

Guidelines for Completing Discussion Board Forums: Q&A Discussions and Critical Comments



Discussion Board Forums

In this four-week class, each week will feature a two-part interactive discussion/critique assignment:

Part I: Q&A Discussion Forum

Part II: Critical Comment Forum

The entire assignment is worth 10 points (weighted at 7.5%). These two-part Discussion Board Forums comprise an important part of your grade, totaling 30% of your course grade for all four weeks.

Part I: Q&A Discussion Forum: You will be asked to come up with two original questions based on the work of two different authors in each week's required readings. Think about what stood out to you in the works in question—what ideas, theories, or approaches did you find to be interesting, engaging, or perhaps intriguing or challenging? (See each Discussion Forum for the specific authors or works you may select from in forming your questions.)

Your task is then to do your best to answer each of your own questions as incisively and thoroughly as possible within a word-count range of around 350-500 words maximum (posts with fewer than 250 words will not receive any credit). The word count includes your question but not any citations. You must cite at least one source, which will be the particular essay or article from the required readings you are addressing. You are welcome to bring in as many others sources as you may need, but this is optional. Just be sure to cite any source from which you take ideas, arguments, or passages of language within the body of your response (next to the quoted or paraphrased passages), including the full source information at the end of your response (you need not do a separate works cited or reference page for this assignment). Your score for this part of the assignment will be based on the relevance, sophistication, and originality of your questions as well as the insight,

understanding, and incisiveness expressed in your answers. This assignment will be due at the end of day on each Friday of the course.

In these essay-style responses to your own questions, you should express a point of view and support your view with good reasons, evidence, examples, expert opinion, etc. High marks will not be achieved by simply reporting back information from the text or other sources. Philosophical thinking and writing involves more than presenting information; beyond doing this, you must also critically assess the issue in question—this involves original thinking and analysis. Moreover, you should attempt to come to some final position in response to the question and include evaluation of others' positions or views on the issues involved in the question. Work for originality and development of critical analyses and evaluations.

Critical Comment Forum: The second part of the Discussion Board Forum requires going back to your peers' Q&A Discussion posts (Part I). Select one Q&A from the work of two different class peers and write a 200-400 word critical commentary on each one (do not critique your own Q&A posts). If two other students have already posted critiques of a particular Q&A discussion post, you must move on to one that has not been critiqued or has only one other critical comment posted. So, ideally, each Q&A discussion will have two critical comments. It may happen that two students post a second critique to the same Q&A at the same time, resulting in three critical comments, with the later ones being simultaneously posted. This is not really a problem and nothing to worry about. The main idea here is to expand the interactivity and general scope of the discussion. Your critiques are due by end of day each Sunday for the first three weeks of class; since class ends on a Saturday, your Week Four critical comments will be due on the final Saturday of class.

It is important to note that a critique or critical commentary may be positive, negative, or a mixture of the two. We tend to use the word, "criticize," or the expression, "being critical" with a mostly negative connotation, as in finding fault with something or "putting something (or someone) down." That is not the intention here, although part of what you're doing in writing a critique may indeed be finding fault. But the faults you are pointing out will have nothing to do with the author himself or herself. You will be looking for errors in reasoning and argumentation, in reporting of relevant facts or information, in overlooking or misconstruing important points relevant to the question posed, and so on.

You should also be looking for precision and clarity in thought and written expression and overall comprehensibility of the written response. Essentially, you will be analyzing and evaluating two peer Q&A Discussion posts and weighing in on what you think they did well and where they fell short, in terms of both posing an interesting, insightful, or useful question and providing a thought-provoking or at least satisfactory answer to that question. You may also want to offer a different answer to the question posed, or add points to the answer you are critiquing. You need not cite any sources in your critiques, but of course you are free to do so. Don't forget to review the document, "Writing a Critique of Another Person's Argument, which you will find a link to in the Discussion Board instructions for each week.

Formatting Your Posts: Click on the title link in each Discussion Forum to create your Q&A threads. YOU SHOULD CREATE A NEW THREAD FOR EACH ONE OF YOUR TWO QUESTIONS. You will then return later in the week to post your critical comments INSIDE of the

two Q&A threads of your choice (remember that if a Q&A thread already has two comment replies, you need to move on to another Q&A thread that has no more than one reply). This means you will be creating two original threads and responding to two threads (each by a different peer) each week to complete both parts of the assignment--the Q&A Discussion and the Critical Comments.

1) Part I: Each one of your two Q&A Discussion threads should be formatted as follows (remember...these are two separate threads):

First thread:

My first question is:

My answer to this question is:

Second thread:

My second question is:

My answer to this question is:

2) Part II: Critical Comments: Find a Q&A post that you would like to critique. After opening the thread and thinking about the question and the answer, post your critique. To do this, click on the blue "Reply"  button, then enter your comments in the editing window that opens. Following this procedure will allow for a very clear lay out in the continuing discussion. No special format is required for your critical comments.

You may wish to comment on someone else's critique of a Q&A Discussion. This is highly encouraged and will enhance your learning experience in this assignment as well as interaction with your peers. To comment on someone's Critical Comments or critique, this time, the reply button will be grey .

3) To repeat, please post your Q&A Discussion by end of day on each Friday of the course. Critical comments are due by end of day on Sunday for Weeks 1-3; for the final week (Week 4), please post your critical comments by the Saturday that is the last day of the course

4) Final reminder: Do not submit any written assignments until you have proofread your work for stylistic, grammatical, and spelling errors.

NO LATE POSTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.