

## Discussion Forum Guidelines and Grading

Most weeks, your assignments will include an online discussion. The instructor will post questions (in the Forums area in Sakai) related to the week's course material. Students are expected to post a well-developed, detailed response to the questions and to respond substantively to at least two classmates' postings. **All postings must be expressed using clear, grammatically correct, professional, and respectful language.**

***Your discussion board grade will depend on the how well you do the following:***

Address all parts of the question thoroughly and accurately and adhere to any instructions provided	COMPLETENESS & ACCURACY	2 pts
Express yourself clearly using your own words, with minimal spelling or grammar mistakes	WRITING & MECHANICS	2 pts
Include specific, relevant details from readings or other course material and demonstrate an understanding of course material	EVIDENCE & ANALYSIS	2 pts
Show original thought by presenting facts and ideas that do not restate what others have said	INDEPENDENCE OF THOUGHT	2 pts
Include at least two replies to classmates that extend the conversation by adding substantive information or insights	INTERACTIVITY	2 pts

### Important note about plagiarism

Thanks to modern technology, it is very easy to copy material from just about anywhere and paste it into a discussion forum post, essay, paper, or other assignment. But this is a temptation you want to be sure to avoid. Why?

- Because it is plagiarism and the penalties for it are harsh (ranging from a zero on the assignment to an F in the course or worse).
- Because it's easier than you may think for instructors to detect it (plus we have tools to help us).
- But most importantly -- because it doesn't help you learn. Reading material, thinking about it, and then doing the hard work of expressing it in your own words is an excellent way to understand and remember it.

Occasionally, it can be OK to **quote** another's words to add emphasis to your writing. But think of quotes like strong spices in cooking: a little bit goes a long way and too much will ruin the dish. If you must quote others, do so sparingly.

**Any time you use another's words you must put them in quotation marks -- no exceptions! And you must provide a reference to the source.**

For discussion board posts, if quoting the textbook, a simple MLA in-text citation will do – just note the author's last name and page number in parentheses at the end of your quote, like this: (Volti, 189). If quoting another source, you'll need to include details (such as a web address) to clearly tell readers where you got it. But again, in most cases it is better to state it in your own words instead!