

## CARD ORGANIZATION

Many students learn best when they can physically manipulate abstract ideas. This technique works best when you are dealing with ideas rather than with events/objects. Write down different ideas on a series of 3” by 5” note cards. (You will have to make class sets of these cards, so make sure to find a process that is easiest for you—you may want to print multiple copies from your computer and cut them into small squares.) This sounds silly, but a small thing like adding color really helps students! For example, you might use the words:

IMPERIALISM  
NEOCOLONIZATION  
FREE TRADE  
RACISM

You should limit yourself to 8-10 cards.

Then, tell students (in small groups) that they have 15 minutes to place the cards in order. You may want to adjust the time as you see fit. Let the students be uncomfortable with the assignment; don't give them any more directions than that. (“Place the cards in order.”) Tell students they should raise their hands when they feel their cards are in the “right” order. (Don't let on that there is no right order!) When they raise their hands, go around and make trouble; “Do you mean to say that racism has to exist before imperialism? How could people invade other people's countries without feeling they were superior?” etc. Finally, when students seem a bit stumped, suggest they try a non-linear answer; perhaps the cards all don't fall in a single line! When the students seem to be finished, have them present their findings to the larger class. The idea is to help students to understand that how they think about ideas (their bias/es, previous knowledge, previous experience, and so on) influence how they accomplish a task. Because they are working with abstract ideas, there is no right or wrong answer. There is only an educated answer; that is to say an answer that students can knowledgeably explain, using solid evidence. All answers should be challenged. You are teaching students to challenge their ideas, as well as the ideas of others. You are asking students to think about answers and then rethink them. You are asking them to be uncomfortable, a place that begs for change and learning which is a good thing.