**Be clear in how you will grade students’ Discussion Forum posts**

This is from the section of my syllabus where I discuss course requirements and grading criteria. To keep grading manageable, I assign students the role of discussion leader (2-3 students per Discussion Forum assignment), which also is part of their grade.

***Participation in Discussion Forum (30%)***

Students are required to contribute to the “Discussion Forum” on Blackboard throughout the semester (there are 12 Discussion Forums total). On the Monday of each week, I will post one or more discussion questions on the Forum. Students are required to reply to one question by Thursday (11:59pm EST) and respond to the posting of at least one other student by Sunday (11:59pm EST) of that week. *Individual postings should not exceed 250 words (i.e., about two short paragraphs)*. I will monitor and contribute to the Discussion Forum throughout the semester. Students who do not participate in the Discussion Forum will be assigned a “W” grade.

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| Students can earn up to 5 points for participating in each Discussion Forum: (A) up to 3 points for their initial positing to one of the Discussion Forum questions, due TH by 11:59pm EST and (B) up to 2 points for responding to at least one other student’s posting, due SUN by 11:59pm EST. |
| **Initial postings (*up to 3 points*)** |
| **To earn the full 3 points:**   * The student replies to the Discussion Forum topic by TH 11:59pm EST. * The posting is directly responsive to the topic, substantive in content, with a clear purpose, and helps move the conversation forward. The posting includes follow-up questions, examples, and/or new perspectives. * The posting reflects comprehension and independent analysis of the assigned lectures/readings/videos and includes a thoughtful response to the course materials; the posting is supported by accurate evidence and examples. * The posting is constructive, and differences of opinion are expressed in a collegial manner. * The posting is logically organized and has no spelling or grammatical errors; the meaning of the posting is clear. |
| **To earn 2 points:**   * The student replies to the initial Discussion Forum topic by TH 11:59pm EST. * The posting is substantive in content but does not respond to all components of the topic and its purpose is not entirely clear. The posting includes examples but no follow-up questions or new perspectives. * The posting reflects comprehension of the assigned lectures/readings/videos and includes a thoughtful response to the course materials; however, evidence is missing or inaccurate; or there are examples and evidence but no explanation of a new contribution. * The posting is constructive, and differences of opinion are expressed in a collegial manner. * The posting is well organized but has minor errors in spelling and/or grammar. |
| * **To earn 1 point:** * The student replies to the initial Discussion Forum topic by TH 11:59pm EST. * The posting is substantive in content but neglects one or more elements of the topic and its purpose is not clear. The posting includes no examples, follow-up questions, or new perspectives. * The posting reflects poor comprehension of the assigned lectures/readings/videos; evidence and examples are missing or inaccurate. * The posting is collegial in tone. * The posting is disorganized and/or has serious errors in spelling and/or sentence structure, making it difficult to understand. |
| **To earn 0 points:**   * Late posting, no posting, disrespectful posting, or the posting has issues of academic honesty or integrity. |
| **Responses to other students’ postings (*up to 2 points*)** |
| **To earn the full 2 points:**   * The student responds to at least one other student’s posting (or existing comment thread) by SUN 11:59pm EST. * The response is substantive, including comments and questions that enhance and further the discussion. * The response provides evidence that the student has actually read the other student’s posting. * The response is constructive, and differences of opinion are expressed in a collegial manner. * The response is logically organized and has no spelling or grammatical errors; the meaning of the response is clear. |
| **To earn 1 point:**   * The student responds to at least one other student’s posting (or existing comment thread) by SUN 11:59pm EST. * The response is substantive but does not include comments or questions that enhance and further the discussion. * The response provides evidence that the student has actually read the other student’s posting. * The response is collegial in tone. * The response is poorly organized and/or has minor errors in spelling and/or grammar. |
| **To earn 0 points:**   * Late response, no response, disrespectful response, a response that merely agrees with the original post, or the response has issues of academic honesty or integrity (i.e., are plagiarized). |

***Leading a Discussion Forum (10%)***

At one point in the semester, each student will be responsible for leading and mediating the Discussion Forum with one or two other students. I will assign when which students will lead the Discussion Forum (more information will follow). *Each discussion leader needs to contribute an initial posting to the Discussion Forum by TH 11:59pm EST* ***AND*** *respond to every student’s posting (or existing discussion thread) by SUN 11:59pm EST*. The task of the discussion leaders is to enhance and further the discussion by either (1) providing a different perspective (perhaps one you don’t agree with, but one you advance to play devil’s advocate), (2) raising a question that furthers the discussion, or (3) putting the posting in conversation with a recent political or policy event or the assigned readings/videos. The point here is to deepen and further the discussion; *discussion leaders’ contributions should not simply agree with and restate what was already said.*

Discussion leaders will receive a grade based on the following criteria:

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| **In the A range:**   * The discussion leader responds to all students’ postings (or existing comment threads) by SUN 11:59pm EST. * The response is substantive, including comments and/or questions that enhance or further the discussion. * The response provides evidence that the discussion leader has actually read students’ postings. * The responses are constructive, and differences of opinion are expressed in a collegial manner. * The responses are logically organized and have no spelling or grammatical errors; the meaning of the responses is clear. |
| **In the B range:**   * The discussion leader responds to most but not all students’ postings (or existing comment threads) by SUN 11:59pm EST. * The responses are substantive but do not include comments or questions that enhance or further the discussion. * The responses provide evidence that the discussion leader has actually read the other students’ postings. * The responses are constructive, and differences of opinion are expressed in a collegial manner. * The responses are well organized but have minor errors in spelling and/or grammar. |
| **In the C range:**   * The discussion leader responds to only half of the students’ postings (or existing comment threads) by SUN 11:59pm EST. * The responses are substantive but do not include comments or questions that enhance or further the discussion. * The responses suggest that the discussion leader has not read or is not engaging with the other students’ postings. * The responses are constructive, and differences of opinion are expressed in a collegial manner. * The responses lack clear organization and have minor errors in spelling and/or grammar. |
| **In the D range:**   * The discussion leader responds to only a few of the students’ postings (or existing comment threads) by SUN 11:59pm EST. * The responses lack substance, do not include comments or questions that enhance or further the discussion, and mostly repeat what has already been said in other students’ original postings. * The responses suggest that the discussion leader has not read or is not engaging with the other students’ postings. * The responses are not constructive, and differences of opinion are expressed in an insensitive manner. * The responses are poorly organized and have many errors in spelling and/or grammar. |
| **Failing grade:**   * Late responses, no responses, disrespectful responses, or the responses have issues of academic honesty or integrity (i.e., are plagiarized). |