

Discussion Post Assignment

Overview

For this assignment, you will need to engage on a regular basis with the class online discussion board on Elearning. Once logged into Elearning and at our class site, you can find the discussion board by clicking on the “Communications” menu near the top of the screen, and then clicking “Discussions.” Below the assignment description, you will see links to each week’s topic.

Generally, you will be replying within the threads you will find posted there, but some of you will be assigned the responsibility of starting new threads each week. Throughout the semester, these discussion posts will focus on three student-selected essential questions.

Roles

Starting in week 3, each week you will fill one of three roles for a week: either an Explorer, a Respondent, or a Summarizer.

- **Explorers:** Generally, three or four of you will be selected as Explorers each week and assigned one of the three essential questions for this semester that the class collectively decided upon at the end of week 2. By the time of our class on Wednesday, you will need to post one new thread under the current week’s topic in which you address how that week’s readings relate to your assigned essential question. As an Explorer, your task is to explore new areas of inquiry about your assigned essential question, uncovering new issues to discuss, contributing fresh perspectives, encouraging imaginative new approaches, and suggesting new ideas. Being “correct” is less important than helping the class think about relevant issues in new ways. Try to use the readings to move our semester-long discussion on the essential question forward or in a new direction. Your post must be a minimum of 300 words and is due by the time of class on Wednesday. The schedule for when each of you will act as an Explorer is located at the end of this assignment sheet.
- **Respondents:** By default, unless you are assigned as an Explorer or a Summarizer, you are a Respondent for the week. As a respondent, you will need to post three responses to any other student’s post that week (including the posts of other Respondents), with each response being a minimum of 100 words. For each response, you should try to do one of the following things: (1) play devil’s advocate, (2) harmonize, or (3) create connections.
 - By “play devil’s advocate,” I mean that whatever your personal opinions might be, you should for the moment try to raise counter-arguments, constructive objections, alternative explanations, and contrasting solutions. **Remember: a counter-argument to a post does not necessarily reflect your actual opinion. Thinking through a counter-argument is a valuable way to check assumptions.** You may want to do this post first.
 - By “harmonize,” I mean you should try to reconcile the posts of at least two other students to try to reach a consensus. Look for counter-arguments to address or places in the discussion where there is an apparent conflict. If you cannot find anything in the online discussion posts so far, are there any conflicts in the readings, either between the readings or between the readings and the class discussion? Can you spot how these conflicts can be reconciled? What does everyone agree on? You may want to do this post second.

- By “create connections,” I mean you should try to connect the discussion in one of the week’s threads to the discussion in a prior week, to prior readings, to in-class discussions, to current events, or to anything else connected to the themes of our course. For example, is there something going on in the world today that relevant to the discussion? How? You may want to do this post third.

As a respondent, you should have one post each week for each task: playing devil’s advocate, harmonizing, and connecting. So that I can quickly see where you are doing each of these roles, label your post at the top as being either a “Devil’s Advocate Response,” a “Harmonizing Response,” or a “Connecting Response.” Each week, you may begin replying after class on Wednesday, and your posts are due by the time of our class on the following Monday.

- **Summarizer:** Starting in week 4, three or four of you will be selected as Summarizers each week and assigned one of the three essential questions. Between Monday and Wednesday of your assigned week, you will need to post one new thread under the current week’s topic in which you summarize the prior week’s discussion thread on your assigned question while trying to faithfully and succinctly restate the main points stated in that discussion (both the initial thread and the responses). You should then also succinctly connect the prior week’s discussion to relevant points in other discussions on that essential question that we have had, including in the threads in earlier weeks or in class. You are not expected to restate everything. Instead, you are trying to save everyone time by cutting through to what you see as that week’s most important contributions to our ongoing exploration of your assigned essential question. Your post must be a minimum of 300 words. The schedule for when each of you will act as a Summarizer is located at the end of this assignment sheet.

If everyone is posting as required, by Wednesday there should be six to eight new threads under the current week’s topic, with half being new exploration posts and half being new summarizing posts of last week’s discussion. Once the selected Explorers and Summarizers have posted their threads, they are not required to post again that week (although they are certainly invited to do so). Respondents can then respond with three posts (one devil’s advocate, one harmonizing, and one connecting post) to any of those threads or to any responses to those threads. During the semester, you will each be an Explorer or a Summarizer three times combined. The minimums word counts listed above are just minimums. There is no maximum word count, and you can post more responses than required. If you are on a roll, please do not feel constrained to limit yourself.

Revision

Please feel free to revise your posts if upon further reflection, you think they could be improved. However, because other students will be responding to the post as it existed when they responded, you should add a short note to the bottom of your post stating that the post has been revised, when it was revised, and how, like this: “Revised on 2/24: Added a sentence addressing last class’s discussion on Family.”

Grading

Your discussions posts will combine to be worth 20% of your course grade. This is the major writing requirement of this course, so you should take this seriously. Your discussion posts will be collectively graded twice based on a rubric to be provided based on the quality of your discussion posts at the time of grading, including with any revisions you have made.

- Pre-Midterm Posts: 50% of your Discussion Posts grade
- Post-Midterm Posts: 50% of your Discussion Posts grade

Role Schedule

Each week, unless assigned otherwise below, your role will be as a Respondent. The essential questions will be posted and numbered at the top of the class calendar after the end of week 2.

- Week 3: Poet X
 - Explorers
 - Essential Question 1: Ingram, Aaron A.
 - Essential Question 2: Jolly, Josh E.
 - Essential Question 3: Ray, Chris A.
- Week 4: Home
 - Explorers
 - Essential Question 1: Smith, Mara A.
 - Essential Question 2: Deol, Harman S.
 - Essential Question 3: Waterman, Waterman C. AKA “Spencer”
 - Essential Question 3: Mack, Kevin E.
 - Summarizers
 - Essential Question 1: Drew, Maggie M.
 - Essential Question 2: Hernandez, Jose A.
 - Essential Question 3: Smith, Kierra E.
- Week 5: Family
 - Explorers
 - Essential Question 1: Otsuka, Masumi
 - Essential Question 1: Afroz, Fariha
 - Essential Question 2: Brisbin, Samantha J.
 - Essential Question 3: Troost, Cate J.
 - Summarizers
 - Essential Question 1: Tincher, Brooke
 - Essential Question 2: Phillips, Jonathon C.
 - Essential Question 2: Mccurtis, Isreal D.
 - Essential Question 3: Kuiper, Brendan A.
- Week 6: Heritage
 - Explorers
 - Essential Question 1: Flores, Valeria
 - Essential Question 2: McClain, Myah J.
 - Essential Question 3: Acker, Autumn L.
 - Summarizers
 - Essential Question 1: Beeker, Christian W.
 - Essential Question 2: Boyle, Sarah E.
 - Essential Question 3: Thawng, Lian
- Week 7: Language
 - Explorers
 - Essential Question 1: Mccurtis, Isreal D.
 - Essential Question 2: Mack, Kevin E.
 - Essential Question 3: Afroz, Fariha
 - Summarizers
 - Essential Question 1: Nelson, Jake r.
 - Essential Question 2: Al Farsi, Mohammed Nasser Humaid Said
 - Essential Question 3: Ingram, Aaron A.
- Week 8: Aliens
 - Explorers

- Essential Question 1: Jolly, Josh E.
 - Essential Question 2: Ray, Chris A.
 - Essential Question 3: Smith, Mara A.
 - Summarizers
 - Essential Question 1: Deol, Harman S.
 - Essential Question 2: Waterman, Waterman C. AKA “Spencer”
 - Essential Question 3: Drew, Maggie M.
- Week 9 (Post-Spring Break): Fences
 - Explorers
 - Essential Question 1: Hernandez, Jose A.
 - Essential Question 2: Smith, Kierra E.
 - Essential Question 2: Nelson, Jake r.
 - Essential Question 3: Otsuka, Masumi
 - Summarizers
 - Essential Question 1: Brisbin, Samantha J.
 - Essential Question 2: Troost, Cate J.
 - Essential Question 3: Tincher, Brooke
- Week 10: Crossing
 - Explorers
 - Essential Question 1: Phillips, Jonathon C.
 - Essential Question 2: Kuiper, Brendan A.
 - Essential Question 3: Flores, Valeria
 - Essential Question 3: Al Farsi, Mohammed Nasser Humaid Said
 - Summarizers
 - Essential Question 1: McClain, Myah J.
 - Essential Question 2: Acker, Autumn L.
 - Essential Question 3: Beeker, Christian W.
- Week 11: Americans
 - Explorers
 - Essential Question 1: Boyle, Sarah E.
 - Essential Question 2: Thawng, Lian
 - Essential Question 3: Mccurtis, Isreal D.
 - Summarizers
 - Essential Question 1: Mack, Kevin E.
 - Essential Question 2: Afroz, Fariha
 - Essential Question 3: Nelson, Jake r.
- Week 12: Beliefs
 - Explorers
 - Essential Question 1: Al Farsi, Mohammed Nasser Humaid Said
 - Essential Question 1: Acker, Autumn L.
 - Essential Question 2: Ingram, Aaron A.
 - Essential Question 3: Deol, Harman S.
 - Summarizers
 - Essential Question 1: Ray, Chris A.
 - Essential Question 2: Smith, Mara A.
 - Essential Question 3: Jolly, Josh E.
- Week 13: The Majority/Congress
 - Explorers
 - Essential Question 1: Waterman, Waterman C. AKA “Spencer”
 - Essential Question 2: Drew, Maggie M.
 - Essential Question 2: Beeker, Christian W.

- Essential Question 3: Hernandez, Jose A.
- Summarizers
 - Essential Question 1: Smith, Kierra E.
 - Essential Question 2: Otsuka, Masumi
 - Essential Question 3: Brisbin, Samantha J.
- Week 14: The Courts
 - Explorers
 - Essential Question 1: Troost, Cate J.
 - Essential Question 1: Thawng, Lian
 - Essential Question 2: Tincher, Brooke
 - Essential Question 3: Phillips, Jonathon C.
 - Summarizers
 - Essential Question 1: Kuiper, Brendan A.
 - Essential Question 2: Flores, Valeria
 - Essential Question 3: McClain, Myah J.