

The Jigsaw Method as a Tool for Discussion Groups

Student Perspectives of European Integration:

"I enjoyed the way in which the jigsaw discussions were organized and felt they were very beneficial to my grasping of integration perspectives and the policy area."

Jigsaw Method:

The jigsaw method is a research-based cooperative learning approach which makes students dependent on each other to succeed. It breaks classes into groups and assignments into pieces which are assembled to complete the (jigsaw) puzzle.

In the course Perspectives of European Integration the jigsaw method enabled students to actively work with different theoretical approaches to European integration and share their insights with fellow students.

Implementation:

1. Assign one article to each person in the Jigsaw Group.
2. Have students meet in Expert Groups that are assigned the same article
3. Students return to their Jigsaw Groups and present what they learned in the Expert Group.
4. Joint discussion.

Student Perspectives on European Integration:

"I really liked the jigsaw method. It was a good interactive way of analysing the literature."

On a weekly basis 3 articles with different theoretical approaches to EU policy fields were discussed stimulating critical thinking about different paradigms of European integration.

Preparation:

1. Divide the student group into groups of 3 students
2. Select 3 articles for each discussion session that address the broader issues driving the course and allow for discussion;
3. Formulate questions that the students should answer in preparation for the discussion session.
4. Develop a grading system

The Jigsaw-method creates a pleasant environment for discussion as it offers students an opportunity to first test their knowledge in the expert groups before sharing their insights in the jigsaw groups and in the joint discussion.

Keys to success:

- Lectures need to be closely aligned to the seminars.
- Clear explanation of the jigsaw method to the students.
- Effective moderation of the jigsaw sessions by the lecturer to achieve the learning objectives.
- Selection of texts is crucial: the texts need to talk to each other and to the related lecture.
- Pertinent but standard questions that guide the jigsaw session

Next Steps:

- Improving the connection between the jigsaw method and course objectives and introducing the tools to do so.
- Achieving good cooperation between the lecturers and the seminar leaders.
- Investing in the coherence of the jigsaw sessions by connecting these more closely to the lectures and improving the selection of texts for each seminar