

Student-Student and Teacher-Student Interaction in the Discussion Area

The basics of student discussions in Canvas:

- Provide a set of questions that help students process or review, think critically or creatively about the course material
- Give directions about expectations for posting, such as number of words, due date, format, how to indicate which question you are responding to; Require posts
- Provide expectations for replies, such as how to read and reply, provide new ideas, politely disagree, give information or examples to support comments; Require replies
- Show models to students of effective posts and replies, and explain why they are effective
- As the teacher, read and reply to students' posts: reply to questions rather than to individual students, personalize responses, save and reuse posts if possible
- Make general comments about posts, such as via announcements—however, that doesn't replace getting into the discussion area and demonstrating how to read, write, and think
- Tips for commenting on students' posts
 - Validate and reinforce good ideas
 - Add ideas/examples/information students have not thought of
 - Correct/redirect students who are confused or incorrect
- Tips for setting up posts
 - Be clear (about how to post, when to post)
 - Be consistent (ie: post/reply on same days each week)
 - Be redundant (post written directions, link to video with instructions; include due dates in Announcements, on Homepage, on Calendar, in Discussion area)
- Tips on grading
 - Give full points for timely completion, to encourage participation
 - Take off points for late posts, to keep students on track with the coursework

NOTE: While text-based posts in Canvas may seem retro, intensive and extensive reading and writing tasks are important because research finds a direct relationship between rigorous academic literacy and gains in learning.

Evidence= Students whose classes reflect high expectations (more than 40 pages of reading a week and more than 20 pages of writing a semester) gained more [critical thinking skills] than other students.

- From *Academically Adrift*

Beyond the basics of student discussions in Canvas:

- Student presentations using slides, pages, PP, or even video: Students read and comment on presentations (2 things they learned; 2 things they liked), which allows for individuality and creativity and students teaching students
- Students posts images or photos in the discussion area, such as snaps of their drawings, graphic organizers, or annotations on their books, and comment on these

SAMPLE CANVAS PAGE

How to Reply to Another Student's Post in the Discussions Area

Think of the Discussions area as a place where we, students and the teacher, can "talk" to each other about what we have read, and, most importantly how we understand and interpret what we have read. The idea is to have a conversation, an exchange of ideas.

In order for this to happen, each student must read all the posts in the Discussion area before he or she posts. If no one has posted on the topic you are interested in, then you can write whatever you want. But if another student has already written about the topic, you should read what that person has written and then "reply."

So, when might you reply?

- **In response to another student's first post.** By Friday midnight each week, all students should write a first post in response to one of the discussion questions or in response to an original question. If another student has already posted about a question you would also like to address, then you should read and reply to that student's post. This reply counts as your first post.
- **As a second post.** By Sunday midnight each week, all students should write in response to at least one other student's post.

When you reply, you should add some new ideas and/or new examples to the discussion. There is no point in repeating another student's ideas because everyone in the class will have already "heard" these when they read the weekly posts. You have basically have three options when replying to a previous post:

- 1) **If you agree** with the first writer, then you might add some new quotes, examples, or details from the book to support the same idea.
- 2) **If you disagree**, you might explain why you see things differently and, of course, give support from the book in terms of quotes, examples, or details.
- 3) **If you have a different interpretation** or you want to add an idea you think the first writer overlooked, then you aren't really agreeing or disagreeing. You might just explain and support your different idea.

Whether you agree, disagree, or have a different point of view, you might want to state this early on in your post. For instance, you could write "I agree with Susan that . . ." or "I disagree with Joe when he says . . ." Of course, you might agree with some points and disagree with others--you can make this clear, too.

To reply, click on the first post so you can read the message. Then click on the "Reply" button at the bottom of that post. Post your message in the blank Message box. Click on "Submit" when finished. Your post should appear as a threaded post under the first student's post.

NOTE: It's not acceptable to post after other students and not add anything new to the discussion. If you don't have anything else to say on the topic, then select a new question to write

about. That's why there's several choices of topics to write about each week, as well as the option of creating your own question.

EXAMPLE: Below is an example--with my comments--to illustrate how one student posted and two students "replied" to that first post. Read the posts and my comments carefully—both students who replied clearly added new ideas, quotes, and examples to the discussion.

Directions for Posting: Write a response to one of the assigned readings by 17th and 18th century women writers. Select the reading you liked best and explain why you liked it.

Students' Posts

Student One (First Post)

My favorite poem of those we read was "The Disappointment" by Aphra Behn. I was really struck by the time in which the poem was written. In 1676, women were not considered to be sexual beings by society--only as long as it was within marriage. Yet, Ms. Behn wrote about a woman's sexual desire outside of marriage.

Even more so, I was surprised to read about a man's sexual failing in a poem from 1676. In the poem, Ms. Behn describes in detail an encounter between a shepherd and a maid, Lysander and Cloris. After a playful and sexual beginning, Cloris finally succumbs to Lysander's advances and allows him to touch her "alter" before she offers her "virgin innocence". It is then that Lysander is overcome by the situation and either premature ejaculates or just loses his erection. Behn describes Lysander as a "th'enraged youth" trying to call its "fleeting vigor back" with the "insensible fell weeping in his hand"; to me, it read as if he were angry at his flaccid penis in his hand. In the end, Cloris leaves disappointed.

I found this to be incredibly funny and entertaining to read in a 17th century poem and I also found this to be very feminist for the time. The main points of the poem appear to be Lysander's failing and Cloris' disappointment, but throughout the poem Cloris was in complete control of her own decision to have sex out of wedlock. Cloris wasn't portrayed as a damsel in distress or a prostitute, but a young woman in charge of her sexual identity. I think it brings to light how slowly social change happens; the poem was written nearly 400 years ago and women are still fighting for equality.

Student Two (First Reply)

I agree with you, Student One, in that "The Disappointment" was my favorite to read thus far. It was difficult for me to figure out exactly what Lysander's "failing" was referring to at first, and I had to read the poem several times over to make sense of what had happened. I liked to imagine Cloris and Lysander have lusted for each other for some time before the sexual event had taken place. The line "finding that God of her Desires, Disarm'd of all his pow'rful Fires" makes me think of going

Comments

Student One clearly identifies the poem she writes about and begins with her first impressions. She explains what she feels are key ideas in the poem and provides details and quotes for support. She focuses on how the woman in the poem seems in control of the sexual encounter.

Student Two begins well by acknowledging the first student and stating she agrees her post.

on a date with the school homecoming king only to find that he is not all he is chalked up to be! But this is a rudimentary comparison. The poem itself gives me the feeling that Lysander was forcing himself upon Cloris at times, and he pays the price with his sexual failing that disappoints Cloris so deeply.

She discusses her difficulties reading the poem and how she figured out what was happening. She adds new quotes and details to the discussion, and raises a new idea about Cloris' internal struggle and new sexual awakening.

It also seems to me that there is an internal struggle within Cloris herself, in that she might be ruined if anyone found she has given up her chastity. She says, "My dearer Honor, ev'n to you, I cannot - must not give - retire," and this tells me that she is aware of consequences, but chooses to forge ahead with Lysander anyway. This represents a way of forward thinking to me in this time period, and I love that about this piece. The poem itself might be about a great "disappointment" in a sexual encounter with a lover, but I feel that Cloris has been awakened to her own desires and becomes a bit more self-aware at the poem's end.

Student Three (Second Reply)

Like Student One and Student Two, I really enjoyed how this poem holistically captured an inexperienced sexual encounter. It possessed the expectations of sex- the transcendent and symbolic instance of two bodies becoming one, the fierce and unbridled passion in the woods- and its often disappointing realities. I think the poem seeks to tear down something considered sacred to be seen in the light of stark reality. Cloris clearly has been made to believe that her virginity is an essential part of what makes her valuable. Sex is given a spiritual and moral facet, while Behn's euphemisms are riddled with references to the divine. Mentions of Venus, Daphne and Apollo, place mythical expectations on the two lovers. The poet even chooses to assign Priapus, the well endowed fertility god, as her phallic symbol, and a holy altar as her yonic. In this poem, the act of sex is compared to ritualistic sacrifice.

Student Three also acknowledges the previous posts, then focuses on a new angle: how the poet suggests sex is not sacred. He continues this novel line of thinking with more quotes from the poem to show how even though deities are referenced, both lovers are brought down to earth and to the realities of sex.

I believe that Cloris' disappointment and shame comes from the expectations that have been placed on her. The tone of the poem dramatically shifts after their tryst is over, going so far as to literally have the "god of her desires disarmed of all his awful fires." Lysander descends from godhood to a very unhappy, dewy boy lying in the meadow. I think Behn's message here is that sex is not attached to something like God or the heavens. Virginity is not a sacred offering, and sex is not a sacrifice of spiritual importance. I feel that her idea, and idea that I still think is a tough pill to swallow for many people alive today, is that sex doesn't draw power from a deity's covenant, nor is it any indication of a person's self worth. Sex simply is, and values and expectations that might be placed on it will only bring shame and disappointment.