

PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION

Our class meetings are a collaborative activity. Although several engaged students can carry on a lively in-class discussion, the activity fails if it doesn't engage the rest of the class. The following guidelines emphasize that good discussions are generated when you engage others in conversation—using body language, eye contact, and good listening to create a classroom environment conducive to good talk—as well as taking responsibility for your own contributions. During extended class discussions, let's aim for 90-100% participation.

EVALUATION GUIDELINES

Preparation for Class

Highly effective	Less effective	Counter-productive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always comes to class well-prepared with strong notes and/or marginal comments on readings, thoughtful analysis, questions or ideas for discussion, and completed homework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasionally comes to class only marginally prepared or unprepared—that is, few notes on readings, inadequate or no analysis, no discussion questions or ideas, incomplete homework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often comes to class unprepared; may distract from discussion and/or group work by inability to contribute.

Contributions to Discussion

Highly effective	Less effective	Counter-productive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributes regularly to class discussions but doesn't dominate. Contributions are thoughtful and reveal engagement with course ideas and material. Contributions don't oversimplify or shy away from complexity—they show thinking as well as talking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributes occasionally to class discussions; may not participate unless directly called on. Contributions to discussion may not show engagement with material. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows very little effort to participate. [OR] Dominates discussion, talking too much without engaging others and making it hard for the class to hear from a wide range of students.

Facilitation of Class Atmosphere

Highly effective	Less effective	Counter-productive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body language shows interest in discussion (good eye contact with instructor and/or other students, turning toward speaker, etc.). Demonstrates attentiveness; good listening; facial expressions show that you are tracking the conversation. Acknowledges others contributions; makes other people feel good about joining the discussion; draws shier people into the conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body language seems to reflect boredom (looks at wall or desk; doesn't make eye contact with person talking; doesn't seem to show interest). Sits stonily without expression or acknowledgement of speakers. In group work, doesn't participate. Watches clock. Looks sleepy (if you are unavoidably sleepy, by all means stand up and stretch or excuse yourself to get a drink of water to wake yourself up). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visibly distracted from class activities. Noticeable boredom (yawning, sighing, putting head down on desk, looking sleepy, nodding off). Packs up before the end of class. Carries on side conversations that disrupt discussion.

MAKING CLASS DISCUSSIONS WORK FOR YOU**Be Prepared**

This is your time to discuss course materials and ideas with the whole class. Read the discussion board and look over your notes before you come to class. Prepare a few questions or ideas for which you would like to explore answers and get feedback. If you are nervous about speaking in front of the class, write out ahead of time what you want to say and then make yourself say it.

Talk to the Group

Address your contributions to the whole group, not only to the instructor.

Respond to Each Other

Don't ignore what the person who spoke before you said (even if you want to take the discussion in another direction) and don't be shy about asking people to clarify their ideas. One of the most useful things one can do in a group discussion like those we will be having in this class is to restate what you have understood someone else to have said either simply for the sake of clarification or to summarize a question or idea before you respond to it.

Make Sure that all Voices are Heard

If you are very comfortable speaking up in class discussions, be sure to give space to those who are a little (or a lot) more shy. Wait to respond until you have looked around the room and given quieter students a moment to collect their thoughts. Be on the lookout for situations where it would be helpful to invite someone to share something with the group that you may have read on the discussion board or discussed with them previously.

Take Notes

Class discussions are opportunities to explore ideas and get answers to questions, and without a record of these exchanges you might have trouble recalling what was said. This type of discussion might not be a situation in which it seems obvious to you to take notes, but jotting down interesting ideas and questions that you come up in discussion can prove to be tremendously useful when it comes time to start exploring ideas for writing assignments and projects.