

# ENGW 4341 Current Theories of Rhetoric & Composition

## Discussion Leader Assignment Sheet

### Overview

In the first week of classes, you will sign up to lead discussion for one class session. You should prepare to lead a 25-minute discussion (not deliver a lecture) on the reading(s) assigned for the class session that you chose. All other members of the class will have read the articles, so there is no reason to summarize it from beginning to end. Your task is to **develop a set of questions** that clarify the main points from the article(s) and encourage those in the class to make connections to other course readings and discussions. As you formulate these questions, try to anticipate class members' responses and be prepared with follow-up questions. You may ask students to respond in writing to a question or two individually, or to discuss and make notes about your questions in pairs or small groups, etc, and then use their responses during the discussion. During the discussion, **encourage class members to voice differing responses** and encourage your classmates to negotiate the various points of view rather than simply supplying the "right" answer.

For ideas about how you might structure discussion, read "The Big List of Class Discussion Strategies": <http://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/>.

### Preparing a Handout

In addition, **prepare a handout**, and bring copies to class the day you lead discussion. You'll need a total of 16 copies.

Follow these general guidelines for the handout:

- Include your name.
- Describe the thesis or focus of the article in your own words.
- How does the author support the thesis—specific details, examples, descriptions, etc.? Include powerful quotes, statistics, and so forth.
- What key terms, concepts, and definitions did you encounter in this essay?
- Write essay questions that could be used for an exam. In each question, connect your article(s) with at least one other article from the course readings. For example, "Compare and contrast Berlin's definition of rhetoric in article x with so-and so's definitions in articles y and z."
- Design your handout so the information is accessible and clear.

### Incorporating Multimedia

You are welcomed to use or incorporate multimedia into your discussion. For example, you might use video clips to illustrate a point, or you might create a slideshare presentation with a photo of the author and background information about him/her/hir, quotes from the reading(s), etc. in order to enhance the discussion. It is not required, but you are encouraged to be creative in how you lead discussion. Just remember, you aren't lecturing for 25 minutes.

### Grading Criteria

Your grade will be based on the effectiveness of your questions and presentation:

- An "A" grade will be given for a well-planned discussion that helps articulate a scholar's main arguments and then pushes students to challenge those ideas by drawing on other scholars' work. Be creative in how you present the material, and don't underestimate how difficult it is to generate lively discussion.
- A "B" grade will be given for clear, well-organized information and for questions that lead students to summarize the readings and address the main concepts from the readings.
- If your information and questions are partially or totally incoherent, disorganized or irrelevant, you will receive a grade of "C," "D," or "F," depending on the extent of problems.

### **Advice on Leading a Class Discussion**

#### *Before Class*

1. Prepare: Thoroughly read all material on the topic that is to be discussed. Review past readings that may be relevant.
2. Organize your ideas by noting specific problems, issues, and questions relating to the topic.
3. Develop questions that lead students to understand and evaluate a scholar's main arguments. Factual questions (What happened...?) may be necessary, but they are not enough for a good discussion. Provoke students to challenge a scholar's interpretation of the situation.

#### *During Class*

4. Set a proper, relaxed atmosphere for the group.
5. Begin the discussion with a clear, interesting, controversial question. (The use of a quotation, demonstration or a picture provides an alternative method of beginning a discussion.)
6. Listen carefully to what is said: respect other people's contributions.
7. Encourage all to participate before adding your comments or going on to another question.
8. Expand and clarify comments made by members of the group in order to help them recognize the main issues.
9. Inform without being dogmatic, and try to remain neutral. (If the discussion is really dead you may wish to take a controversial position on the issue.)
10. Follow through with questions or points the class wishes to discuss.
11. Summarize: Restate the problems discussed and indicate general conclusion and divergent viewpoints expressed on the topic.

\*Adapted from Dr. Vera Reber (Shippensburg University)