MASS COMMUNICATIONS
Online Discussion Guidelines

This semester in Mass Communications we will be using an online discussion area to facilitate discussion between the class members. Participation in this online discussion is essential to having success in this course. The online discussion will also be used at times to prompt a deeper level of in class discussion as well. This document is designed to explain the requirements, guidelines, and grading criteria for the online discussion.

From time to time (usually at least once a week) your instructor will post a discussion topic on the class discussion board (go to www.keithcorso.com). You will login to the board, read the question and respond to the question. Not only should you respond to the instructor’s question, but you also read your fellow student’s posting so you can respond to them as well.

General Guidelines for Online Discussion in SPE 205/ BC 253

1. I will post a discussion starting question and will inform you of this in class

2. My initial question will ask you to post YOUR personal response to the question by a specific date and time.

3. My initial discussion starter will also give you a time frame for which to make responses to other learners in the class. Please pay attention to these timelines since your grade on any online discussion is affected by a lack of timeliness.

4. If I or someone in the class asks a question of you need to respond to that question in a timely manner. So check back periodically to make sure there are any questions for you.

5. I will not post on a regular basis to these discussions, but if something catches my eye, I will respond. Please do not interpret my lack of posted comments as disinterest on my part. I read all the messages but ultimately this is your discussion.

6. Even though you are asked to reply to only one other student’s personal response, you can reply to others if you like. Responding to one other students is the minimum requirement.

7. Try to keep each post to no longer than three paragraphs (four sentences to a paragraph). One or two paragraphs will be the norm more than likely.

8. If you express an opinion support it with material from our readings or videos and audios if applicable. When you quote, summarize, or paraphrase from the text be sure to give the page number(s) -- This is important!

(adapted from Danney Ursery, http://www.stedwards.edu/ursery/discuss.htm)
Online Discussion Expectations

- Use respectful and appropriate language in your responses.

- Do not engage in name-calling or personal attacks against another classmate. A first instance will result in a warning and a 10% reduction in this portion of your grade. A second offense will result in being locked out from the course website and an automatic “zero” in this portion of the class grade.

- No posting of inappropriate links or content within your posting. This includes racial or ethnic slurs or pornographic material. Posting of this type of material will most likely result in an automatic failure of the course.

- You are responsible for reading all of the messages that are posted in the online discussion. Not reading messages is the equivalent of sleeping in class.

- In an in-class discussion, you share ideas with all class members. In an online discussion, you can expect that everyone in the class will read your messages.

- If you want to send a private message to someone, click on the person's name and use the email function. Otherwise, all messages are considered public.

- It helps to keep all of us oriented. It helps us maintain a clearer sense of who is speaking and who is being spoken to. As we begin to associate names with tone and ideas, we come to know each other better.

(Adapted from Bernie Fortenbaugh, http://wwwnew.towson.edu/facultyonline/TeachingWithLearnOnline/helpsheets/GuidelinesForOD/GuidelinesForOD.htm)

Grading Rubric

NOTE: Posting on time according to the deadlines set forth in the discussion question you are replying to is essential. Here are some key things to know about deadlines.

- Having all posts on time allows you the ability to get an A on a post as long as it meets the criteria below.
- If you are late on one of the post deadlines, you can get no higher than a B
- If you are late on two or more deadlines that are posted, you can get no higher than a C
- If you miss and don’t post at all before a discussion is closed, then you get a F for that discussion question

A Criteria

- Consistently uses grammatically correct posts with rare misspellings
- Consistently posts topics related to discussion topic; cites additional references related to topic
-Expresses opinions and ideas in a clear and concise manner with obvious connection to topic
-Aware of needs of community; frequently attempts to motivate the group discussion; presents creative approaches to topic
-Offered a critical analysis of an existing posted idea or introduced a different interpretation to an existing idea
-One can often tell an A quality post because the post responds directly to the discussion question. The post refers to ideas and supports those ideas by referencing material read in class or other outside sources.
-These posting usually pose some new way of thinking about an idea or concept. Connections to other material outside mass communications might be referenced. Other materials are brought in to support an idea. These postings are not the restatement of the obvious.

B Criteria

- Few grammatical or spelling errors are noted in posts
- Frequently posts topics that are related to discussion content; prompts further discussion of topic
- Opinions and ideas are stately clearly with occasional lack of connection to topic
- Frequently attempts to direct the discussion and to present relevant viewpoints for consideration by group; interacts freely
- Agreed or disagreed with existing discussion and provided limited justification/explanation--A B quality post shows good critical thinking. It responds to the post directly and while the post shows a great deal of care in its composition, it doesn’t refer to other materials. Analysis is very good, but it doesn’t advance any new ideas about the topic.

C Criteria

- Errors in spelling and grammar evidenced in several posts
- Occasionally posts off topic; most posts are short in length and offer no further insight into the topic
- Unclear connection to topic evidenced in minimal expression of opinions or ideas
- Occasionally makes meaningful reflection on group’s efforts; marginal effort to become involved with group
- Agreed or disagreed with existing discussion but provided no justification/explanation
- These post don’t show much reflective or critical thinking. The post is mostly opinion and unsupported.

D Criteria

-Posted, but both are late
-Utilizes poor spelling and grammar in most posts; posts appear "hasty"
-Posts topics which do not relate to the discussion content; makes short or irrelevant remarks
-Does not express opinions or ideas clearly; no connection to topic
-Does not make effort to participate in learning community as it develops; seems indifferent
-Provided no evidence of agreement or disagreement with existing discussion
-These posts are really nothing more than a cursory look at the topic. Opinion based and not showing any evident of thought or careful construction.

F Criteria - No posts made