

Discussion Board Posts

I've created eight discussion board forums in Blackboard that you'll complete throughout the semester. Each post is worth 3% of your final grade—you'll get full credit if you post a substantive comment or response about the assigned readings and course materials for that week. Some weeks you will respond to a specific question that I provide; other weeks will be a bit more informal/creative.

What counts as a “substantive” comment? This doesn't mean it has to be super long. Most posts will be 100–200 words. Graduate students should write a bit more and take the lead. What's most important is that your post says something interesting or important. In other words, I don't want summary in original comments or things like “I agree with what my classmate said” in responses. Instead, you should add to the discussion, just like you would in conversation.

How can you do this? There are three ways:

- 1) Personal response. Can you relate to the assigned reading in any way? I'm not looking for deeply personal revelations, but maybe there are things in a reading that resonated with your experiences or those of someone you know.
- 2) Evaluation. Did you like a particular work? Why or why not? This should connect to reasons related to the content and style of the work, not its genre (“I don't like poetry”), subject (“I don't like readings about death”), or length. (Many students think literary works are too long, when in fact they might still be building their attention spans as readers or their ability to read longer passages if English is not their first language.)
- 3) Analysis. You can practice the kind of analytical writing you'll do in your papers in the discussion board, touching on aspects of a work that I didn't cover in my course materials.

Discussion board posts are informal pieces of writing, so I'm not deducting points for writing errors like in your writing exercises.

While the discussion board posts are due by midnight Saturday for that week, I encourage you to post sooner and to check out what others are writing. If everyone waits until Saturday night to post, there won't be time for much of a discussion!

You'll also see a separate discussion form for “Questions and Answers.” This is not graded or required, but I encourage you to ask questions about the readings, assignments, and/or course materials if you don't understand something. I really appreciate it when students make an effort to learn, and learning often happens when we ask questions. It's also the case that if you have a question about something, someone else in the class probably has the same question, so it's really useful to everyone when you ask questions!