Whole Class Synchronous Discussion

Platform
BlueJeans, Zoom, and Google Meet.

Principal Challenges
- Having an open discussion when we're not physically present with each other.
- Knowing that our students are listening.
- Getting students to talk to each other, rather than only to the instructor.

Suggested Method
Set Up Prior To Class
1. Consider having students generate questions to contribute, either in the chat box or orally. See **"Student-Generated Questions."**
2. Consider putting students in small groups for break-out discussion. See "Create A Room" for Google Chat or "How To Create A WhatsApp Group" for WhatsApp.

Things to Say/Do Before The Discussion Begins
1) Ask everyone to turn on the camera and leave it on.
2) Ask everyone to mute the mic except when they're speaking.
   a) Test this by calling on each student and having them respond. They will likely need reminding periodically to unmute when they speak.
3) Let everyone know that in the whole-class discussion, it may be more necessary than usual for you to call on people.
4) Give everyone a method for signaling that they have something to say *before* they speak. Here are three ways (but choose one):
   a) Raising hands, as they might in class. This needs to be visible to their camera.
   b) Posting to the class chat. All three of these platforms have this function. This is best if they have a question to address to you for the benefit of everyone.
   c) Use the "raise hand" function. Some platforms have an icon that allows the student to raise a virtual hand.

Things To Remember During Discussion
1) Just as in the actual classroom, if you ask a question, give students time to write (or at least pause and think) before responding.
2) Remind students to mute and unmute.
3) Limit the whole-class discussion time: It's difficult to sustain an engaged whole-class discussion for a long period. Consider a series of shorter discussions, interspersed with independent activity (such as writing), presentation, or small group chats.
4) Consider using headphones (and suggesting that your students do so): This generally helps with volume control.
5) Remember that "discussions" can happen asynchronously, using blog or Google Doc features. See **"Question and Claim Weekly Assignment"** as an example.