DISCLAIMER:

In training one's self or others to teach a Socratic/Cooperative style class (henceforth SC), it seems no amount of preparation or advice can substitute for a certain kind of on-the-job training. The essential ingredients of on-the-job training are criticism and imitation. Experienced instructors visit the classrooms of new instructors, taking extensive notes on what they see: what went right, what went wrong, what might have worked better, and so on. New instructors also visit the classrooms of experienced instructors, taking equally careful notes on what went well or poorly, what might have worked better, and on what techniques they see used that they would like to use themselves. Some of this type of work can be done beforehand, via visits in the previous semester or videotaped classes, but it tends to be more valuable when it comes after the new instructor has had a chance to try teaching a class or two first. Currently in 130-131-132 we are trying for one visit each direction in the first two weeks, another in the second two weeks, plus at least one more during the term.

If you are not going to adhere to a plan as outlined above, then **don't expect the notes that follow to do much for you**. You can't learn to play the piano by reading books about it or by talking about technique with Rubenstein, so don't try to learn a significant new teaching skill without practice and guidance either. On the plus side, all the interested instructors that have taught SC classes here (admittedly a self-selected sample) have become pretty good at it, so you can be pretty confident that you'll be able to step right in and teach effectively this way even if you're not a virtuoso.