Discussion Hot Seats

Chris Kauffman, Computer Science
CS 211

Gauging student understanding in a large lecture can be difficult without feedback through discussion. In the absence of technology (clickers), measuring participation in large classes is difficult, tedious, or both.

Hot Seats are seats close to the front of the room. Students may elect to sit there.

- During discussion, questions are directed at students in hot seats
- Effort and answers are rewarded with a "token" physically given to participant
- Unprompted questions from any part of the room also nets a token
- At the end of class, students return tokens and record how many they received on a sheet of paper at the front of the room
- Works well with in-class activities: rewards for contributing answers after 10-minute work period
- Instructor tallies total participation over the course of the semester: quantifiable participation based on token count
- *Frequent Q&A shows temperature of the room*; can speed up or slow down presentation based on answer quality
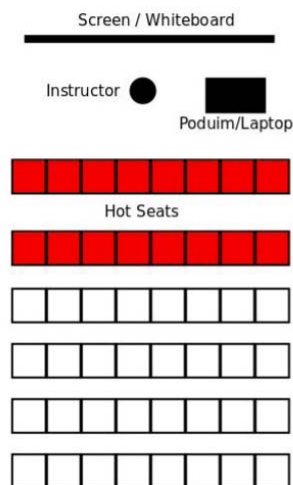- Emphasis on discussion encourages all students to ask questions

Adaptations

Very Large Class: Rotate hot seats by last name (A-K in Lecture 1, L-Z in Lecture 2)

Participation Required: Notify students that they must reach a certain total by end of semester

Participation Optional: Top token-earner gets a 3% bonus, others get proportional bonuses

Single Dominant Student: Rotate who gets to answer to spread tokens around

Typical Lecture Setup

Playing cards are a readily available and inexpensive token to hand out as students answer questions. I use souvenir cards from trips/museums.