

Online Discussion Guidelines

Demonstrate Academic Effort

Be thoughtful in your responses, and add value to the conversation. Instead of a judgement statement (e.g. “I agree” or “That’s a good idea”), state specifically what you agree or disagree with, and give both your reasoning and, if possible, evidence from the course materials that support your reasoning.

Write Simply and Clearly

The aim here is to discuss a topic together, not to overawe your colleagues, so write simply and clearly, so everyone can understand. Avoid slang and jargon as much as you can.

Be Self-Reflective

As you talk with your colleagues, take time to re-examine your beliefs. If someone else makes an argument you find compelling, consider how that view changes your own stance. The aim in these conversations is not to win or lose, but to improve everyone’s understanding of the topic.

Organize Your Responses

If you have two separate ideas you wish to express, do so in two different posts. That will establish distinct threads of conversation, and make it easier for others to respond directly to your ideas.

Respect Your Colleagues

Respect what each of your classmates brings to the conversation. If they don’t know as much as you about the topic, help them understand. Stay calm and maintain critical distance from the topics where possible. Emotional responses have a tendency to upset others. If you feel tempted to make an emotional response, take a few minutes to stop, reflect, and compose a more reasoned response.

Ouch!

If you feel hurt by a post, or think someone else might be, say “Ouch!” and explain what you think statements or attitudes might get in the way of the conversation. Talk about the statement that caused you pain without making a judgement statement about the person who made the statement. Assume that everyone is trying to be respectful.

Guide on the Side

As the instructor, I will be reading all the posts, but I will only be responding to clarify process or to extend the conversations into new territory.

Often the best parts of an online class are the conversations you have with your fellow students, so do you part to enrich the conversation and thereby, the class.