

Guidelines for Facilitators

Your role in facilitating small group discussions related to *Fast Food Nation* is just that—the role of a discussion *facilitator*. If done well, you will make it easy for students to participate. Your role is to begin the discussion and then step off of “center stage,” letting students participate, and entering as needed to direct traffic and pose additional questions to keep the discussion flowing. From time to time during the discussion and at the end, you might find it helpful to summarize the conclusions of the group.

Here are some tips for facilitating the discussion:

- **Be prepared** - It is important that you read the book in advance and have some possible issues and questions identified ahead of time.
- **Use a common experience as an icebreaker** - All students have eaten in fast food restaurants, and many have worked in them. Reflecting on real life experiences is meaningful to students and encourages participation.
- **Listen** – Attend to students’ ideas and feelings.
- **Observe** – Notice who is responding and who is left out.
- **Use open-ended questions** such as “What is your opinion about...? Or “What are the causes of...?” rather than questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” Since it is anticipated that faculty will use the book in their courses following the discussions, you might ask about the interdisciplinary nature of this type of research and to which fields the book would relate. For other suggested discussion questions, see the Summer Reading Program website <http://www.lsu.edu/srp/>
- **Pause after questions** – Students need time to think. Give “wait time” before you recognize or call on a student.
- **Rephrase questions** – If students don’t respond, try saying it a different way.
- **Ask for examples and support for opinions** – Probing deeper gets students to think.
- **Encourage all students to participate** – Solicit responses from non-talkers. Watch for nonverbal clues that students who do not participate much have something to say, and then call on them.
- **Test consensus** – Be careful of premature consensus before an issue has been explored. Restate the conclusion and ask if anyone has a different view.
- **Summarize** – Provide a summary or conclusions as appropriate, at transition points during the discussion and at the end.

In closing, you may tell students you would be pleased to hear from them during the semester and give them your business card or email address.