

BODIES IN PLACE
Leading a Discussion with Panfora
Fall 2003

Objectives:

1. To ensure student control of the section
2. To encourage proactive engagement with the texts and lectures
3. To prompt comparisons of online and face-to-face discussions
4. To develop oral presentation skills

You will work with partners to lead part of section this quarter by moderating a discussion that begins on Panfora, our asynchronous chat application, and continues in section. Your discussion leadership constitutes part of your participation work for the class. This responsibility consists of three sets of activities: your initial post, your moderation of the resulting online discussion, and your moderation of the continuing discussion in class.

I. Step One: The Initial Post

After completing the reading for the day you are assigned to lead, you will work with your partner to start a discussion thread in Panfora at http://panfora.stanford.edu/Forums/ihum54_1042. Please post under our section's thread under the appropriate text. In your initial post please include the following:

1. A set of three analytical discussion questions for your classmates that you feel are most important to the concerns of our course. Remember to avoid yes/no questions. Somewhere in the three questions you must
 - a. Ask about one or more of the elements from step 1 in relation to a specific concept from a previous lecture. The faculty may not have lectured on the text under discussion yet. Do not let this concern you. Every lecture in the course engages with at least one idea that has significance for the other texts we read. You need not use a concept from the lecture that immediately precedes your day. You may use any concept from any previous lecture that works.
 - b. Ask a question about one or more particular passage from the text
 - c. Ask a question that is related in a more general way to the themes of our course.

You are welcome to post interesting visual material related to your questions if you wish.

Please see the class reading schedule for the dates and times at which you will need to begin to post. This schedule will be handed out on Thursday, October 2 in section.

Step Two: II. Moderating the Online Discussion

As your classmates post, you will begin your duties as moderator. You will read and respond to their posts in a supportive fashion that nevertheless shepherds the discussion in an interesting direction. You can accomplish that goal by

1. checking regularly for posts – make a schedule with your partners ahead of time of moments in the 48-hour response period (between classes, after dinner, before bed, etc.) to check in, see how things are going, and moderate with posts that work on the following:
2. connecting different classmates' posts by comparing and contrasting their ideas (differences in opinion can be very productive – highlight these when you find them)
3. synthesizing the positions taken so far and asking a new follow-up question (this can help classmates avoid repeating positions already articulated)
4. (hopefully unnecessary) defusing any disruptive disagreements. Some disagreements are productive so you will have to decide whether you should intervene.

Make sure you and your partners share equally in this responsibility – I suggest alternating in your moderation schedule. Remember to take notes on any posts that seem intriguing but unclear so you can ask the author of those posts to clarify their positions..

III. Step 3: Moderating Class Face-to-Face Discussion

During section you will continue your role as moderator. Depending on my plans and yours you may be leading class anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes. This activity has three steps:

1. Summarize the online discussion very, very briefly. Be sure to keep this summary under five minutes long. You can seek clarity from authors of particular posts during this summary. Invite classmates to represent their own contributions as you go.
2. Pose one new follow-up question to the whole class or lead an activity you design and follow it with questions. Interactive, creative activities that highlight difficult or subtle aspects of the text are most welcome. Activities that demand interaction with the text are treasured. Be sure that the questions and discussion surrounding this activity really do address the issues of the text and course in substantial, sophisticated ways. Please let me know via email before lecture if you plan an activity.
3. Moderate the discussion that follows. This can mean leading them through an activity and the analysis of that activity, calling on your classmates; asking them to explain what they mean if their comments are not clear; asking them to elaborate on a point they have made.

Thank you in advance for prompting all of us to think in new ways!