



Anatomy of a Discussion Prompt:
Get the Responses You Want

Granite State College
Division of Adult and Career Services

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Online Discussions

“Learning and development is a social, collaborative activity.”

Social Constructivist Learning Theory




Assumptions

Students know how to participate constructively in an academic online discussion.

They can read our questions and produce what you expect without much guidance.

It is self-evident to them why we are engaged in this discussion.

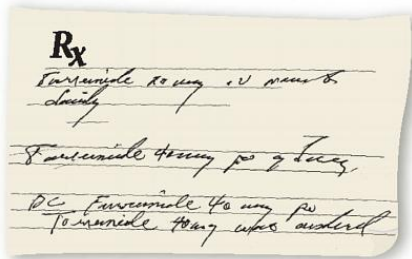


Topics

1. How to promote recall of instructional resources.
2. How to clarify expectations by identifying what the assignment actually is.
3. How to help students maintain focus in writing a complete response.
4. How to show students what tasks you expect them to complete to meet the assignment requirements.
5. How to write a thematic description of how the outcome of the discussion is relevant to the topic or course overall: "What's in it for me?"



Prescription



Common Problems

Students don't answer the question.



"This example is a bit hard to evaluate according to the forum question ..."



Common Problems

Students don't answer ALL the questions in a multi-part prompt.



"A sound analysis of our trend toward reliance on digital devices.

But now comes the hard part -- answering the question of how we will make peace with this phenomenon..."



Common Problems

Students don't support their responses with examples from the readings/media (hearsay).



"Please review the readings and media prior to posting in the forum..."



Common Problems

Students lose points because they don't complete all the required tasks.



"My grade for the forum post was a 67%. That's what I was referring to specifically.

How did I get such a low grade?"



Common Problems

Students don't apply what they have discussed to other projects or assessments.



"You had a lot to say about this topic in the Module 4 discussion.

Why not apply your position here in your presentation?"



Strategies!

Module 2 Forum: Romans, Hippies, and the Modern SM Zombie

Klein cites the originator of SM as the confluence of technical capabilities and the hippie Generation who sought to "share love". Long after the 1960s, he says, the sensibilities of communism and individualism have come back to life - online.

The story of The Web points to the idealism its founders envisioned about asynchronous online interaction.

In Kevin Kelly's presentation, he makes the following statements: **"Our humanity and everything we think about ourselves is something that we've invented. Technology is allowing us to reinvent ourselves..."**

Assignment: Based on the readings and your research into historical events that have shaped present-day SM, please respond to the following questions:

--- PLEASE COPY THE QUESTION AND PASTE IT IN YOUR RESPONSE ---

What three reasons can you come up with to explain why social media were invented?
How have the readings and media shaped your response?

What you will get out of discussing this question: Lots of things are invented everyday. In Japan, there is a term "chindaiji" which refers to inventions or gadgets that are ideal but impractical, mostly useless, and often hilarious! (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chindaiji#/media/File:Chindaiji.jpg>). They go nowhere.

But SM, as a technology-driven invention, works. The responses you encounter in this discussion will give you the ability to explain why SM is an ideal approach to solve the problem you have identified for your final project (Option #1) or ideal as a basis for your story (Option #2).

(10 points) Respond to the initial questions, with references to support your positions.
(10 points) Respond to the instructor's challenge.
(10 points) Reply to one other student's response.



#1 – Summarize for context

Hey! Remember those fabulous readings and videos?



Remember those themes we said to look for while reading or watching?

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#2 – Clearly identify the assignment

What is the actual assignment?

Avoid confusion between the assignment and rhetorical questions!!

Module 2 Forum: Romans, Hippies, and the Modern SM Zombie

Have you ever imagined life as the confluence of technical capacities and the Hippie Generation who sought to "take back" living after the 1950s, he says, the availability of communication and collaboration have come back to life, online.

The story of The Web points to the vision its founders envisioned about asynchronous online interaction.

From today's perspective, he makes the following comments: "Our humanity and everything we think about ourselves is something that we've invented. Technology is allowing us to reinvent ourselves..."

Assignment: Based on the readings and your research into historical events that have shaped present-day SM, please respond to the following questions:

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What three reasons can you come up with to explore why social media were invented?

How have the readings and media shaped your reasons?

What you will get out of discussing this question: Lots of things are invented everyday, in paper, there is a term "technology" which refers to inventions or gadgets that are used but impractical, mostly useless, and often harmful. However, we also have engineering and technology. They go together.

Our SM, as a technology-driven invention, works. The responses you encounter in this discussion will give you the ability to explore why SM is an ideal approach to solve the problem you have identified for your final project (Option #1) or ideal as a model for your story (Option #2).

150 guidelines: Respond to the initial questions, with references to support your positions.

170 guidelines: Respond to the instructor's challenge.

190 guidelines: Respond to one another to which is required.

#3 – Help them stay focused

What should their responses include?

Copy/paste:

Avoid the chance that they will answer only the first question!!

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#3 – Help them stay focused

Sample student response:

Week 2 Forum: Romans, Hippies, and the Modern SM Zombie

Social media could be instrumental in documenting future events.

A brief description of the event as it happened.

During WWII, millions of people were targeted, beaten, gassed and tortured in concentration and labor camps throughout Europe. Today, there are tens of thousands of people who are still alive and living very hard lives.

According to Cohen (2010), Douglas D. Eisenhauer wrote the following regarding a German labor camp in 1945:

The usual evidence and the usual testimony of the victims, cruelty and brutality were so overwhelming as to leave him a wreck, in one storm, when they showed were piled up bodies or empty, naked men killed by starvation. George Patton would not even enter. He said that he would go and see the Nazis in their gas and by special arrangements, in order to be in a position to give his best evidence of these things of war. In the future, there is a warning to change these allegations merely to "Synagogues."

A hypothesis of how the event might have played out if contemporary SM had existed, using the history offered in this week's readings and media.

Historical events that occurred during the war, information about the results of the camps may have been disseminated to the public by a network of social media. The information may have been spread more quickly and accurately, and the public may have been able to see the truth of what was going on in the world at that time. The information may have been spread more quickly and accurately, and the public may have been able to see the truth of what was going on in the world at that time. The information may have been spread more quickly and accurately, and the public may have been able to see the truth of what was going on in the world at that time.

A description of whether the event would have been observed visually or digitally.

With options under observation, we have been monitoring or watching something. In the labor camp, they may have been able to take some photos to document the conditions. Of course the photos and information would have been viewed with suspicion and many may have seen it as a publicity stunt. However, those that accepted the information as fact would have been limited in their ability to operate. As a result, many of the articles that were submitted would have been well documented and distributed widely, and the historical record would be better.

References

Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/eblog/19-20>

#3 – Help them stay focused

COMM601 End of course poll question (n = 11):
 "...How well did this method help you to stay focused on fulfilling all of the assignment questions?"

- 0 - It made things worse
- 0 - It didn't help at all
- 1 - It neither helped nor hindered
- 5 - It helped some
- 5 - It helped a lot

#4 – Help them stay focused

What should their responses include?

Refer to Readings & Media:

Builds (somewhat) an assurance that they will actually read.



Module 2 Forum: Romans, Hippies, and the Modern SM Zombie

Have you ever been struck by the convergence of technical capacities and the human condition who sought to think their way after the world, to map the possibilities of communication and interaction have come back to life - online.

The story of the Web points to the debate its founders envisioned about asynchronous online interaction.

Have you ever been struck by the convergence of technical capacities? "Our humanity and everything we think about ourselves is something that we've invented. Technology is allowing us to reinvent ourselves..."

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But SM, as a technology-driven invention, works. The responses you encounter in this discussion will give you the ability to explain why SM is an ideal approach to solve the problem you have identified for your final project (Option #1), or ideal as a basis for your story (Option #2).

150 points! Respond to the initial questions, with references to support your opinions.

150 points! Respond to the instructor's challenge.

150 points! Reply to one or more student's responses.

#5 – State purpose

What can students expect to get out of this discussion?

What will it lead to or support?

This is social learning!



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#6 – Clarify required tasks

What tasks are required to complete the assignment overall?

How do the tasks reflect what grade is given?

Module 2 Forum: Romans, Hippies, and the Modern SM Zombie

When was the origination of life as the confluence of technical capabilities and the Hippie Generation who sought to "reach back" (using their 1960s) to save the sanctities of communication and individualism have come back to life, again?

The story of The Red points to the vision its founder envisioned about asynchronous online interaction.

In from King's presentation, he makes the following statements: "Our humanity and everything we think about ourselves is something that we've invented. Technology is allowing us to reinvent ourselves..."

Assignment: Based on the readings and your research into historical events that have shaped present-day SM, please respond to the following questions.

--- PLEASE COPY THE QUESTIONS AND PARTS OF YOUR RESPONSE ---

150 points: How do you think you connect with or disagree with social media when viewed?

100 points: How have the readings and media shaped your research?

What you will get out of discussing this question: Lots of things are invented everyday, in space, there is a term "technology" which refers to inventions or gadgets that are used but impractical, mostly useless, and often harmful. How do we distinguish useful technologies? They go forward.

Our SM, as a technology-driven invention, works. The responses you encounter in this discussion will give you the ability to explain why SM is an ideal approach to solve the problem you have identified for your first project. Explain how you think it should be used for your own situation. (20)

150 points: Respond to the initial questions, with references to support your positions.

100 points: Respond to the instructor's challenge.

10 points: Reply to one other student's response.

How this methods helps students

- Less guessing about what the assignment is about and what is expected.
- Promotes coherence between instructional resources, discussion, and achieving objectives.
- Promotes focus on required tasks.
- Promotes a sense of purpose in the context of related knowledge or skills.
- Promotes a clear connection between what is done and how the grade is calculated.



How this methods helps you

Summarizing themes in the readings and media into the context of a discussion helps you evaluate whether the objectives can be met with what you have provided.

- Do the resources make sense? Relevant?
- Are they strong enough?
- Can students actually answer the question?
- Is the discussion in alignment with the module level objectives?



How this methods helps you

Identifying the actual assignment (hopefully) relieves the need to restate expectations to students who have misread the prompt and posted an irrelevant response.

- The stuff after the word "Assignment" is the *assignment!*
- Allows you to use rhetorical questions with less risk that students will answer them instead of the assigned questions.



How this methods helps you

Using the "Copy/paste this into your response" helps you to discern which question (among several) is being answered in the student response.

- Helps you to observe the thread of their thinking and conclusions.



How this methods helps you

Stating "What you'll get out of this discussion" helps you to check whether the outcome of the discussion would be useful towards the instructional goal.

- Have I put these students through the wringer for no particular reason?



How this methods helps you

Stating the tasks and their assessment value helps you support your grading in case there is a grade dispute.

- Dispute: Show students how they earned full credit in other posts and show them how their low scoring posts compare.



Aspirations

Students know how to participate constructively in an academic online discussion.

They can read our questions and produce what you expect without much guidance.

It is self-evident to them why we are engaged in this discussion.



Thank You!

See the post:

<http://teach.granite.edu/anatomy-of-a-discussion-forum-prompt/>

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to complete our brief online survey!

https://granitestatecollege.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9GIBkRaaG5Uu4B

Visit <http://faculty.granite.edu> for additional professional development opportunities.