

Tips and Guidelines for Online Discussions

Prepare

- Each class begins on Tuesday.
- Materials will be available at least one week earlier (often earlier) for the week ahead.
- Plan to read all materials before class begins.

Engage

- Pay attention to any special instructions for the week. Most weeks involve a mix of activities/questions that will comprise your initial involvement (what is due by Wednesday).
- Do NOT summarize
- Post your first comment by Wednesday (or assigned day). First post does not mean a reply to a single thread. Be sure to **read the directions carefully each week**. Some weeks you might respond to several questions in one more threads or report on your findings from an activity.
- Log in and engage a few more times over the next few days.
- Post at least three follow up comments over the next few days as you like depending on what engages you. Additional posts also earn points and will be used as a form of extra credit or to offset a week of low involvement (it happens).
- I will also engage in the discussion. I do not respond to everyone but like in any discussion add my thoughts and questions when and where they fit (same as I expect from you). I also try not to be repetitive so generally will not say something similar in multiple replies.

Grading

- The rubric below outlines how points are awarded for discussion posts.
- You receive 10 points (max depending on quality) for your first post by Wednesday (or assigned day). If you do not post by the deadline you automatically lose these points. Initial posts are often more involved so earn more points.
- You receive 5 points (max) for each additional meaningful post/comment made (same rubric but points are halved).
- Engage in the discussion and do not simply “do the minimum to get by”. It’s your education so be involved in it. You CAN earn more than 25 points for each discussion.* This is to help encourage the conversation. However, do not post fluff in hopes of earning extra points.
- Only original comments will earn points. In other words, avoid repetition (i.e. don’t post similar comments in multiple threads or replies).
- Comments that do not add to the overall discussion (or repetition) do not earn points, but it is okay to respond to questions (Where did you find that? What software did you use? Etc.).
- Avoid cluttering discussions with comments like “I agree” or “good point” unless you then follow up with something more meaningful.

- Also consider that agreement doesn't really further the discussion. **We extend and enhance our thinking and grow when we are challenged.** Therefore, it is okay and encouraged to disagree. However, don't just say you disagree. Discuss why, ask questions and suggest alternatives. Also, try to take such disagreement not as a personal attack but as an opportunity to grow.

Rubric

In general, posts/comments that are on time and demonstrate thoughtful engagement in the course, content, and issues we are exploring will earn full points. Those that fall short of this expectation will earn reduced points based on the guidelines below.

- Outstanding – Addresses the question(s). Thoughtful and reflective but also includes information from the readings, broader discussions, and outside resources. Is challenging and examines issues from multiple perspectives. Encourages an ongoing dialog with other students. (10 points)
- Advanced – Addresses the question(s). Self-reflective and includes information from the readings and broader discussions. Challenges ideas and seeks to encourage growth. Adds value to the discussion and engages others. (8-9 points)
- Proficient – Simple response that still manages to answer the question but may not address broader implications or demonstrate that the student is really thinking about the issues. Relates to readings and engages others (i.e. causes them to think). (7 points)
- Developing – Relies mainly on summarizing readings and other discussions with few personal thoughts and makes it difficult for others to participate. Adds little to the conversation. (5-6 points)
- Basic – May be off topic or shows the student has not read/viewed course materials. Summarizes the reading or comments of others. Brief "I agree" type comment or similar that adds nothing to the discussion or even detracts from the discussion. (0 points)

***Note:** Points earned in excess of the maximum will be used at the end of the semester to adjust your course grade up to 3 percentage points (i.e. a course grade of 87% could be adjusted to 90% depending on points earned). It is okay for an occasional week to fall below full points so long as you exceed full points in other weeks. In other words, a little bit of ebb and flow each week is normal. Focus more on engaging in the discussion over several different days rather than counting posts.

Non-participation: While it's okay and understandable that you may not be fully engaged each and every week, you are required to participate at some level each week. Students who fail to participate in more than two discussions will automatically fail the course. Non-participation is defined as not posting anything to a class discussion by the deadline. To avoid this, be sure to post at least once each week. As an online class with a fair bit of flexibility, exceptions are not generally made for illness or school-sanctioned events. You should be able to participate at some point during any given week. In the event of serious

illness (lasting a full week or nearly so) be prepared to submit an official document from a doctor stating the length of illness and expected recovery time. Student athletes should be able to work around game schedules. You know these ahead of time so plan accordingly. In the event of extenuating circumstances please communicate with me as soon as possible or have your advisor contact me.



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