

Discussion Board Ideas

Application questions

In general, questions that require students to apply concepts they are studying to their own experience—or to events currently in the news—generate good and meaningful discussion.

A unique question from each student

"I ask students to post a unique question about the readings and then to respond to two or three of the other students' questions. By 'unique' I mean that there can be no repeat questions. That makes the task easier for the earlier responders than the late ones."

—Tracy Constantine, English and Humanities

Peer review of draft papers

A number of instructors use the discussion board for "peer review" activities. For example, each student might be required to post a rough draft of a paper and then to review another student's paper and offer suggestions for improvement. Here are the directions that Kerry Cantwell (English Instructor) gives her students:

To do the peer review assignment, follow these instructions:

1. Post your essay as an attachment.
2. Choose a classmate's essay to review that is not yet spoken for.
3. Post a reply to that student that you will be reviewing his or her essay. This will ensure that no one else begins a review of it while you are working on it.
4. Review the essay by:
 - Using the comment feature in Microsoft Word,
 - Making comments in a different color in the body of the text, and/or
 - Writing your comments on a separate page or in a separate document.
5. To review the essay, along with your in-text comments, you MUST paste the Peer Review Questions (in Week Three Writing Assignments folder) to the end of the student's essay (in your word processing program) and answer them there. See the samples in this Discussion Board forum for help.
6. Once you have completed your review, post a reply to the student with your review file(s) attached.

--contributed by Kerry Cantwell

The Great, the Good, and the Not-So-Good

"In the film class, I start by having students respond to a "The Great, the Good, and the Not-So-Good" discussion forum. I tell them that we all have opinions about films, but the key is to start fleshing out WHY we feel the way we do about different films. So they must identify a great, good, and not-so-good film they've seen and write five sentences for each one explaining why they liked or didn't like it (and what the difference is between great and good, etc.). They need to respond to at least two classmates. It's interesting that students seem to respond to more than the required two classmates, because they are truly interested in hearing what the other students think about the movies and want to engage in the discussion about what's good or not good. I think this

would translate pretty well into other classes (great/good/not-so-good sentences in an essay, examples of a concept, etc.)." –Tracy Constantine, English and Humanities

Diagnose This!

For courses like psychology, or for those in health fields: The instructor can post a description of a "mystery" illness or condition. Students post unique questions to try to identify or "diagnose" the condition (sort of like 20 questions).

Student-led Discussions

Fieldwork Journal

In programs that require clinical rotations or fieldwork, you can use the discussion board as a place for students to make "journal entries" reporting on their experiences at the clinical site. Here are a few sample prompts from Carol Marcus, Clinical Coordinator for the Occupational Therapy Assistant program:

Group Work

Case Studies / Role Play

Summarize an article (chem. Instructor)

Summarizing the discussion board

- Instructor post summary at bottom of forum, at top of next week, or as an announcement
- Require a student to summarize the discussion—perhaps if they have to "miss" a week due to illness, travel, etc.

Student Café