

Guidelines for Discussion Groups

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The grade for Discussion Groups will be based on your ability to do the following:

The idea of a discussion group is to come in prepared to lead the class in discussion on the texts and lecture materials already lectured on. The group should come with questions (organized among the members, as below, last points) as well as short commentaries that reflect on materials already covered in class. Or, if the assignment is to present a moral argument, then come with both an argument and the commentaries. The idea is to engage the class in focused discussion of the relevant topics/texts to everyone's benefit including your own.

The difference between a discussion group and a presentation is that the former requires students to lead a discussion section with some brief review and questions of what has already been presented in lecture and readings. With the latter you are responsible for presenting the material for the first time to the class and then leading a discussion section based on the new material.

For classes using ethical theory and ideas (Phil 61 and 186): Since this is a class in ethics, I would like you to not only come in with questions, but with an argument pro or con (or more than one, pro *and* con) using our form: moral standard, premises, conclusion with a moral judgment. Use the theories. I think this will help you and the class understand what a moral argument is and how to use it. As above, if you have more than one argument, great; they could even be two different representations of either side of an ethical debate. Present both. This is especially true if you can't agree amongst yourselves, then reflect the disagreement in two different arguments. Many will do power point of their arguments and support. *All* groups must supply the rest of the class with a one to two page handout with the argument, supporting facts and questions to the class.

To reiterate the above, regardless of whether your class is a moral issues class, the class should have a one to two page handout that you present to them in class that contains your major points, support and questions. So, coordinate your material. If you get it done early enough, you can bring it by my office hour and I will have it copied. Otherwise, it is your responsibility.

This is your own presentation, so you are responsible for bringing your own computer for power point. I don't supply you with that. If you use a Mac, you will need a special adaptor for the overhead projector. You can get those at Instructional Resources in Dudley Moorehead Hall.

This is a group effort. You should ‘network’ with each other in advance to decide what you want to say and in what order. I expect to see some tangible effort on the part of all group members. Since it is a group effort, make sure you are coordinated. If you have networked as above, then there will be less possibilities of incoherence or overlapping ideas. I’d like to have some of the interactive flavor of a real discussion between all of us in the class. But this doesn’t mean you don’t come in with some structure.

Make sure by your organization and presentation, that each member *shows* what they have contributed to the effort. Some groups in the past have annotated individual questions or points with their names. This is helpful to me. (You could give me a “professor’s” copy noting who did what.)

Always speak clearly and in a way that everyone else can hear.

Use the whiteboard as well for additional points, etc. Quotes, important passages, key words that you or your group use as part of your discussion should be on the board—or in your handout. But not all quotes need be there. For those you don’t put down, make sure you have page references to the course text you are using or references for texts that aren’t course texts. That means: Always refer to the book you are using, including page numbers. These are important techniques that enable the rest of the class to follow along and get the full force of the ideas you are conveying.