Working with Groups OnLine
Greg Hamill
Document available at: http://www.oakton.edu/~ghamill

My Process & Tips:

1. Prepping for group work… the week before! The week before the online Group work, I put people in their groups for a low-stakes (i.e., 5 points) practice run that asks them to do the following:

   a. Next week you will be asked to watch a 90-minute film and complete a worksheet related to the film in a small group. The responses on the worksheet must represent a single answer FROM THE GROUP for each question. It should NOT be a collection of individual answers. The answers should represent the back-and-forth discussion of the group. Note, this requires you to be working with each other throughout the week.

   b. Next week, the discussion board will open, as usual, on Monday and the original group post (i.e., the worksheet) will be due on Friday. However, this week, I want you to decide your process, including the following:

      i. By what day and time of the week do you expect first contributions from each member?
         • Discuss this with each other on this board and let me know what your group decides.
         • NOTE: You can tell who is in your group by clicking on the Groups tab on the course home page. If needed, you can email them through the Groups tab too.

      ii. By what day and time of the week do you expect response/follow-up contributions from each member?
         • Ongoing?
         • By Wednesday?
         • Thursday?
         • Is Friday okay? If so, up to what time?

      iii. What will you do if a group member doesn’t contribute by the deadlines you establish?
         • NOTE: My instructions will state that if you reach out to group members via email and your private group discussion board and never hear back from them, you should move on without them, complete the assignment, and not include their name on the final product. YOU MUST REACH OUT TO THEM THOUGH!
iv. Where will your group collaborate?
   • Discuss this with each other on this board and let me know what your group decides.
   • NOTE: I will provide you with detailed instructions on your group’s private discussion board in next week’s discussion area. Some groups exchange information back-and-forth via this private group discussion area. However, some groups find it useful to collaborate via a Google doc instead. Some use both the discussion area and the Google doc. This too is fine. However, you must invite me to the Google doc if you go that route so I can see who is doing what.

v. If needed, how will you communicate with each other beyond the above collaboration?
   • NOTE: You will have access to each other’s d2l email via the Groups tab on the course home page.

vi. Who will consolidate group member’s thoughts and ideas into a single answer for each question?

vii. Who will post the final document to the MAIN discussion board by Friday on behalf of the group?

2. Group Work
   a. Assignment of individuals to Groups
      i. Technically, it is very easy to do this via the Groups tab. I will demonstrate this.

      ii. The harder part is thinking through who to put in what group. This is my process.
      • If there are 20 in the class, I use 5 groups of 4.
      • I go to the Grades tab, click on the “Total Earned Points to Date” grade. This grade is just what it says – an up-to-date running total of student’s points. This puts the students in rank order. I take the top 5 students and assign 1 to each group. I take the next highest 5 students and assign 1 to each group, and so on.
      • This helps ensure a mix of motivations, effort, and/or talent in each group.

   b. Discussion board set-up
      i. Create your Discussion board (I label mine by Week – for example, Week 5 Discussion). For Group discussion weeks I add a qualifier in the title
(e.g., Week 5 Discussion – Groups this week... don’t delay getting started!)

ii. Add a “MAIN DISCUSSION BOARD” as a topic for the final group products. See image below.

iii. Add topics for each of your numbered, group work areas (e.g., Group 1 Work Area, Group 2 Work Area, etc.)

---

Week 5 Discussion (Groups again this week; please don't delay getting started!)

Available after Monday, July 16, 2018 12:01 AM CDT.
Unlocked: Monday, July 16, 2018 12:01 AM CDT - Sunday, July 22, 2018 11:59 PM CDT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Threads</th>
<th>Posts</th>
<th>Last Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miss Representation - MAIN DISCUSSION BOARD</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Oz &lt;br&gt;Jul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Representation - Group 1 Work Area</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>My &lt;br&gt;Jul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Representation - Group 2 Work Area</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mt &lt;br&gt;Jul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Representation - Group 3 Work Area</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sa &lt;br&gt;Jul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Representation - Group 4 Work Area</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sa &lt;br&gt;Jul</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
iv. In each Work Area, add detailed instructions and a link to the group worksheet. See image below.

3. Grading Group Discussion
   a. My course has 1,000 available points in it. At least 10% (100 points) are for online discussions; some courses have more (i.e., up to 140 points).
   b. Group work always gets more points than individual discussion boards. It takes more effort and time.
c. The “original post” – that is, the group worksheet is given 70% of the total points for that week. So, if I’ve allotted 30 points for that week’s discussion, 21 of them are for the original post.

d. The “follow-up post” on another group is worth 30% of the points. Each individual student must do this. Again, if I’ve allotted 30 points, that is 9 points. Per the syllabus, here is my criteria for getting follow-up post credit.

e. Responding to Professor’s Questions. I always ask follow-up questions on each group’s original post. Per the syllabus, they must respond to this by Sunday (as individuals) for full credit. I deduct 15% if they don’t. See the image below for an overview of my syllabus/discussion information.

**Discussions:** In most weeks there will be discussion questions posted. To access the weekly discussions, click on "Discussions" from the homepage, or the link in the CONTENT section for the given week. Generally these questions will be in the nature of a reflection about the material. You are expected to be involved in these discussions in two ways:

- **Original post:** You are required to post a minimum of 1 original answer to each question; by original, I mean that you apply ideas from that week’s readings and not merely offer an "opinion". Original responses to these questions are due **before midnight on Thursday** of the particular week, although discussion will continue until the end of the weekend. In this way, everyone will have ample time to respond to each other’s postings before discussion is closed Sunday night at midnight. Please post your original comments using the "Create a Thread" button.

- **Response/follow-up posts:** Besides posting your own thoughts, you are required to respond thoughtfully to others’ posts during each week. At least one follow-up post on another student, per question, is required. Please note that discussions are an opportunity to help each other grow and learn. I expect **follow-up posts to add something to the learning process**. Saying "I agree" doesn’t add anything and will not earn credit. Try the following in your posts:
  - Connect your thoughts directly to material from class or textbook
  - Provide another example that illustrates someone’s point
  - Clarify a concept or term from the class for another student
  - Provide links to additional resources and explain why you did

**Responding to the Professor’s Questions.** If I pose a direct follow-up question to you on the boards, you must respond to it before Sunday at midnight to earn full credit for the week.

**Discussion Summary:** You are expected to post a minimum of one (1) original post per question, plus one (1) follow-up post per question in each week. If the week has 2 questions, that is a total of four (4) posts for the week: two original posts and two follow-up posts.