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Framing Online Discussions: Getting Quality Posts and Giving Effective Feedback

Marilea Bramer

Minnesota State University - Moorhead, bramer@mnstate.edu

Monica Janzen

Anoka-Ramsey Community College, monica.janzen@anokaramsey.edu

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Marilea Bramer, PhD
Philosophy Department
Minnesota State University Moorhead
bramer@mnstate.edu

Discussion Post assignment

The first five people to post each week will be the ones who choose our discussion topics.

If you are one of the first five people to post, you will write a Quote Analysis post. To do that, you will **select one or more complete sentences from the reading for the week** as your quote. Your Quote Analysis post should include the following:

1. the sentence(s) you're quoting (in quotation marks)
2. a citation for the quote from the reading (page number + who said it)
3. one or more paragraphs of **your own writing** about the quote

Selecting Sentences for your Quote: Look for something that *strikes* you for some reason. It could be interesting, puzzling, illuminating; it could be something you disagree with, something you think is ridiculous, etc. The main thing to keep in mind is that you'll need to write something about it, so it's best to choose something that you might actually *enjoy* writing about. If all else fails, go back to the "How to Read a Piece of Philosophical Writing" handout, and try to find a passage that you think answers one of those questions.

Your Own Writing About the Quote: That totally depends on the quote you pick and your reason for picking it. The main thing I want you to practice in these is *engaging directly with someone else's statements*. So whatever you write needs to be connected to the quote, either explaining it, illustrating it with an example, arguing against it, offering up your interpretation of it, describing what you find puzzling about it, etc. This might also involve giving some context, explaining a bit about what was being discussed in the section where you found it.

If you are one of the first five people posting and starting threads, be sure to quickly look at what other people have posted to make sure you are not writing about a quote someone else has already chosen.

Once we have 5 threads, all other posts will be replies to the first threads. *No matter which type of post you are writing (thread starting post or a reply), you need to engage with the text in your post.* If you are writing a reply, your post should respond to the original Quote Analysis post or one of the following posts by doing the following:

1. Raise a constructive criticism about the content of the post, explain a question you have about the Quote Analysis post, or offer an substantive example that helps to illuminate the original Quote or the Quote Analysis post. You will need to use the text in your post.

2. Quote another part of the reading for the week that helps you understand the original Quote Analysis post or raises questions for you about the Quote Analysis post. When you quote the reading, be sure to put the quotation in quotation marks and include the page number of the quote, plus the name of the author.

All posts should be approx. 300-400 words, not including the quotations you use. Posts will be graded on a scale of 0-5. The following rubric will be used when grading discussion posts:

5: The post is clear, thoughtful, and makes use of the assigned readings. Information taken from the texts is cited and enclosed in quotation marks. The post clearly addresses all parts of the assignment. The position of the post's author is clear and the argument the post's author gives in support of the author's position is valid. The post contains a descriptive title.

4: The post is mostly clear and makes use of the readings for the week in presenting the questions and in the critical reflection component. The post addresses all parts of the assignment, though one or two of the answers may not be well supported.

3: One of the following occurs: A post that simply summarizes the reading or another post OR a post that generally makes sense, though parts of it may not be clear. The post may contain an invalid argument or an argument that is not based on Rawls's "public reasons". The post utilizes the readings for the week in a general way, but the author of the post does not make clear exactly where the information is contained in the readings. The author's critical reflection isn't clear; the author of the post states but does not describe her/his/their position; the argument the author of the post makes in support of his/her/their position is not valid; the author fails to answer one part of the assignment.

2: Two of the following occur: The author's questions are not clear or the critical reflection isn't clear; the author of the post states but does not describe her or his position; the argument the author of the post makes in support of their/his/her position is not valid; the author fails to answer one part of the assignment.

1: The author of the post gives short, perfunctory responses to the parts of the assignment with little to no explanation, OR three or more of the following occur: The author's critical reflection isn't clear; the author of the post states but does not describe her or his position; the argument the author of the post makes in support of his/her/their position is not valid; the author fails to answer one part of the assignment.

0: One or more of the following occurs: The post does not address the assignment or is off-topic; the author of the post does not make any clear reference to the readings for the week; the post was made after the deadline, or the author starts a thread after 5 people have already started threads. Additionally, if a student does not post for the week, the student will receive a 0 for that post.

Dr. Monica Janzen
Anoka Ramsey Community College, Philosophy Department
Monica.janzen@anokaramsey.edu

General Guidelines for Online Discussions

Explanation of online discussion board work found in my syllabus:

Learning Activities: Learning Activities (LA's) will give you a chance to practice what we have learned. You will find these on the discussion board on D2L. We will all answer questions and respond to one another as if we are having a class discussion. For this reason, respect for one another will be crucial. Because we don't see one another face to face, it can sometimes be difficult to interpret "tone" on the discussion board. Be mindful of this, and be careful that you convey respect for diverse positions. We will not always agree—and that is expected! You will never be graded on your position, but rather on the evidence you present to support your position.

You will answer an initial question posted each week. This is what I am looking for in your initial post:

- Your answer should be between 300-500 words. Include a word count at the end of your initial post.
- Draw from our text and reading, using quotes and showing your knowledge of the readings. You can give page numbers from the text, and if you use any additional sources (which is not required), you should give a full citation.
- At the end of your answer, you will pose a question for another student. This question should invite discussion, not simply a "yes/no" response.

You will then respond to 2 student posts. This is what I am looking for in your responses:

- Your responses to others will be between 200-250 words. Include a word count at the end of each response.
- You will start by answering the question at the end of their post.
- You must further the discussion by adding information, clarifying concepts, and/or asking additional questions. You must continue to draw from our text and class materials
- I always appreciate when you respond to a student who has not yet gotten a response.

Regular Grading of LA's: Usually, I will grade LA's based on completeness and effort. You will be penalized for leaving a part of the assignment undone: failing to ask a question at the end of your post, writing less than the required word count, failing to use evidence from the text/readings, failing to post a total of 3 times. These points are easily made if you put effort into your posts. I will regularly participate on the discussion board answering questions and being an active presence. This more regular grading/checking will result in 18 points/ LA.

"Pop LA's": However, 3 random times during this semester, I will carefully grade your LA. This will be almost like a "pop quiz" in class. I will carefully read your post and grade not only on completeness but also on how thoughtful your response have been. I will post a detailed rubric under Content for you. This "Pop LA" will be graded at 35 points x 3 random times this semester. *****Please see the detailed grading explanation and rubric for Learning Activities under Content (Important Course Documents) for precise details about grading.

Example of a Specific Learning Activity Prompt:

Learning Activity 1: Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment and Ethics

This session, we are studying Kant's ethical theory. This theory is a deontological theory—it is not concerned about consequences, but rather what our reason points to as specific moral duties. For Kant, an action is not morally permissible if it violates any formulations of the Categorical Imperative. So, before we act, we must ask whether everyone can do this action (universal formulation) or whether our actions might treat another as a means to an end rather than an end in themselves (humanity as an ends formulation). If we **ALL** can't do an action, then no one can morally do that action. Likewise, if an action treats another as a mere means, it is not morally permissible.

We also read in our text book about the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. Here is a short video by a student about this study. You may watch it if you are looking for more information on this study: Or follow this link: <https://youtu.be/FFWiLKA-91s>

Then, Answer ONE of the following questions.

1. In the video embedded above, the student says that the Tuskegee Syphilis Study violates the patients' rights. This is one way to explain why this experiment is wrong. But, how might you explain that this experiment is wrong using one of the theories we have studied so far in class?

OR

2. Answer the "Decision Scenario 1: Tuskegee Effect" on page 807. There are follow-up questions to your reading on page 807. Use these in your answer. It's important to distinguish between the Tuskegee Experiment and the "Tuskegee Effect" in medical practice. Make sure you consider this in your answers.

You will answer one of the questions above. This is what I am looking for in your initial post:

- Your answer should be a minimum of 300 words. Include a word count at the end of your initial post.
- Draw from our text and reading, using quotes and showing your knowledge of the readings. You should give page numbers from the text, and if you use any additional sources (which is not required), you should give a full citation.
- At the end of your answer, you will pose a question for another student. This question should invite discussion, not simply a "yes/no" response.

You will then respond to 2 student posts. This is what I am looking for in your responses:

- Your responses to others will be a minimum of 200 words. Include a word count at the end of each response.
- You will start by answering the question at the end of their post.
- You must further the discussion by adding information, clarifying concepts, and/or asking additional questions. You must continue to draw from our text and class materials.
- I always appreciate when you respond to someone who has not yet gotten a response.

Dr. Mo Janzen

Introduction to Medical Ethics, PHIL 1200--Online

Learning Activity Grading Rubric and Explanation

In your syllabus, you can find information regarding what I am looking for in your answers to Learning Activities. Here is what your syllabus says:

- Your answer should be a minimum of 300 words. Include a word count at the end of your initial post.
- An “A” post will be between 300-500 words. But, it will not be full of filler/fluff. Your initial post will be concise and in depth. It will also contain no grammar errors and be written clearly.
- Draw from our text and reading, using quotes and showing your knowledge of the readings. You can give page numbers from the text, and if you use any additional sources (which is not required), you should give a full citation.
- An “A” post will do more than just quote the text. It will create connections between course materials. It will provide clear analysis of course materials explaining in your own words what textual support means. It will apply this textual support to the specific case mentioned in the LA.
- At the end of your answer, you will pose a question for another student. This question should invite discussion, not simply a “yes/no” response.
- An “A” post will pose a thoughtful question that shows a depth of understanding of the material. This question will invite discussion and reflection.

You will then respond to 2 student posts. This is what I am looking for in your responses:

- Your responses to others will be a minimum of 200 words. Include a word count at the end of each response.
- “A” responses will be between 200-250 words. But, it will not be full of filler/fluff. It will be concise and in depth. It will also contain no grammar errors and be written clearly.
- You will start by answering the question at the end of their post.
- An “A” response will fully engage with the question and answer using class materials as well as the student’s own original/thoughtful ideas.
- You must further the discussion by adding information, clarifying concepts, and/or asking additional questions. You should continue to draw from the text and class materials in each response.
- An “A” response will add relevant, and accurate information. It will clarify concepts that may have been incorrect or not clear. It may ask additional questions that further the discussion or seeks to create connections between course materials. It draws on class materials in an obvious way.
- I always appreciate when you respond to a student who has not yet gotten a response.

An “A” initial posts and responses exceed my basic expectations and are exceptional.

- The author’s own analysis and ideas are clear, relevant, and substantial.
- The author uses relevant and numerous instances of textual support (including page number from the text) well-beyond what is expected/assigned.
- The question is fully answered via exceptional insight with no noticeable lapses throughout.
- A clean read that is free of distracting errors.
- Responses begin by answering the question posed, draw on class materials, and further the discussion.
- All 3 of the author’s posts match this criteria. If the 3 posts are inconsistent, then the average grade will be given for the 3 posts.

A “B” initial post and responses is strong with a few lapses.

- The author’s own analysis and ideas are clear, relevant, and substantial with only minor lapses.
- The author uses relevant and numerous instances of textual support (including page number from the text).
- The question is fully answered via exceptional insight with only minor lapses for any single point.
- A clean read that is free of distracting errors.
- Responses begin by answering the question posed, draw on class materials, and further the discussion.

A “C” initial post and responses has as many strengths as weaknesses.

- The author’s own analysis and ideas are noticeable, not substantial.
- The author uses the expected portion of textual support (although page numbers may be missing) and word counts.
- The answer attempts to address the question but lapses at some points creating an adequate not exceptional response.
- Answer exhibits a few errors that are not distracting.
- May lapse in one of the following areas: use of class materials, posing a question, or furthering the discussion.

A “D” initial post and responses weaknesses begin to overwhelm strengths.

- The author’s own analysis and ideas are limited or not consistent.
- The author uses minimal textual support or textual support (although page numbers may be missing) that does not connect well to the topic.
- The answer attempts to address the question but does not convincingly do so.
- The answer has numerous distracting errors.
- Lapses in one or more of the following areas: use of class materials, posing a question, furthering the discussion, word count, and number of posts

An “F” initial post and responses do not offer enough to effectively evaluate/off-topic/late

- The author’s own ideas and analysis are not evident or insubstantial in quality or quantity.
- The author does not use any meaningful textual support.
- The answer does not address the question or does not do so in an adequate enough amount to assess.
- The answer has numerous distracting errors.
- Lapses in one or more of the following areas: use of class materials, posing a question, word count, number of posts.

*** If your 3 posts are inconsistent, then the average grade will be given for the 3 posts.