



SWC 11: Writing Discussion Posts

Discussion posts are common writing assignments that students encounter whether taking classes online, in-person, or in a hybrid format. Discussion posts are designed for professors to see that you understand the concepts and/or themes from the course materials. Discussions provide students with a platform to express their opinions or ask questions about the material.

Getting Started

Expectations surrounding discussion posts vary by class and instructor, so it is important to consider any instructions provided. Before you begin drafting your post, consider the following:

- **The assignment prompt(s).** How thoroughly is your professor expecting you to discuss the topic? Is your professor requesting that you address multiple questions or only one, or are you being asked to simply share your response to the materials in general?
- **The assignment length.** Are you expected to write a paragraph, a specific word count, or some other length? How does this effect how thoroughly you can address the prompt?
- **Additional expectations.** Does your professor expect you to use outside sources, a specific citation style, write with a particular tone, etc.?

Make sure you differentiate between summary and analysis, particularly if your professor has asked you to discuss a specific passage or chapter from your reading assignment. Instead of only telling the reader what the text says, explain why the text is important and how it connects to any overarching themes or ideas.

Brainstorming

Keeping these factors in mind, brainstorm ideas for your discussion post:

What are your initial thoughts regarding the prompt?

What connections can you make between the prompt and class readings?

How do all of these ideas relate to one another?



Drafting

Once you've selected your main idea(s), it's time to begin drafting. As you draft, keep the following tips in mind:

- **Be precise:** Stay focused on the main idea(s) you have chosen. While discussion posts may not be as formal as essays, they should still show thoughtful organization.
- **Be concise:** Make each word count. While essays allow room to develop a comprehensive perspective on a topic, discussion posts are designed for you to present a briefer understanding of and personal take on a topic.
- **Start early:** Since discussion posts are typically shorter than essays, it is easy to postpone writing until the last minute. However, completing readings early will give you time to consider the text. This will also give you time write a thoughtful response as well as the opportunity to revise before submitting your post.
- **Be genuine:** Discussions posts are a great way to start a dialogue about your own interpretations and opinions. Encourage conversations with your classmates by asking open-ended questions.
- **Understand your own opinion:** Take the time to understand your viewpoint on the topic(s). This will aid in your overall comprehension and conversations with classmates.
- **Use the rubric if you have one:** Sometimes professors will include a rubric, which is an assessment tool your professor will use to review your discussion post. You can use the rubric to ensure you have met all expectations.

Discussion Posts Responses

When writing discussion post responses, move beyond simple agreement or disagreement with the original post. Build on the discussion instead. You can either comment more generally to the **entire post** or select a **specific sentence or phrase** to comment on. You can write about how the post/writer:

- changed your perspective
- effectively argued points
- helped you understand the course material better
- related to the points you explored in your own post or to your own experiences
- motivated you to approach your next readings differently

Including questions (for the student or your professor) in your responses also helps show that you are engaging with the discussion and are interested in learning more!