**Socratic Seminar**

Outer Circle Responsibilities

**Introduction**: Socratic Seminars take on many shapes, but for this seminar, there will be two concentric circles—an inner circle and an outer circle. The inner circle is where participants will actively share ideas, and the outer circle is where participants will actively observe and take notes on the discussion.

**Task**: Choose one approach from the list below that interest you. When you’re in the outer circle, record information on the back of this sheet. You will share pieces of this information (the highlights—what stands out to you) with the class or with individuals at the conclusion of the seminar.

*Possible observation approaches:*

**• Opposite person**

Watch the person opposite you (across the circle so you can see his or her face).

How many times does the person speak? Does the person listen well? How does the person behave during the discussion? Provide a few examples of the person’s comments and behavior.

**• Questions**

Who asks questions? Do people answer the questions? Which specific question is most interesting to the group?

**• Discussion leaders**

Who seems to be leading the discussion? Is it more than one person? Does the leader keep other members engaged in the discussion? Does he or she keep attention focused on ideas in the text?

Does he or she listen carefully to others? Describe the leader’s behavior briefly.

**• Gender dynamics**

Do you notice different discussion techniques between males and females? Who interrupts whom? How are interruptions received? Do the males and females listen differently?

**• Discussion difficulties**

What parts of the discussion are awkward? Why? What are your suggestions for improving discussion techniques?

**• Note taking**

Record notes and questions that you want to bring to the inner circle discussion

**• Balance of discussion**

Count the number of times each person speaks

**• Good points**

What are the speakers doing well? Make a list of their positive discussion techniques.

**• Quiet people**

Are the quiet people listening? Do they give subtle signals that they wish to speak? Do the talkers ignore them or look at them?

**• Focus**

How often does the group get off topic completely? (Count and record examples.) How often does the group find tangents to the discussion? (Tangents are ideas not directly related to the passage but still on topic.) When the group finds tangents, to what do they refer? (Count and record examples.)

***Remember:*** The purpose of the outer circle is to improve your own ability to participate effectively in a Socratic Seminar and to help others. The class dynamics should improve each time a Socratic Seminar takes place. If your feedback is critical, be sure it is presented in a supportive manner, not meant to criticize.

Observation Notes:

From what you observed, what jumped out at you? What were the highlights? What are your major takeaways from observing the seminar?