Leading Online Discussion: General Tips and Tricks

By Caity Kelly, M.S. &
Dr. Lisa Liseno
Zoom Session Guidelines

• Please mute your microphone when you are not speaking

• Be aware that other attendees can see you if your webcam is turned on

• If you are having trouble seeing our screenshare, try selecting the gallery view on Zoom

• Try not to talk over other attendees if you are making comments/asking questions; please use the hand raising function or inform us in the chat that you would like to speak

• Please silence your phone/email as other participants may be able to hear notifications
Welcome! 😊

- Assistant Director for the Program for Instructional Excellence & Fellows Society
- FSU Alumnus—Bachelor’s in Psychology; Master’s in the Instructional Systems and Learning Technologies
- Former online TA/online class instructional design intern

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Presentation Agenda

❑ Explore tips and styles for creating and facilitating asynchronous online discussion in the classroom.

❑ Explore techniques for facilitating effective synchronous discussion sessions.

❑ Discuss discussion techniques you might utilize in your online classroom.
Types of Discussion

- Asynchronous
  - Single prompt style
  - Multiple prompt style

- Synchronous
  - Zoom
**Asynchronous: Single Prompt Style**

- The instructor creates one discussion prompt to which students generate responses.

- The question may include one or multiple parts.

- Some instructors prefer to set Canvas discussion settings so that students must post a response before they can view other responses.

- Write thorough directions with **clear requirements** and **deadlines** for participation.
Sample Single Prompt Discussion

Catlin Kairy
All Sections

Directions

The discussion is divided into two portions: An initial response to the prompt and a minimum of two peer responses. You must participate on at least 2 separate days this week. The initial prompt is due by Wednesday of this week. The 2 peer responses are due by Sunday of next week.

1. Initial Prompt: Summarize a small section of the reading/learning materials that particularly interested you. What thoughts did this section bring up for you? Do you have any practical examples or critiques of the information? What questions did this section bring up for you?
   A. What academic and/or work experiences have you had that can build your resume/CV for graduate school? If you have not had many experiences, what types of opportunities might you seek to build your CV/resume?
   B. Look into FSU resources for finding job, internship, organization, and research opportunities. Share links to at least 2 resources in this thread and describe how they might be helpful to your peers.

2. Peer Responses: You must submit a minimum of 2 peer responses. Responses should consist of more than simply "I agree" or "great job." You should expand upon their post with your own thoughts and/or ask critical thinking questions to continue the conversation.
Asynchronous: Multiple Prompt Style

The instructor creates several discussion prompt options and allows students to explore those that interest them.

Use the discussion prompt space to write directions; reply to the discussion prompt space to start multiple threads that your students can follow.

Write thorough directions with clear requirements and deadlines for participation.
Module 1 Discussion Board: Undergraduate Preparation

Use this forum to discuss the topics below pertaining to overall graduate school processes and undergraduate preparation. Posts are graded pass/fail. If you reference any course materials, please cite them. To receive full participation credit, students must post:

- **1 Initial Post:** Choose at least one of the prompts listed below and respond to the questions/ideas in the prompt. Your response should be thorough and draw upon your own experiences/thoughts as well as information from the course materials. You are welcome and encouraged to respond to more than one prompt.
  - Due Wednesday, 2/05, 11:59 P.M.
- **1 Peer Response:** Post a response to at least one peer that expands upon the questions about their initial post response. You are welcome and encouraged to respond to more than one peer.
  - Due Saturday, 2/08, 11:59 P.M.

**Note:** You do not have to respond to every question in the prompt--focus on ideas that interest you.

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Caitlin Kelly
Oct 8, 2019
Several of our materials this week discussed various opportunities/experiences undergraduate students may pursue in order to give themselves a competitive edge for getting into graduate school. What are some valuable opportunities you have experienced? Jobs? Internships? RSO's? Research?
If you have not had any experiences, what are some opportunities that you are aware of--on campus or in your community--that might be of interest to you?
Use this thread to brainstorm ideas for your Initial Thoughts Paper (due Saturday, 2/08).

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Caitlin Kelly
Oct 8, 2019
In his graduate school video, Jake Vorhees mentions several strategies for networking with professors to secure letters of recommendation and other helpful connections for pursuing higher education. Which of his tips do you currently practice? Would you add any tips to his list? Do you have any “DON'T” tips to add to his list of “DO” tips? Aside from faculty, what other professionals might you want to network with?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DO:</strong></th>
<th>Provide clear instructions for satisfactory participation</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assess participation based on the instructions/criteria provided</td>
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<td>Provide an example of a high-quality discussion response students are novices to online discussion</td>
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<td>Show some involvement in the forum, depending on your students’ need for scaffolding</td>
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<td>Link to tech support for your discussion board medium (likely Canvas)</td>
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<td>Link to netiquette/online civility guidelines in your course syllabus</td>
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<td>DON’T:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominate the discussion; give students time to converse with each</td>
<td>every</td>
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<td>other</td>
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<td>Discuss sensitive information via discussion board—adhere to</td>
<td>university policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overcomplicate your discussion tool; use a tool that fulfills your</td>
<td>students’ needs</td>
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<td>students’ needs</td>
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**General Asynchronous Dos & Don’ts**
Synchronous Discussion

You will most likely use Zoom integrated through Canvas.

• Note: Zoom enables FSU FERPA/HIPPA compliance

Great for review sessions, summarizing “main points” of the unit, or activities better performed live.

Be careful with assigning required synchronous sessions—consider student schedules and the time zones.
General Synchronous Dos & Don’ts

**DO:**
- Set an agenda for each synchronous session; know the main points you want to cover
- Have any files/documents you need pulled up and ready
- Set rules/guidelines for sessions—particularly if webcams are enabled
- Mute your computer notifications and remind students to do the same
- Test your technology prior to meeting time
- Link to tech support for the synchronous tool
<table>
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<th>DON’T:</th>
<th>Have sensitive student information or your private information pulled up during sessions</th>
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<td>Discuss sensitive student information during the group session—adhere to FSU policies</td>
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<td>Ignore distracting audio/visuals from students; practice muting mics and stopping webcams if needed</td>
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<td>Do other tasks while you are presenting</td>
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A Quick Note on Grading

- Many ways to quantify it
- Exact instructions are important
- Modeling may be helpful
- Examples
  - Answer all parts of the question
  - Post at least two responses and two comments on others’ posts
  - Substantial posts should expand upon other posts and/or ask questions; avoid “Good Job” or “I agree”
  - Word count
  - Times per week
Exploring Online Discussion Tech

- Canvas
- Zoom
- Google docs
- Google slides
- Blogging platforms
- Flipgrid
- Padlet
- Polls
Activity!

We will be using Padlet software to explore a fun discussion board tool and to experience the less-common multiple prompt discussion style.

Choose a minimum of 2 prompts (available in the Google doc provided on the Padlet grid) to respond to in Padlet (you can answer more if you would like). You do not have to respond to all of them. The goal of this activity is for you to experience choosing and following the trains of thought that are most interesting to you as a learner. Respond to at least 2 other participant’s post in a meaningful manner by expanding their points, asking questions, etc. You are also welcome to post your own discussion question to get a conversation going with your colleagues.

Padlet Link: https://padlet.com/grimmallusions/z4a6lg05ylfcgc4x
Let’s Reconvene! 😊

◊ Highlight a few posts
◊ What did you think of this discussion style?
◊ What did you think of the Padlet tool?
Real-time Interactive Technologies

- iClicker & REEF
- Turning Technology
- Poll Everywhere (free for 40 responses, multiple platforms)
- Poll Junkie (free, web)
- Kahoot! (free, web)
- Zoom polls
Teaching Methodology

- **Question**: Aims at common misconception or higher level of Cognition (Bloom’s taxonomy)
- **Think**: Students individually
- **Poll**: Students individually – *commit* to an answer
- **Discuss**: Find classmate with different answer-try to convince them you are right-he/she is wrong! (Zoom, use breakout rooms)
- **Repoll**: Student individually – can keep or change answer
- **Explain**: Instructor or students
Utilitarianism: The morally right act = that which produces the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people.

Factors involved in calculating the greatest amount of happiness:

1. Count every person equally
2. Calculate the net (overall) amount of pleasure/happiness
3. Intensity of happiness
4. Duration of happiness
5. Fruitfulness (long-term results/effects)
6. Likelihood (what are the chances of an act’s consequences successfully occurring)
7. Quality of happiness
Consider the following two cases:

1. While lying by a lake, Lance sees a child drowning in the water. Normally, Lance would be too preoccupied with getting a tan to care about rescuing the child. In this case, however, he notices that an attractive woman, apparently unable to swim herself, is shouting for someone to help the child. Hoping to impress the woman, Lance jumps into the water and saves the drowning child.

2. While lying by a lake, John sees a child drowning in the water. Although he is a poor swimmer, John is terrified by the prospect of the child drowning. With the welfare of the child being his top concern, John jumps into the water and saves the child.

Question: According to Utilitarianism, which ONE of the following is true:

A. Lance does the morally right thing
B. John does the morally right thing
C. Both do the morally right thing
D. Neither do the morally right thing
Discussions on Sensitive Topics

✧ Upcoming PIE workshop topics may cover this topic...stay tuned 😊
✧ Finding the balance between freedom to share opinions and respect
✧ Include a civility statement in your syllabus
✧ Provide trigger warnings if needed and list campus support resources
✧ Set ground rules
  ✧ General civility tenets
  ✧ Class contract
  ✧ Input from students on civility vows
What if my students won’t talk?

- Many reasons for silence (introverts, anxiety, etc.)
- Increase engagement—multiple prompt style, interactive new tools, etc.
- Ask more low-stakes questions; call on quiet students if needed
- Provide stronger structure as needed for breakout activities
- Above all, read your audience
- If all else fails, set stronger guidelines for discussion participation (i.e. breakout rooms; all participants must contribute one idea)

A guy in class got called on to answer a question and after a short pause he says, “hang on, I’m not dumb I’m just panicking.” I felt that. The guy next to me felt that. Your mom felt that. The world felt that.
Questions? 😊
Check out our TA support forum!

Support Forum Highlights:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=id3Kxjrrj8k

Enrollment Link:
https://canvas.fsu.edu/enroll/JB4D8K
Our Next Workshop

📍 **Date:** Thursday, 1/21, 2021
📍 **Time:** 3:00 PM ~ 4:30 PM
📍 **Panelists:**
  - Grace Wilson, M.Ed., Student Governance & Advocacy (SGA)
  - Magnolia Hood, M.S.Ed., LMHC, University Counseling Center
  - Nate Harris, Academic Center for Excellence (ACE)
  - Dr. Jennifer Mitchell, Office of Accessibility Services (OAS)
📍 **Description:** Each panelist will have 10-15 minutes to provide an overview of their organization's services. The primary goal is to educate teaching assistants on how to best utilize these resources for supporting their students. Once panelists have finished presenting, we will open the session for questions from the attendees.