

Discussion Guidelines

Every other week we will have discussions that will compose a large part of our engagement with each other in this online learning space. For these discussions to be meaningful conversation spaces, we all need to take responsibility for consistent and substantial participation. Instead of grading discussions based on number of words posted or on frequency, I will assess discussions based on the degree to which you substantially engage in the conversation each week. Over the course of a conversation, **substantial engagement** means:

- 1 **Extend the conversation** - creatively and critically push the conversation forward; do not just regurgitate what has already been said. If one or two other students have already responded directly to instructor-provided prompts for the week, **do not** simply write another response to the prompts unless it adds something new to the conversation. You need to extend the conversation by adding an additional or different insight from the course materials, by asking a new question that stems from one of the posts already offered, by offering a related and contextualized example of the issue being discussed.
- 2 **Ask contextualized questions** - situate your questions within the discussion by referencing the course materials and other parts of the conversation thread that inform your inquiry. Give us a little background as to why this question matters to you and how it relates to the course.
- 3 **Engage others in the course** - thoughtful engagement with other students in the course and with the instructional team.
- 4 **Engage the course materials** - thoughtful engagement with readings, lectures, student discussions, and any other materials related to the course. Referencing and citing course materials in your posts where appropriate is encouraged.

Each post need not do all of these things, but your overall participation in each conversation should demonstrate all of these components. You might have several short posts and a handful of longer posts in a week or you might have only a few strategic substantial posts. Either way, your overall participation in each conversation will be evaluated for substantial engagement. The goal of this discussion design is to encourage and reward interchange, so post often and engage each other with meaningful questions that open to other questions.

Structure of Discussions

There will be between one and three prompts every other week in the Discussion section of the syllabus; please choose one to be your primary discussion topic.

By Wednesday of each week, post your substantial response.

By Saturday of each week, post at least one response to some other discussion thread.

You are expected to respond to any responses to your initial post.

Remember that the point of all of this is to create a lively, productive conversation.