

## Leading Discussions

Discussions are a means for students to keep up with and discuss the current and most important literature at a deeper level. Other benefits include (i) acquisition of critical thinking and appraisal skills and (ii) improvement of reading & communication habits & knowledge of the relevant material. Leading discussions also provides the opportunity for reflection. What do I/the participants bring to the group? What surprises or challenges me? What behaviors am I most familiar or comfortable with? What am I like on-stage?

**You are required to be the “discussion leader” on a selected article. This requires you to lead the class in an engaging and in-depth manner about the article of that week’s class. Your job is to summarize, establish ground-rules and lead the class by managing the speakers in an effective way. Below are some instructions to start you off:**

1. Do your research. Read the article thoroughly with a pen/pencil in hand.
2. Take many notes about the content & mark/note down relevant pages/paragraphs. You can use these notes for ideas on how to guide your discussion. Narrow down most important points & prepare an outline so that you can keep the meeting moving smoothly.
3. Consider the main arguments. Make a list of questions for each of the arguments you have identified. Develop your article (1) summary and (2) questions in such a way that your fellow group members will feel encouraged to share their own thoughts. Avoid questions that are too general but don't make them so specific that there is no room to explore the topic. If you found something noteworthy, the other members probably did too and will have plenty to say.
4. Manage your time and content well. In a 30 minute discussion, 3-4 **good** questions should suffice. It is also good to have 2 or 3 smaller sub-questions for each main question. However, you should prepare for at least 1.5 times as much material as you think you'll cover, just in case students are particularly quiet that day or in case one line of inquiry wasn't as fruitful as you thought it was.
5. As the leader, try to keep the conversation on course. Maintain a friendly atmosphere, but keep everyone focused on the matter at hand. Use your position to guide the group when participation is lacking, but allow each member the chance to speak. Do not let someone else take control over your role as leader of the discussion.

### **I will be grading your:**

**Preparation of the oral component (6%):** a summary of the paper, your response to the ideas and the 4-5 critical analysis questions that will allow you to maintain a discussion for about ~30 minutes. The discussion should be scholarly with probing questions to bring out participants' ideas about the issues & article further. Re-visit past contributions, articles, events and incorporate them into the discussion, if possible. I will be focusing on your attempt to manage the discussion, engage the class, inclusion of other readings/literature, public speaking skills and your attempt to critically evaluate the topic and readings in a collaborative way

**Preparation of discussion & questions (9%):** 5 pg double-space **response paper** that complements your discussion. The written paper should be a deep examination of the piece where you respond to the ideas – show me you not only understood the article, but also that you have a good grasp of the topic. Response papers appear deceptively simple since, as in this case, you are expected to produce a 5 pg double spaced paper, maximum. However, this assumes that you thoroughly understand the material you are working with & have spent a lot of time understanding the text. I will provide more helpful suggestions on how to write response papers in class. However, there are also other guides available through the internet. The exercise is to help to develop your ability to formulate succinct and clear summaries and articulate your position on the subject. You are not expected to do outside research for the position paper and no bibliography is needed. The article provides you with sufficient ideas to start with formulating your response and writing down your arguments.

Ask yourself, did you formulate an academic and critical response – or is it a personal rant? Remember to respond to content. Do not use I, but rather “Smith effectively discusses...”.