

Facilitation Guidelines

I. Facilitator Responsibilities

Instead of lectures, this class will depend heavily on student-facilitated discussions about the reading material. As a student facilitator, you will have the opportunity to guide class conversation around topics and ideas that you find intriguing, provocative, or even confusing in relation to the assigned texts. Facilitator responsibilities include:

- **Situating the text(s):** This can be accomplished by offering insight into the author's background and/or the circumstances (e.g. historical and political events) surrounding the publication and reception of the text. You may also situate the text(s) within our ongoing class discussions by drawing connections to previous readings and/or themes and questions that were raised in earlier sessions.
- **Stimulating class discussion:** This entails (1) opening up dialogue and intervening if discussion starts to fragment or veer off topic; (2) drawing connections and clarifying student observations when necessary; and (3) striving to engage the entire class. You may stimulate discussion in a number of ways:
 - Direct attention to a key passage/scene in the text that you found intriguing, effective, or simply confusing (or invite fellow classmates to share a passage they marked in the reading)
 - Call on students to elaborate on their responses or comments on the blog as a point of departure for a broader conversation about specific characters or themes
 - Develop an in-class writing or group activity that can push us to think about the text in different ways

Facilitators may choose to collaborate by working together to develop handouts or activities, but keep in mind that you will still be evaluated individually. All students must participate in some capacity during the facilitation even if you are working as a group. To make collaboration easier, I have created a Google Doc "workspace" for facilitators to communicate with each other and share questions and ideas on the course blog under the "Collaboration" page. There is no written component to the facilitation. You will be evaluated on how effectively you are able to situate the texts and stimulate and sustain class discussion.

*Keep in mind that you are only facilitating discussion for 10 minutes, so remember to tailor your questions and activities to fit within this time frame.

II. Effective Questioning

Effective questioning is a core skill and tool for facilitating class discussion. Whether conversation remains lively and engaged or falls flat depends heavily on the types of questions you pose.

Different types of questions:

- *Comprehension questions* (who? what? where? when?): These questions allow you to gauge whether your peers comprehend the text on a basic level and can help you establish a common ground for conversation.
- *Reflective questions*: These questions encourage your peers to reflect on their reading experience and to interrogate any assumptions or expectations that might have been overturned in the process.
- *Analytical questions* (how? why? so what?): These questions often identify a particular passage or scene in the reading that you think highlights an important idea or argument posed by the author. You can use these questions to invite your peers to probe the different kinds of literary devices or formal techniques an author deploys, and to what end. You can (and should) also ask analytical questions about specific passages that you find unclear or confusing.
- *Thematic or exploratory questions*: These questions (like analytical questions) can be used to push your peers to critically engage a text, but instead of focusing on specific passages, they allow you to explore the broad, overarching ideas and issues the text addresses.
- *Motive-based questions*: These questions deal with the author's purpose in writing a particular text. Perhaps you find the motive or significance of a reading unclear or problematic. When posing these questions, you can ask your peers to explore the reasoning behind why a text was written or challenge its overall purpose directly.
- *Stylistic or structural questions*: These questions have to do with the way a text has been written and organized. You may pose these questions if you are confused or intrigued by the overall form of a text. You can also invite your peers to examine specific stylistic or structural elements, for instance, drawing our attention to the way an author introduces or concludes his or her text.
- *Connecting questions*: These questions invite students to think about multiple texts in relation to each other and draw connections that can deepen and broaden understanding.

*These different question types are meant to serve as a guide for the kinds of questions you can ask during your facilitation. These are just general categories and are in no way exhaustive. If you have a question that does not seem to fit into these "types," feel free to ask it anyway!

Something to think about: Should facilitators ask questions they already know the answers to or questions they don't know the answers to?