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Netiquette = Think before you post

- Avoid Offending Classmates – be respectful and polite at all times
- Keep Your Voice Down
 - USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS online is the equivalent of yelling. Ouch! Instead, use HTML to bold or italicize text in your postings, or use *asterisks* around the text to be emphasized.
- Avoid Sarcasm and Subtleties
 - Hearing spoken words, seeing people's faces and bodies while they talk, and reading dialogue on your computer screen can convey substantially different impressions. Keeping this in mind may help you realize that it's sometimes easier to sound insensitive and hurt someone's feelings or have them miss the point when you're communicating through text only. To counter this, be clear and straightforward with your language.
- Just Wait
 - Assume any comment you read that sounds abrasive wasn't proofread for tone, and wasn't meant to offend. If you're upset, you might wait a little before posting a too-hasty reply that you'll regret later. Unless the author specifically says they're angry, assume otherwise and ask for clarification of their intent.
- Make the Extra Effort to Be Courteous
- Make it Personal
 - At the end of each posting, sign your name. It also adds a personal feel when responding to an individual if you address him or her by name.
- Be Positive
 - It's good to express your opinions in discussions, but don't make disagreements personal. Agree to disagree in your exchanges of information and opinions. Keep your interactions with others friendly, especially when you're getting to know each other.
- Be Aware of Culture
 - Be aware of cultural differences. If you suspect classmates might be from other cultures, avoid unexplained references that may not be understood or cause feelings of exclusion.
- Use Emoticons
 - These can be effective in conveying a tone with which to supplement your words. If you prefer, use other more direct ways of being sure your intentions are known, for example, by adding phrasing like "just kidding," "no offense intended," or "this is my opinion."
- Write for Readability
- Change the Subject
 - Always enter a new subject for each of your postings, even if you are making an additional comment on the same subject as those above yours. Leaving the default subject tells readers nothing about your particular topic. Unique subjects allow classmates to understand the flow of conversations and relocate particular postings without having to open every one.

- Not Too Little, Not Too Much
 - One word or single phrase responses can seem curt and rude. Use complete sentences and clearly communicate your meaning. Conversely, postings of multiple screens of text can be overwhelming to read online. Compose offline, edit your musings, and consider making bullet points to aid classmates in getting to your point.
- What It's About
 - When replying to a posting, quote the part of the original posting to which you are replying to help classmates understand the context.
- Spell It Out
 - With spellcheckers now available as add-ins for most popular Web browsers, there's no excuse for inadvertent typos. Also remember that abbreviated spellings are best left outside of online classrooms.
- One Final Look
 - After you compose a posting, take a moment to reread your text before submitting. If it's possible, reading out loud can be especially helpful. One final once-over can identify typos, misstatements, lack of clarity, or an unintended tone.
- What's Written is Recorded
 - Remember that everything you post is recorded in most asynchronous online discussions, even if you delete it later.

Online Discussion Forum (worth 20% of your final grade)

There will be one graded online discussion forum in the course that will serve as a type of seminar. It will be conducted exclusively within the course discussion page dedicated to the topic.

Everyone has something to add and I hope you will try to help each other. Participation may well be one of your greatest challenges in this course. Given your prior experiences in a teacher-centered classroom, some of you may fear initiating discussion, especially among yourselves; however, it is important that you participate in the discussions substantively and consistently.

As your instructor, I will not directly participate in the discussion unless I think students are proceeding in the wrong direction or individuals are becoming disrespectful, but I will closely monitor the discussion threads. This assignment is designed for you to help each other by sharing ideas, resources and experiences, to develop your critical thinking skills, to gain a better understanding of the course content, to see how others view the topic and to see how your own perspectives change over the course of the discussion.

Critical thinking is thinking that assesses itself. As a critical thinker, do not simply state the problem; state it and assess it for its clarity. Do not simply gather information; gather it and check it for its relevance and significance. Do not simply form an interpretation; check your interpretation to see what it is based on and whether that basis is adequate.

How the process will work:

- The discussion forum will be opened for one full week (see schedule for opening and closing dates), and you will be assigned to a small group for this assignment.
- During this time, you are expected to contribute a minimum of **one original posting** and **respond to at least four postings other than your own** in the threads that develop.
- You are expected to **participate throughout the week**. Your **first post should be within the first two days** of the forum and you will need to engage with your group on at least four days through the week. You will not be able to see or take part in the discussion until you've posted your response to the 'starter questions' in the first two days.
- **Comments that are derogatory will not be tolerated and will result in a zero on the assignment.** You **MUST** always be respectful of your fellow classmates. Follow the netiquette guidelines that are attached below. You can disagree with what someone has posted without making the discussion argumentative or resorting to personal attacks.
- After the forum closes, you will reflect on what you've learned from the discussion and how your own participation contributed to the conversation. By the end of the following week, you will **submit the self-reflection assignment** to the folder for this assignment.
- See the course calendar for specific due dates.

What Does a Good Discussion Look Like?

- Ensure that the posting contributes to the overall discussion thread that is being developed. Your response must contain some reference back to the original discussion question. Stay on track by always referring back to that original discussion question.
- Try to use your posting to add value to the discussion. This is more effective than simply responding to meet a requirement.
- Make sure your posting is direct and to the point, that it is grammatically clear and free of spelling errors.

Ideas for your initial posting:

- Answer some of the questions posed in the assignment FIRST.
 - THEN:
 - Ask students questions about their ideas/experiences.
 - Consider an idea being discussed, and offer a different perspective on it.
 - Describe an interesting idea from the week's reading, and explain what insights you gained from it.
 - Ask the group a question about the week's reading.
 - Disagree (respectfully, of course) with a point that someone else has made.
 - Discuss a related issue on which you would like some feedback.
 - Describe how you have applied the recent course concepts to your personal/professional life.
 - Share another resource you have used as you explored the course topics.
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Ways to keep a conversation going:

Level 1: you can keep the conversation going in a reply post by:

- **agreeing:** You can add value to the discussion by agreeing with a previous point by simply repeating, rewording, or summarizing it, for the purpose of building consensus or indicating a job well done in a cheerleading or back-slapping mode -- but if that's all you do in your reply, you run the risk of dead-ending conversation, and if that's all you do in your typical response, you will not be an engaging discussant over time.
- **questioning:** You can add value to the discussion by, after showing that you have engaged with a post in some depth, raising a pertinent, provocative question asking for elaboration, expansion, or refinement of the previous post -- but if you question in an automatic, perfunctory, mechanical, or shallow way, you run the risk of dead-ending conversation. In other words, don't just begin with a question in knee-jerk manner, but show how the host post led you to arrive at a question. Show why your question is a question.

Level 2: you can keep the conversation going in a reply post by:

- **enhancing:** You can add value to the discussion by providing additional evidence or support for the exact point made in a previous post with which you agree.
- **answering:** You can add value to the discussion by satisfactorily answering a question asked by another, by clearing up someone else's perplexity about a point that you or someone else made.

Level 3: you can keep the conversation going in a reply post by:

- **building:** You can add value to the discussion by building a new but related point on the foundation of an existing post, by taking a previous point to a new and different level.
- **disagreeing:** You can add value to the discussion by *respectfully* providing specific evidence or support in opposition to a point raised in a previous post, thus opening up potential new avenues for thought.
- **weaving:** You can add value to the discussion by synthesizing two or more previous posts, recognizing that a new contribution, one not realized by the individual posters, emerges from the synthesis.
- **re-directing:** You can add value to the discussion by demonstrating that, after several interactions, the current thread has reached a dead-end and by making a transition from the current post -- literally taking the discussion in an entirely new direction.
- **re-thinking:** You can add value to the discussion by acknowledging how a post or posts have caused you to re-think a position you have articulated previously, to have a new

insight, to be converted to a new way of thinking, or to be more strongly committed to a previous position -- that is, showing that you have listened to and learned from someone(s) else, perhaps the highest compliment in discussion.

These guidelines were developed by Edward J. Gallagher. For more information visit his Improving the Discussion Board website.

The topic for discussion (questions to answer):

- Why is the concept of race so prevalent in modern society when anthropologists argue that it is simply a social construct? How and where do anthropologists use the term, and is it justified in those situations?
- How is the concept of population similar to, or different than, race? How does using the statistical concept of 'population' to group people instead of race change how you think about human variation – or does it change it at all? Are we just substituting one word for another? How can we begin to move away from the concept of race?

What you will turn in for the self-reflection assignment:

- In a Microsoft Word document, in 12-point font with double spaced lines, answer the following questions.
 - o Did you contribute at least one original post to the discussion, and respond to at least four other postings?
 - o On which days did you post or reply to posts?
 - o Which references did you cite in your posts?
 - o How many Level 3 responses to the discussion did you contribute? How many were Level 2? How many were Level 1? (see the guidelines below)
 - o What were the key themes that arose during the discussion?
 - o What recommendations and conclusions can you draw from the discussion?
 - o What was the most challenging part of this discussion for you?
 - o What was the most important thing you learned from this discussion?
 - o What do you think is a fair grade (out of 20 points) for the level and quality of your participation in this discussion forum?

How you will be assessed:

- Did you contribute the minimum number of posts to the discussion? Were you active throughout the week?
- At what level did you contribute to the discussion? Look at the guidelines above for how to construct your posts in a way that keeps the conversation moving forward.
- Did you complete the self-reflection assignment and how much thought did you put into it?
- **In order to receive any grade on this assignment, you must participate in the online discussion during the week it is open and complete the self-reflection assignment.**

Rubric for Online Discussion Participation

Criteria	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
Frequency	Participates frequently throughout the week	Participates sufficiently, but in short sequence, or participates minimally throughout the week	Participates minimally and in short sequence	Participates, but did not meet minimum requirement	Participates not at all
Quality and Relevance	Posts factually correct, reflective and substantive contribution; advances discussion	Posts information that is factually correct; lacks full development of concept or thought	Repeats but does not add substantive information to the discussion	Posts information that is off topic, incorrect, or irrelevant to discussion	Did not post
References & Support	Consistently uses references to literature and readings to support comments	Frequently incorporates references from literature and readings	Infrequently incorporates references from literature and readings	Uses personal experience, but no references to readings or research	Includes no references or supporting experience

Rubric for Self-Reflection Exercise

Criteria	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
Completeness	Answers all the questions thoroughly and in a thoughtful manner	Answers questions with modest reflection on the discussion	Answers the questions in a perfunctory way	Answers some, but not all of the questions	Does not answer the questions posed
Structure	All spelling, grammar and punctuation are correct	Only small writing errors	Moderate writing errors or format instructions not followed	Significant writing errors or format instructions not followed	Spelling, grammar and punctuation so poor that the idea is lost



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