

Discussion Forums and Guidelines for Working Groups



The Purpose of Working Groups

Sometimes students feel like the cartoon figure on the right. They are puzzled and don't know how to do 2 key things:

1. Find the right information for the question being asked (whether a quiz question or a Comparison)
2. Figure that information out in such ways as:
 - Having a dialog with careful, evidence-centered postings by several students
 - Having one of you find additional information in the textbook or in the visual resources in the Digging Deeper folders in the Unit and tell the others about the resource
 - Asking your instructor for more information (If you need it, that's what I'm here for.)

Sometimes, it seems easier just to memorize something without understanding or just try to fake it, and students may get by with that. Faking learning is, however, a lousy habit--to be blunt--to develop for your immediate future and certainly not for your long-term future. What the Working Groups are for is to help you help each other with those 2 things.

Working Groups (Available on the Course Menu and in the Learning Modules for Units 1, 2, and 3)

Working Groups use Blackboard's Discussion tool, but the only ones who can see your group are members of it. Each of you has been randomly assigned to a small group. Once the purge rolls are available I will make adjustments so the groups are about the same size and so that everyone is in a Working Group.

Participating in a Working Group is a required assignment with each Unit. In the grades, participating in Working Groups is classified as written work. Not participating may mean an alternative quiz that does require writing.

How Do You Find Examples of What to Do You Do and Find Out about Grading

After Unit 1 starts, you will see a Unit 1 forum for your Working Group. Within each Working Group, the first thread in the forum for each Unit:

- Provides instructions
- Shows the Rubric used in grading

You can also see examples of how you can post to ask or answer a question in the forum Shareables from the Working Groups.

You are to help each other learn history and practice Good Habits for Evidence. These Working Groups let you ask or answer questions about the current content, current Comparison Topics, and about current quiz questions. You can earn those points by asking or answering.

Guidelines for Working Group Postings

Read Working Group forums on Blackboard often. Reflect on these comments and contribute. Online discussions are learning opportunities that are equivalent to study groups or class projects with other participants. By reflecting on and responding to questions and comments, you will develop your ability to articulate your knowledge and to learn from others. We are here to learn the material, to help each other, to have fun, and to discuss matters of importance (at least I think history is important) with others.

With graded Working Groups:

- Let the facts you have reveal the evidence so that others can decide for themselves. Do not state your opinion.
- The Good Habits for Evidence apply to these assignments as well. For example, you must correctly use pairs of quotation marks (""") if you type exact words from the textbook, not just identify the exact location of the information.
- Always provide the exact location of the information in our textbook so others can read the information for themselves. Your first task as a member of a Working Group is to reply to a posting from me asking what edition of the textbook you use.
 - If all of your group members have the current edition of our textbook (the 4th edition paperback), you can state the location just as a page number.
 - If some of your group members use an earlier edition, my next posting will tell you an easy way to specify the location.

Post Early: The longer you wait to post your question, the harder it is for others to answer you in time for you to do your work. If you post so close to the closing date and hour, that no one--except your instructor--can help you with a response or make use of your response, your grade will be very low. If you try to post after the due date and hour, the responses are no longer accepted.

Opportunities for Extra Credit with Working Group Postings

You not only can see examples of how you can post to ask or answer a question in the forum Shareables from the Working Groups, but also see useful postings from other Working Groups. The Shareables forum is used to share information—and to earn extra credit. When I see postings in your Working Group that can help other Working Group, I do two things:

1. I copy and post your work into the Shareable forum for each Unit (available at Discussions).
2. I enter 2 extra credit points for each posting that can help the other Working Groups and for each person involved in that posting.

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