

- ❖ Clearly define expectations for Discussion participation
 - How often students should post
 - When they need to post by
 - Length of posts: 200 word original post, two 50-word responses
 - Follow “[netiquette](#)” guidelines!

- ❖ Posts should count towards participation- need to look at the quality not just quantity

- ❖ Address style of online responses
 - Do you want them to feel more conversational rather than a composed essay with references and footnotes
 - Do you want them to cite references
 - Tip: Are you using this to replace conversations in class (less formal) or to help them prepare for academic writing? (more formal)

- ❖ Clearly define what is an acceptable post
 - New ideas
 - Has substance, not just "I agree"
 - Responds to others with feedback and new thoughts
 - Citations if appropriate

- ❖ Design high level questions that promote constructivist thinking
 - Interesting, controversial, evaluative (which is better, x or Y, why?)
 - Thinking that constructs knowledge from personal experience and prior learning

- ❖ Avoid asking questions that are too vague
 - What do you think
 - Who wants to start us off
 - Are there any questions
 - Yes/No questions
 - Asking for a specific fact (When was the Civil War)
 - Avoid simply asking for an opinion- lower order thinking- ask why

- ❖ If the conversation starts to wane
 - Weave together different pieces of the conversation for them to consider
 - Encourage the students to do that, add a new thought for them to consider
 - Pose a follow up questions etc. Example responses: What reasons do you have for saying that? Can you please elaborate? How do you define x? What do you think might be the implications of your previous statement? Are there any alternatives to this approach?

❖ Create a Space for Casual Conversations

- “Water Cooler”, “Coffee Break”, “What’s Happening”
- Add this extra discussion board at the top of the “Modules” area in Canvas or at the start of each class module
- Find a fun prompt each week – students will be more likely to participate, and learning more about each other will help build a sense of community. Encourage the use of (appropriate!) images and video.
 - What was your most favorite/leave favorite vacation?
 - What was your favorite toy/game as a child?
 - If you could meet anyone alive or from history, who would it be and why?
- You could also leave it open as a place for them to discuss whatever they want outside of the class discussion prompts

❖ Informal Weekly Discussion – replaces or supports in-class discussion

- On topic but no need to use citations, formal references etc.
- Use proper grammar/spelling (no tweets)
- Respectful “netiquette”
- Encourage sharing of topic-related images, resources, news stories etc.

❖ Small Groups/Partners: 2-4 participants

- Ongoing Discussions each week
- Builds comradery
- This could be part of an ongoing group project, study group, practice (language)

❖ Give a Media Assignment from Time to Time

- Audio/visual/video
- Easy to do in Canvas or with phones
- Breaks of the monotony of a lot of text
- More personal and engaging
- *Give clear time limits for recordings – e.g. no less than 30 seconds, no more than 2 minutes
- Shared with entire class or in smaller groups

❖ Tips for Instructor

- Be present and involved in conversations
- Let students know how you intend to participate
 - Expect posts post twice a week – M/W
 - Expects responses before class
 - Etc.
- Use it as a prep or follow-up to synchronous conversations in Zoom or in the classroom

You might be surprised to see that more students are engaged in the online platform than in class!

- They have more time to reflect and respond
- No time limits as to who gets a chance to speak before class is over
- This can provide a more equitable discussion environment