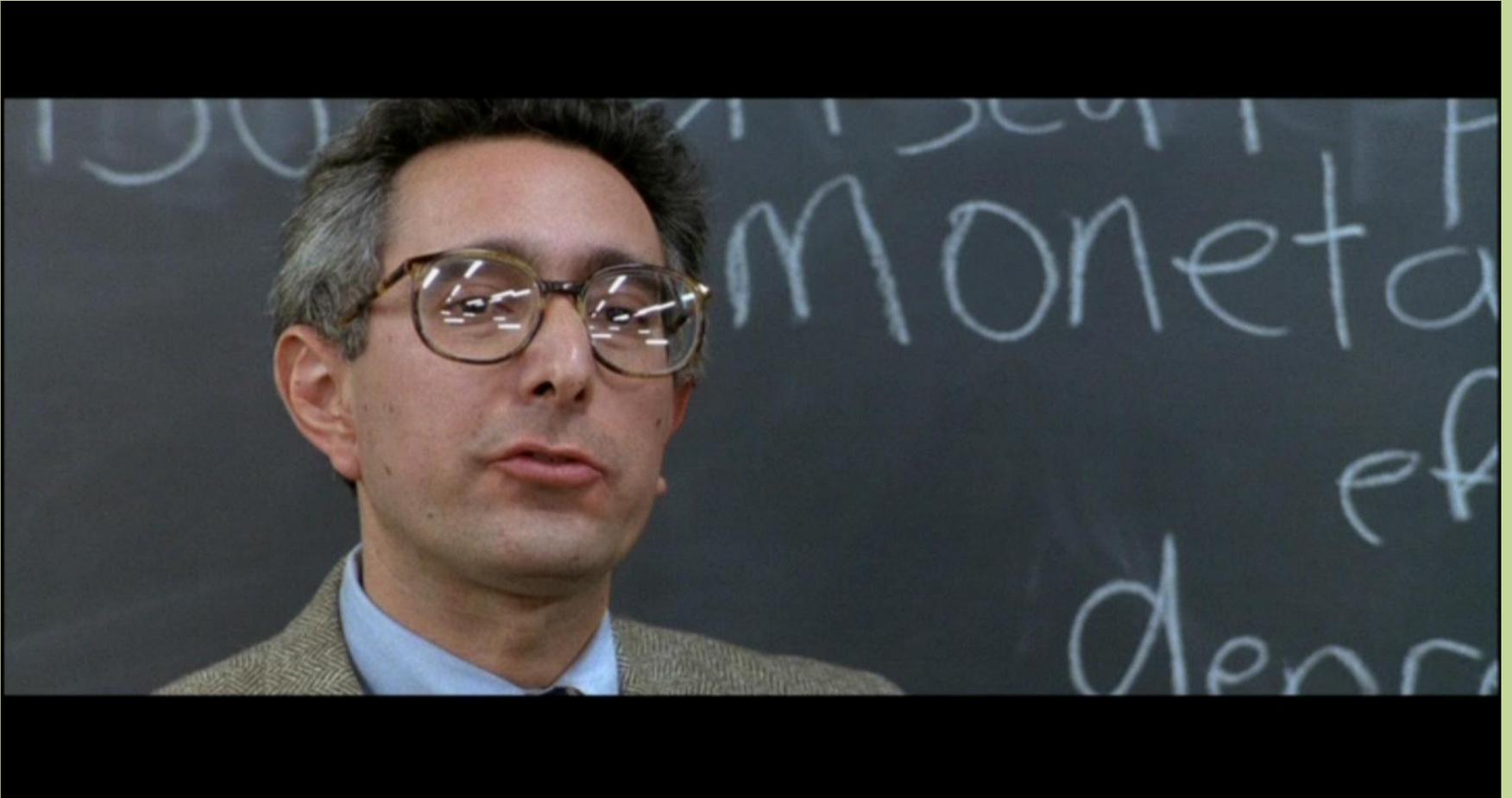


# Why have Discussions?

- Knowledge is constructed individually and collectively
- One aspect of teaching
- Continuous Discovery
- Crucibles of the democratic process?

# Better than Boring Power Point Slides

# Modeling Good Discussion Leading Practices



**Good  
Discussions are  
Unpredictable  
and Surprising**



# THE GOAL?

Getting as many people as possible deeply engaged in the conversation



# Discussions are Collaborative Enterprises



# BALANCE





**“Democratically inclined teachers are frequently silent in discussion, curbing the compulsion to say all they would like to say in the interests of promoting engagement and participation.”**

# Saying too much???

- Responding to *every* student comment...even positively
- Too much of any teacher creates a passive audience
- Often we dominate unintentionally



# Why do we fill the silence?



**Habit of “didactic transmission”**

**v.**

**The reality that knowledge is  
constructed individually and in groups**

# **Knowledge divorced from Contexts and Relationships**

*We need to connect disciplinary discourse with the  
everyday experiences of diverse communities and  
individuals*

# **Fear of Failing**

**Often we socialized to believe that everything that happens in the classroom is our responsibility**

**We underestimate the  
Students**

# **We overestimate our own contributions**

***Only a small part of what we know can  
be usefully and effectively conveyed to  
students***



# When we don't say enough

Don't stay on the sidelines: "Teachers must be active listeners"

Before students "discuss" they need a model

Discussions need to be productive

Strategic intervention



# Questions to Consider



**Do I interrupt  
students in mid  
sentence?**

**Do I comment more  
than the students?**

**Do I give student's  
time to reflect and  
think?**



**Are my methods  
consistent with the  
class goals?**

**What are the class  
goals?**

**What am I doing to  
build a sense of  
collaborative  
engagement?**

# PLANNING

“Good Discussions Don’t Just Happen On Their Own.”



# PLANNING

Sketch out Questions ahead of time

Identify relevant passages and formulate possible responses



# Setting the Classroom



**Adapt the Space for your own purposes**



# **Set Expectations for Discussion**

**Discussion as a part of the Contract  
with Learners**



**Ask students  
to unpack  
assumptions  
and  
implications  
of their  
contributions**

**Discussions are more likely  
to teach process than  
straight content**