Course Name
Discussion Board Guidelines

Look for **green text** used as a placeholder, to indicate information needed, text you should change, or notes. *Be sure to delete these notes before finalizing your syllabus or change the text color to black.*

The contents of this handout are intended to serve as Discussion Board guidelines for your students. Consider each area for edits you might need to make so that the guidelines fit your criteria for your course discussion activity. Most content provided in this handout is based on existing research (see the companion document "Online Discussions for Blended Learning" (http://www.csus.edu/webct/faculty/discussion-board-best-practices.pdf for additional information).

Grading for Discussions

Topic discussion posts will be graded during the week following the date that the discussions are due. 20 total points are possible for each discussion topic. In determining your grade, the following components are considered (see the *Grading Rubric for Discussions* in the section that follows for a complete breakdown):

Length of post (quantity

- You are required to post one original message for each topic (i.e. "replies" to other students do not count in this regard).
- In addition to your one, original post, you must reply to at least two other classmates for each topic.
- Original posts should consist of at least 700 characters or more (not including spaces; roughly 150 words).
- Replies to other students should consist of at least 350 characters or more (not including spaces; roughly 75 words).

Quality of posts

- Each of your posts (original posts & replies) must demonstrate your understanding of the topic.
- Connections between lecture content, textbook content, and discussion should be exhibited.
- Relate new information with material previously covered in the class as well as with personal experience.
- Discuss at a critical level – don't just recite facts from your reading, discussion, or lecture.

- Critical discussion includes your opinion of items mentioned, but also includes the reasons you hold that opinion, and why it may be inconsistent or consistent with what you've learned. Justify your reasoning with facts. How does what you're presenting affect present and future situations?
- Posts that are replicates of other student's posts will result in a lower grade.

Timeliness

- In posting your original response to the topic, post at least 3 days before the due date for the topic, to give your classmates time to respond.
- Discussion messages for a topic that are posted after the specified due date will not be graded.
- You will be given one week to respond to each topic.

Grading Rubric for Discussions

You can take this rubric and input it into your SacCT course to use as a Grading Form for Discussion topics.

In grading discussion topics, the following rubric will be used. 20 total points are possible for each discussion topic.

Objective/ Criteria	Not Met	Needs Improvement	Minimally Acceptable	Meets Expectations
Critical Thinking	**(0 points)** • No evidence of critical thinking whatsoever (or nothing posted).	**(1 point)** • Superficial posts • No valid connections made between content. • No analysis or insight. • *Critical* presentation of opinion not present.	**(3 points)** • Some connections made, although all might not be valid. • Analysis of content is evident, although possibly not complete. • *Critical* presentation of opinion is not complete.	**(4 points)** • Valid connections made. • Posts are complete with analysis and insight. • Opinions are presented at a *critical* level.
Uniqueness	**(0 points)** • Originality of post is completely unacceptable (or nothing posted).	**(1 point)** • Originality of posts is not evident (ideas are not your own). • Posts consist of little more than "I agree with you …" statements. • Plagiarism may be evident. • Sources not cited.	**(3 points)** • Originality of posts might be questionable, but valid. • Some new ideas. • Plagiarism not evident. • Sources are cited.	**(4 points)** • Original ideas are presented. • Plagiarism not evident. • Sources are cited.

Timeliness	**(0 points)** • Post is made after the deadline (or nothing posted).	**(1 point)** • Original posts are added at the last minute, leaving no time for classmates to respond.	**(3 points)** • Original posts are present, but may have been posted during the last half of the discussion period. • Participation is infrequent during the discussion period.	**(4 points)** • Original posts are added during the first half of the discussion period. • Participation is evident throughout the entire discussion period.
Quantity	**(0 points)** • Quantity is completely unacceptable (or nothing posted).	**(1 point)** • Length of all required posts do not meet requirements. • One or more required postings are missing.	**(3 points)** • Length of all required posts meets the requirements but includes considerable "fluff" or "filler." • All required postings are made.	**(4 points)** • Length of all required posts meet requirements. • All required postings are made.
Stylistics	**(0 points)** • Content is illegible (or nothing posted).	**(1 point)** • Many spelling or grammar errors • Content is difficult to understand. • Inappropriate language used.	**(3 points)** • Few spelling or grammar mistakes • Content is generally easy to understand.	**(4 points)** • No spelling or grammar mistakes. • Content easy to understand.

Total Possible Points: 20

NOTE: Sometimes it is helpful to students if they are shown examples of "A-quality" discussion posts. As the instructor, you can provide examples to student by identifying exemplar discussion posts that have been submitted during the first few weeks of instruction. Point out the qualities of the post that make it especially good.

Instructor Role

As the instructor, I will serve as a "guide" in terms of the Discussion Board.   While I will not respond to every post, I will read what is posted, and reply when necessary. Expect instructor posts in the following situations:

- To assist each of you when it comes to making connections between discussion, lectures, and textbook material.
- To fill in important things that may have been missed.
- To re-direct discussion when it gets "out of hand".
- To point out key points or to identify important posts.

Discussion Board Etiquette

How you post a message to a topic is just as important as what you post. If your behavior does not follow the course etiquette standards stated below, the grade you receive for a posting may suffer.

- The instructor reserves the right to remove any discussion messages that display inappropriate language or content. Do not use offensive language.
- Rudeness or slamming will not be tolerated.
- Show respect for your fellow students, even if you disagree with something that was stated.
- Clearly state what you believe, even if it means that you're disagreeing with someone. Never, however, respond in anger – take care to discuss ideas, not the person.

Help!

Technical Help:

- See [SacCT Faculty Resources](http://www.csus.edu/sacct/faculty/index.stm) (http://www.csus.edu/sacct/faculty/index.stm)