

## Online Discussion Tips

For faculty:

- Create a rich, open-ended prompt. For example, a question (that does not have a single right answer), a quote from one or more of the readings, a reflection prompt etc. It will sometimes be helpful to provide a framework, model, or set of questions to scaffold students' work. You may need less scaffolding as the course progresses.
- Keep an eye on the discussion but participate sparingly or not at all. Do not jump in quickly unless someone has said something inappropriate. Otherwise, give students a chance to answer each other's questions, correct misconceptions, or clear up confusion.
- Respond to the class as a whole in a way that shows that you are reading discussion posts and are present. Record a short video or post a short note, highlighting some of the interesting or important points that came up in the discussion, linking them to the course's themes, the readings, or upcoming topics.
- It can be helpful to divide students into online discussion groups, especially if the class is large. If using a number of groups, consider allowing them to discuss different prompts related to the same broad topic depending on their interest.
- Do not require every student to respond to the initial prompt. Instead, explain that the goal is to move the conversation forward and deepen the class' understanding. Students can choose to reply directly to the prompt or to build on the replies of others. This will allow a deeper conversation to develop.
- Do not require students to post a particular number of posts. Instead, explain to them that they should aim to be active but not overbearing and that quality is more important than quantity. Provide students with a rubric that clearly explains what you are looking for in terms of quality. It is OK for students to participate more in some discussions than in others. You might consider a grade for overall participation in online discussions or you might consider grading participation in each discussion but discarding the lowest two grades for each student.

For students:

- It is a good idea to log in to the discussion board 3-5 times a week to ensure that you keep up with the discussion. Try to make contributions throughout the discussion period rather than waiting until the end. It can be helpful to create a schedule for yourself.
- While there is no specific number of posts required each week, you are expected to be an active and collaborative member of our class learning community.
- Your contributions will be assessed for quality over quantity. In particular, I am looking for constructive and supportive contributions that build on the contributions of others to deepen the collective understanding of the class.
- Your goal is to move the conversation and the class' understanding forward.
  - Examples: Connect someone's idea to a course reading, discussion from another class, or someone else's comment; raise questions or suggest directions for further research or investigation; suggest solutions or possible answers to a question; suggest resources; summarize or synthesize comments and/or course materials.
- To make it easier to follow the discussion:
  - Keep posts short (about 100-150 words).
  - Post about one topic at a time. Create a new post if you have more than one topic to discuss.
  - If posting on a platform that allows you to create a title for your post, make the title short and informative.