

## Discussion Participation Assignment Description

### Posting Discussion Questions (5 points)

Discussion questions serve as a way of getting the class ready for your discussion facilitation. More importantly, discussion questions can function as an important study tool, directing the reader to important elements in the text. For this portion of your discussion grade, your group must develop and submit 2-4 discussion questions for your assigned facilitation day. Questions are due no later than three days in advance of your assigned facilitation day. If you have multiple texts assigned for your day, you can write discussion questions about one or both texts. Facilitation group members receive the same grade for this portion of the assignment.

5	4	3	2	1	0
<p><b>Excellent discussion questions.</b> The discussion questions provide a helpful guide for the student while doing the reading. Additionally, the questions prepare the reader for the discussion that the facilitators have planned.</p> <p>For example, when discussing Gorgias's <i>Helen</i>, the facilitators pose two to four questions like the one below.</p> <p>1. Gorgias is defending Helen for her role in triggering the Trojan war. Imagine you are charged with a similar defense of the football player Michael Vick, who was indicted for animal cruelty. Gorgias wasn't simply trying to get Helen acquitted in criminal court, he was trying to get people to see her as not entirely responsible. As Vick returns to the NFL, the challenge is similar. How would Gorgias defend Vick in the court of public opinion? What would he need to be able to do-in our modern, televisual culture-to get the American public to absolve Vick of his crime?</p>		<p><b>Adequate discussion questions.</b> The questions touch on relevant aspects of the reading, but do little to advance a reader's understanding of the text. The questions are valuable as a study tool for recalling basic information, but don't really setup a rich discussion.</p> <p>For example, when discussing Gorgias's <i>Helen</i>, the facilitators pose two questions like the one below.</p> <p>1. What are the four ways in which Gorgias defends Helen? Why did Gorgias choose those four defenses?</p>	<p><b>Poor/absent discussion questions.</b> The questions do little to advance the reader's appreciation of the text. The questions feel hurriedly put together based on a rather superficial understanding of the reading.</p> <p>For example, when discussing Gorgias's <i>Helen</i>, the facilitators pose two questions like the one below.</p> <p>1. What are the ways Gorgias talks about Helen? Why?</p>		

### Leading Discussion (5 points)

Having solid questions is not, by itself, sufficient. Each group will also be responsible for facilitating discussion. You can be as creative as you like. The goal for the facilitators is to get the class actively discussing and thinking about the readings and their ethical and political implications. The facilitators may choose to have the class break up into small groups, give us an exercise or activity, or have us engage in roleplay. As facilitators, you want the class to actively engage the readings in an interesting manner. Facilitation group members receive the same grade for this portion of the assignment.

5	4	3	2	1	0
<p><b>Excellent discussion facilitation.</b> The facilitators are able to get the class to think about the material in an interesting manner. Ultimately, the facilitators get the entire class to discuss the readings in a way that uncovered something novel.</p> <p>For example, when discussing Gorgias's <i>Helen</i>, the facilitators have the class break up into small groups, draft a modern equivalent of <i>Helen</i>, and then discuss as a large group the ethical and rhetorical challenges involved in defending a social pariah. In the large discussion, the class begins a vibrant discussion of the role of public relations experts as modern sophists.</p>		<p><b>Adequate discussion facilitation.</b> The facilitators prompt some moments of interesting discussion. The material is covered and the main themes discussed, but in a very rote manner.</p> <p>For example, when discussing Gorgias's <i>Helen</i>, the facilitators prompt the class to discuss the major parts of the text. The facilitators ask the class to identify the different reasons Gorgias uses to defend Helen and then follow up by asking the class why they think he used such a reason. At the end of the discussion, the class has gone over each portion and might be able to remember it better, but the discussion never became vibrant.</p>	<p><b>Poor/absent discussion facilitation.</b> The facilitators appear unprepared. They miss many important elements of the text. During the discussion, there are long periods of silence. At the end of the discussion, little interesting has been added to the texts.</p> <p>For example, when discussing Gorgias's <i>Helen</i>, the facilitators don't have a solid grasp of the text. They ask questions based primarily on how well the students recall the parts of the reading. At the end of the discussion, the class, as a whole, has not improved their understanding of the text nor have they engaged in much strong discussion.</p>		

### Participating in Discussions (10 points)

This class requires participation since we discuss and analyze primary and secondary texts as a group. Although attendance is not specifically required, participation is. Your class participation grade will be calculated based on your informed contribution to class discussions and activities. Below is the rubric I will use during the quarter to assess this portion of your individual discussion grade.

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
<p><b>Always participates intelligently.</b> The student always comes to class having completed the reading. The student responds well to questions about the text and can relate the text to other parts of the course. The student engages others in the class and often raises interesting points. Consistently, the student has engaged the reading before class, clarified their thinking in class, and prompted others to delve deeper into the readings and issues.</p>			<p><b>Sometimes participates intelligently.</b> The student frequently comes to class prepared. Many of the student's comments contribute to the discussion, but rarely drive it forward. The student completes much of the reading, but only rarely uses the reading as a way of prompting others to think about the relevant issues.</p>			<p><b>Rarely participates intelligently.</b> The student often comes to class unprepared, barely having completed the readings if at all. When comments are made, the student doesn't add much to the conversation and in fact may hamper it. Yet, most commonly the student doesn't participate in class discussions.</p>				