a preferred solution.

Clearly the nature of presentations will vary from class to class. At the same time, there are some aspects of good presentations that are consistent across classes:

- The session leader is excited about the subject matter and willing to take a risk in sharing newly learned content.
- The session leader has made a selection from among the available information, analyses and ideas regarding the topic, narrowing down the focus to a few major points, with a theme or thesis, and with vivid examples.
- The session leader has arranged the content into a predictable sequence or structure, using his/her own words, rather than repeating extensive quotes from sources.
- The session leader has made an effort to keep class members engaged.

Shaping and Arranging the Information

Once you have selected and researched your topic, and checked with the coordinator to confirm the preferred thematic or analytical approach to new content, here are several steps leading to a great presentation.

1. Sort your information into categories: Take a few minutes to sort through the ideas, stories and information from your reading and research, to put the various materials into categories. Such sorting will definitely speed up the writing of the text for your presentation. Here are some categories for sorting.

    - Generally known information
    - Information, analyses, and/or examples that are of particular relevance to the themes of the class
    - Facts and examples that are new or surprising to you, as well as examples, data and stories that might be particularly engaging for class members
    - Controversial aspects of the topic, along with a couple of experts' stances on these controversies
    - Background information that will help class members understand all of the information in the other categories

2. Make an outline: Now, you should easily be able to generate an outline or a first draft of your presentation. You could, for example, rearrange the categories into the order you prefer, using the category titles listed above, and write through your researched information, using your own words and preferred focus. Or you could generate an outline of major ideas, as suggested by the class themes, and then slot in your researched information to support and explain those ideas. Or you can develop your outline or draft, using this audience-centered sequence.

- Introduction: A short opening "hook," such as a brief story, surprising facts, a dramatic scene, or a concise quote from an expert. Follow this with a clear statement of your specific topic, then a simple list of the three or four items or issues you will explore, plus a one-sentence statement of your main overall message.
- Body: Systematically explore each of your three or four core issues or items. For each item, be sure to explain or define it in your own words, provide interesting examples, and draw on the opinion of experts if these help you clarify difficult points.
- Conclusion: Briefly summarize the main ideas of your presentation. Then, close with a final anecdote or look to the near future regarding your topic and main message.

3. Include class participation: Once you have completed a draft or a set of note cards for your presentation, decide when and how you will invite your classmates to participate. You might start by asking for their impressions and questions about your topic; and/or you could pause at the end of each section to ask if they have any added insights on the points covered, so far. Of course, at the end you should allot time for further question and discussion on your topic.

Final Preparations

- Once you have a draft or set of note cards, *rehearse it.* Make sure you can move through all of your content in a relaxed manner within the allotted time, including time for questions and answers. Revise as needed.
- Get feedback. Rehearse in front of a classmate, friend, or a spouse, to see if the stories are making an impact and if the content is clear. Listen to their suggestions and revise to improve the impact on the listener.
- If you use notes or read text you have written, be sure to make frequent eye contact with the audience during the presentation.
- Check and recheck the technology you are using as part of your presentation. Make sure you can handle the devices comfortably and that they are completely compatible with the hardware in the classroom. Test the compatibility in the week prior to your presentation.
- Use a microphone if you have any difficulty projecting your voice; many LLC members have impaired hearing.
- Have fun!! LLC is a supportive environment and you have friends.

Role of the Session Leader IV - Leading a High Quality Discussion

A good discussion session in an LLC class is very satisfying. Through the give-and-take of ideas, information, analysis and stories, class members gain a new or deeper understanding the topic being studied. During a good discussion, participants listen to each other, they respond directly to each other and stay on topic, while offering new information, relevant examples or clarifying analyses, and they consider a wide range of related issues until they have new perspectives.

Session leaders can help the class engage in this kind of high quality discussion by asking stimulating, thought-provoking questions, and by mediating the give-and-take to ensure a productive interchange of ideas and opinions that will keep the dialogue moving forward.

A Crucial Element: Purposeful Questions

Good questions help class members to examine a topic or item more closely, to tease apart its complexities, and/or to clearly articulate why they like an item such as a work of art or a novel, or why they support a line or argument or public issue. Different subject areas (such as literature vs. current issues, vs. the law, etc.) may call for different kinds of questions, and subject-based questions can be found at the LLC website (link address). In general, however, session leaders can develop a stimulating array of questions by drawing on the journalist's "5-W's": Who, What, Where, When, Why, plus How? This scheme works well when the W's are paired into stimulating, open-ended questions, for example: "What is this play about and why is it so powerful?" Or: "How did this problem arise and what solutions have been tried?"

A variation on the 5-W's question format comes from the great rhetorical tradition of Aristotle: describe, analyze, argue. This scheme works best sequentially, starting with description. "How would you describe this item, problem or place?" Then analysis, with questions that target parts, process and comparisons: "What are the major parts of this item, problem or place?" "What is it similar to?" "How does it work?" "What are its causes?" "What are its effects?" Then, ask participants to take a stand. "What would be the best possible solution?" "Why is this an important work of art (or not)?" And so on.

In addition to developing an array of questions about the subject matter, session leaders should consider sharing them ahead of time through email or as a handout during the prior class meeting. Also, consider having a mix of brief presentations and discussion: A few class members could be ready to give brief initial responses to the prompt questions, and then class members can respond with follow-up commentary to each initial response. Also, at the start of the session, session leaders can offer a few minutes of free response time, or "venting," for those who have strong personal feelings about the topic. But leaders should keep this activity limited; such venting is not a substitute for the discussion prompted by a planned sequence of questions.

A Crucial Element: Mediated Exchanges

Once a question is posed and a response is offered, a good discussion leader has two tasks: Encourage everyone to participate with more responses but keep the give-and-take on topic.

Session leaders can encourage everyone to participate by asking for different kinds of contributions to the discussion, including:

- Initial answers to core questions

- Follow-up responses that give more examples, or helpful new information, and/or *relevant* personal stories
- Follow-up opposing responses that give valid contrary data, and/or counter experiences or information
- Deeper probing into the topic through: unique analyses, new comparisons, alternative contexts and/or more background information

At the same time, session leaders should be vigilant about helping the group stay on topic by using the following strategies.

- Break complex responses into small chunks for consideration
- Focus the group's attention on one or two recurring threads that seem to be of concern to everyone
- Move the group onto the next set of questions in a timely manner
- Watch for problematic participants and be ready to act assertively
    - Many participants have a tendency to express random opinions rather than stay on topic. ("Well, I think . . ."). Session leaders should not hesitate to redirect the discussion back to the core topic ("We can come to that point later, right now, would someone like to respond to . . .?")
    - Some responders always jump in first and comment on everything, while some responders want to win an argument rather than analyze a topic or hear other's views. These participants drive others out of the discussion. Session leaders must make room for other opinions and/or analysis ("The question under discussion is . . .. Is there another way to pull apart the problem? How about looking more closely at . . .? Even if you do not agree, what might be another perspective . . . Let's give others a chance to speak.")
    - Some participants may be very hesitant to speak publicly. LLC believes that everyone has something to contribute at some point during a class. Thus, session leaders should keep inviting all class members to participate and offer different ways of responding. Sometimes quieter members will respond to requests for special kinds of responses, such as sharing relevant personal stories, unusual examples and comparisons, or by taking on unusual perspectives for a few moments. ("If you were "X" in this case, how would you respond?"). In addition, session leaders can hold small group discussion before whole class discussion and /or ask for short written answers before whole group discussion; both strategies give quieter class members alternative ways of sharing their ideas and responses.

Role of the Session Leader V - Videos in Presentations

Why Use Videos?

In an LLC music class or theater class, for example, historic performances of pieces and plays could easily be displayed via streaming video. In a current issues class, videos of interviews and debates among experts could be viewed and compared. In a class focused on a place, such as in a class on cities or a class on James Joyce's *Ulysses*, a video walk through a city like Dublin would be readily available. Such displays would certainly add clarity and impact to a presentation.

Video Resources

For streaming video, YouTube and TED are but two of the many Internet sites that make videos available for free, and such sites can be easily accessed in the LLC classroom. YouTube and TED host huge archives, containing videos addressing all of the topics studied in LLC classes. TED features high-quality talks by experts on innumerable issues. YouTube hosts digitized versions of new and classic recordings, films, TV documentaries, interviews and more. For movies and CD versions of audio content, the public library and a service like Netflix offer a wide range of content. www.TED.com www.YouTube.com

Tips for Integrating Videos into a Presentation

- Target the Content: Video content should be an element within a presentation; *it should not be the whole presentation.* Nothing replaces a presenter's interaction with the class. Thus, once you have a draft of your presentation in hand, decide when and approximately how long to use video content. For example, a short clip from a video could be a great opener for a presentation, really grabbing the class's attention, or a powerful closer, adding a visual element at the end. Or a few clips shown at intervals throughout a presentation could prompt discussion on different but related themes.

- Visit Streaming Video Sites: Select and visit one of the easy-to-use sites, but before visiting, assemble a list of search words, including topical words and descriptive terms, names of experts and formats, such as interview, documentary, performance, etc. Enter the various terms into the site's search bar, and sample many of the listed videos. Use links on the site's sidebars to connect to other relevant videos.

- Save and Integrate: Once you have located an appropriate video clip, save its Internet address. Use the bookmark feature of your web browser, or copy the web address at the top of the screen and paste it into your slide show or into a digital version of your text or notes cards. Place the address at the exact point in your presentation where the video should be displayed. Then, during your presentation, a click on the address should link directly to the video.

- Practice: Rehearse your presentation including the video display; do it again and again until you feel comfortable with the routine. Usually, you can control the start and stopping points of a video by managing the time-elapsed bar at the bottom of the screen. Also, ask for help and support from the course coordinator. The coordinator will help you set up the technology in the room and help you manage it during a presentation. Anticipate problems. Sometimes video or audio technology just does not work during a class session. Be prepared to do the presentation without these elements. Presenters can always share the links to the video after the class, through email.

Role of the Session Leader VI - Technology Resources

Many session leaders use computer visual and audio technology to facilitate their presentations because these enable the showing of videos, the displaying of photos, graphical data or other images, the playing of audio files or recordings, and the efficient sharing of text. While it is true that some presentations and some LLC classes can function without a technology component, the use of presentation technologies--when done well—reinforces the presenter's crucial ideas, clarifies the line of thinking, provides a display of relevant examples in a simple and powerful manner, and, generally, makes a presentation more memorable. Furthermore, digital slideshows (like PowerPoint) are extremely easy to assemble and the 'drafting' process can help session leaders sharpen and organize their presentations as well as increase their topic's inherent audience appeal.

Computer Slideshow Guidelines

For typical LLC class presentations, a good slideshow usually has three crucial components (not including the research and reading that usually *precede* the drafting of any presentation).

1. Title slide: This first slide should display a pithy, very short headline that captures the core subject and the central thesis of the presentation.

2. Four-to-eight topical slides: Each topical slide should capture one main idea in the presentation. For a typical twenty-minute presentation, there will not be time for more than eight slides, with each slide exhibiting a minimal amount of text, usually with a relevant photo or image. The sequence of these slides should be easy for viewers to anticipate, because the slide sequence should follow a discernable order: chronological order, narrative order, geographical order, or some other logical order.

3. A summary slide: One final slide should bring together and reinforce the main ideas in the presentation, perhaps in a bulleted list or a final short quotation from a source.

Slideshow software comes loaded with formatted slides in dazzling colors and preset text boxes. These are "eye candy." Do not let eye candy substitute for good content. Have good content and take control of the options offered in the software, as follows.

Six Steps to a Great Slideshow

1. First, do the research and decide on the general ideas for the presentation. Also, check with the coordinator to make sure that the slideshow software is compatible with the technology in the classroom.

2. Now, develop the *text* for the topical slides: First, put the main ideas into an easy-to-follow outline of four to eight elements. Then, reduce the words in this outline *to the least amount of words possible for each idea*. Use this reduced text for the four-to-eight topical slides.

3. Now, load the text into the topical slides and check for the following features:
   a. Can you make use of bulleted lists and various font styles (bold, italic, etc.), to clarify the message?
   b. Have you kept the same font from the beginning to the end of the show?

c. Is the text on each slide large enough to be read easily from the back of the room? A font size of 30 points, at least, is a handy guide.
d. Have you avoided copying lines of text from a source onto a slide? (*Never* copy and paste long quotes onto a slide. Such text is always unreadable, unless it is very short.)
e. Have you used black as text color? Black is the most readable text color on screen (unless the formatted slide provides an alternative readable color).
f. To enhance the impact of a slide, have you added visual content like a photo or an image? But remember the rule of thumb for visual content: Less is more. Use only the most relevant and clear photos, drawings or images.

4. As each reduced-text slide is developed, also draft a separate and parallel set of notes, explanations and comments. These notes can become the basis of the written and spoken texts that accompany the slide show.

5. Now develop the title and summary slides, following the same processes.

6. Once the slide show and the accompanying written and spoken text are complete, rehearse the presentation, to make sure it fits within the timeframe and to feel comfortable handling the technology while making the presentation.

Temple Beth-El Policies for LLC Classes

Access

Access to the Temple for LLC classes will be through the rear entrance from the parking lot. Since access to the Temple is restricted, LLC members should push the button to signal the office and will be buzzed in.

Emergencies

For all medical, fires, and other genuine emergencies, call 911 and then call the Temple office 401–331–6070 Ext 105. Any concerns or complaints about the conditions in the classrooms, which are not deemed emergencies, should be reported to the coordinator only. The coordinator can contact the LLC Temple liaison, David Hansen, at 401-726-0171 or ampa8hansen@gmail.com. Do not bring minor issues to the Temple staff.

Parking

The assigned parking spaces in the Temple parking lot belong to the Rabbi and staff of Temple Beth-El. Please do NOT park in these assigned spaces. Any vehicles parked in assigned spaces will be subject to towing at owner's expense. There is usually ample parking on Orchard Street, so if the lot is full, please park on Orchard Street.

Food

Food is not allowed in the classrooms. Beverages are permitted, but must be covered.

Food is permitted in the break room from 9 AM – 5 PM and in the meeting hall during Brown Bag lunches, parties, and other special events.

Any food brought into the Temple must not include pork, pork products, or shellfish and should not mix meat and dairy in the same dish.

Be sure to clean up after eating or drinking in any room.

Cancellations

If the Temple closes for inclement weather, LLC classes for that day will be cancelled. The Temple director will notify the LLC president, the curriculum committee chair, and the LLC Temple liaison. The curriculum committee chair will notify the coordinators, who, in turn will notify their class participants by email. All communications should happen in a timely fashion.

In the event of a funeral at the Temple, the venue for our classes may change or, in rare cases, classes may be cancelled. Communication to class members will occur as above.