

Roundtable Discussion #1: Aesthetics – T Sep 10 / Th Sep 19

Overview

A loosely-structured seminar discussion is the typical format of upper-level undergraduate courses as well as all graduate work (masters and doctoral level). The point of a seminar discussion is precisely that: to discuss. In the process of discussing, you are forced to clarify what you think by articulating your ideas in a clear and persuasive manner, and at the same time you learn from the wide array of perspectives and experiences that your peers bring into the conversation. The discussion may organically move to unexpected topics, but the main takeaway from a learning experience like this one is that all of your knowledge and resources are related—there is no such thing as a separation of academic subjects when you really approach a topic critically. Your familiarity with the assigned material, your own initiative in doing additional research, and your engagement with each other is what will make for an effective and enjoyable class.

The assignment

For this assignment, you will prepare one of two assigned articles (sent directly to you in an email) to discuss as a group. In class, students assigned to the first article will form a circle with their seats facing each other to have their discussion. The students not assigned to that article will form a circle around the first group, listen to their discussion, and take notes as they learn from the discussion. After approximately 30 minutes, the groups will trade places and trade roles: the first group will listen and take notes while the second group discusses.

How to prepare for an effective Roundtable Discussion:

1. Read your article. Not just once. Skim for major points, read again closely, define words you're unfamiliar with, read again, read as much of the linked material as possible, read again, take notes, reflect on it—in other words, do what we do in class on your own.
2. Refer to notes you've taken in class over the course of the semester, past lecture slides, and previous Online Discussions to make sure you're correctly understanding as many concepts as possible. Read additional sources as necessary to ensure that you know what you're talking about with this topic.
3. Prepare thoughts, questions, and ideas that you have about the article. Draw upon your other educational experiences, life experiences, or other expertise. Make use of the various brainstorming methods you've come across in your other classes.

Be ready to have a rich, engaging, and involved discussion with each other as an entire class. Ask each other questions. Offer comments. Respond to each other. I will not participate in this discussion.

Grading

This assignment is graded on a scale of Credit/No credit. Good discussion and conversation come from being able to contribute three things to the experience, and each student must contribute at least two (2) high-quality examples of each of the following in order to receive a grade of "Credit" on this assignment (e.g., if it's not high quality, it doesn't count towards your grade):

- **Contributing your own ideas** (not just restating or summarizing what's said in the article) – You have to have something *interesting* to say, and it should be based on verifiable, factual evidence or reasonable assumptions. A good contribution goes beyond repeating what someone else has said or summarizing the article.
- **Responding to someone else's idea** – You must listen to and think about what others say. A good response thoughtful, accurate, and engages with another student's idea in a meaningful way; it's not a repetition of something that's already been said, a summary of the article, or inaccurate, and it doesn't ignore what has previously been said.
- **Asking a question** – You seek to learn from the experience. The best questions are “open-ended,” meaning they can be answered in many ways, rather than framed as “yes/no” questions.
 - Example of a “yes/no” question: “Do you guys think that...” or “Has anyone ever...”
 - Example of an “open-ended question: “What happens if...” or “Why do you think that...” or “How does that work?”

Rewrites/resubmissions. Any student who is present for the discussion and receives a grade of “No credit” may write a thoughtful reflection on their article and the discussion experience in order to change their grade to “Credit.” The rewrite must be accompanied by a process letter in which you describe what you think you missed by not being able to participate in the discussion as it took place.

Absences. Any student who is not present for this assignment will receive a grade of 0. If you know that you must be absent, email your written response to your article before class. Include both your thoughts about the assigned article and describe what you think you missed by not being able to participate in the discussion as it took place.

Extensions and late assignments. Every student may have one extension for any assignment in the “Supporting your growth” category, no explanation necessary—life happens. Request an extension in person or via email at least 24 hours before the scheduled due date and set your own new due date. Whatever the due date (or if you do not request an extension), late assignments lose one point per day, up to two weeks, and will not be accepted after 14 days. An assignment that is submitted late and receives a grade of No credit may still be revised; the final grade will reflect the number of days the first submission was late. Written responses received after class lose one point per day; submissions which do not follow submission instructions below are late until they are properly sent.

Formatting for written submissions

In general, written college assignments are typically typed using 12-point font, double spacing, and using 1-inch margins. I won't penalize you for not following these norms, but your doing so does make my grading process significantly easier.

The only requirement I do have is that if you need to email me a file because you will miss class, you must name it like this: LastName, FirstInitial – Writing 1 (Example: Jones, A – Writing 1). If you send me any other file name, I will not accept it. The only file formats I will accept are .doc, .docx, or .pdf. Attach your file directly to your email; I will not accept a link to a cloud service (e.g, OneDrive, Google Drive, iCloud).