

Throughout the semester, we will have discussion forums in which you will post to a prompt or question. In addition, you will leave at least TWO *substantive* and *complete* posts in response to two of your classmates' assignments. Your responses are due the within 2 days of submitting your own assignment.

As the instructor, I will facilitate student discussions, but I will not address every single post. In most cases, I might share a related idea, intervene when the discussion goes off-track, or tie student comments together to help deepen student learning. Consequently, I will not directly answer questions in the discussion area unless they are addressed to me.

Some characteristics I consider to be part of **excellent discussion contributions** are outlined below. I will consider these characteristics when assessing the quality and level of student participation.

- Submit initial post(s) well before the due date, and subsequent responses to the posts of other learners on time. The goal is to have a dynamic discussion around the topic.
- Posts and responses should be thorough and thoughtful. Just posting an "I agree" or "Good ideas" will not be considered adequate. Support statements with examples, experiences, or references. Be brief — keep each post and response to one or two short paragraphs. Keep in mind that fellow learners will be reading and may be responding to you, too.
- Make certain that your response addresses your classmate's original thoughts, questions, or summary. Stay on track.
- Discussions occur when there is dialogue; therefore, you need to build upon the posts and responses of other learners to create discussion threads. Make sure to revisit the discussion forum and respond (if necessary) to what other learners have posted to your initial responses.
- When relevant, add to the discussion by including prior knowledge, experiences, references, resources, etc. (giving credit when appropriate).
- Contributions to the discussions (posts and responses) should be complete and relatively free of grammatical or structural errors.
- Posts should not be offensive or contain profanity. If I feel your post is offensive or contains profanity, I will contact you and likely remove the offensive/profane part of your post.

What do I mean by a substantive post?

The following are some ideas to set the stage for substantive participation for the development of your critical thinking skills:

1. Check to see that the posting expands on the main ideas/questions in the assignment posting.
2. Try to use your posting to add value to the discussion. This is more effective than simply responding to meet a requirement.
3. Make sure your posting meets the minimum number of sentences and/or word count.

Other Ideas for Participation

- Share a related thought or idea.
- Comment on others' personal responses or ideas.
- Ask questions about others' ideas or thoughts or experiences.
- Consider an idea being discussed, and offer a different perspective on it.
- Describe an interesting idea from class if relevant, and explain what insights you gained from it.
- Disagree (respectfully, of course) with a point that someone else has made.
- Respond to one of the questions in the original post, sharing your reference.
- Share another resource you have used as you explored the course topics.

Here is a suggested rubric for forum discussion posts

Criteria	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Exemplary
Timeliness	Does not submit at least one post well before the due date	Submits at least one thoughtful post well before the due date	Submits two or more thoughtful posts well before the due date
Demonstrates applicability to course content	Post(s) and responses show little evidence of applicability to course concepts	Post(s) and responses show evidence of applicability to course concepts	Post(s) and responses show evidence of understanding of course content and applicability to concepts and offers ideas that extend the learning of the community
Generates learning within the community	Posts do not attempt to elicit responses and reflections from other learners and/or responses do not build upon the ideas of other learners to take the discussion deeper.	Posts attempt to elicit responses and reflections from other learners and responses build upon the ideas of other learners to take the discussion deeper.	Posts elicit responses and reflections from other learners and responses build upon and integrate multiple views from other learners to take the discussion deeper.