

Instructions for Discussion Questions & Summaries

PHIL 102, Spring 2018, Hendricks

WRITTEN PART DUE: by 5pm the Monday after you do the oral part in discussion class

As noted on the syllabus, each student must sign up to bring discussion questions to talk about in a small group this term to a small group of about 3-5, during a discussion class meeting.

What this assignment is for

You are going to share something that you find interesting or puzzling in the texts assigned for the week, and you are also going to be in charge of leading discussion in your small group through raising a few discussion questions. Instead of the professor or T.A. being the one to raise many of the issues, it can really enrich discussions to have students bring up what they find important as well. This assignment is a way for all of us to benefit from ideas and approaches from the other participants in the class that might otherwise go unsaid (because they take time to think through, and thus may only really come up if someone has a chance to work on them beforehand to prepare for a presentation).

What you must say in class on the day you've signed up for

- (1) Give least two discussion questions for the group to talk about
- (2) Explain how these questions relate to one or more of the author's main argument(s) in the text(s) assigned for that week

Think of questions for discussion that can't simply be answered by reference to facts, that others would have to go do research to answer; rather, pick something that they can discuss and come up with some ideas on (even if not resolve), given that they've read the texts and attended class.

You could raise questions and connect them to the text(s) in any number of ways; the following are examples you might choose from (or come up with your own idea).

- (a). *Pick a passage in the text that you think is important, and yet that poses some problem, raises a question, or is otherwise helpful to look at more closely.* You might pick a passage to discuss because it is unclear, or because it seems to be in tension with another claim made in the text. Or, you could point to a particular passage in a text because it is especially rich with significance for the themes raised in the text, or because it is open to several interpretations that might give different ideas of what the text is saying. After giving your view of the passage and its importance, raise questions about it for the group to discuss.
- (b). *Discuss something that puzzles you about the text* that you have tried to work through but are still struggling with (not necessarily a particular passage, but perhaps an idea or an assumption or a method). It's okay if you haven't solved the problem; it can be interesting to raise the problem and see what others think. This should be something that is somehow important to focus on, given the themes of the text and/or lecture, not just something that's puzzling but fairly insignificant. As noted below, the puzzle/problem should not just be something that could be answered through an investigation of facts. Say what the puzzle is & how you've tried to solve it, then raise a couple of questions about it for the group to talk about.
- (c). *Take a complex or abstract concept from the text for the week and come up with an example or an illustration of some kind that could help us understand the concept better.* It should be something

that is likely to be puzzling to many people, not something relatively simple. You could relate the concept to something in modern history or culture, even references to movies or books so long as you also explain the gist of the movie or book so that those who haven't seen/read it can understand. Then raise questions for the group to discuss that relate to your illustration.

- (d). *Make one or more connections between some aspect of a text to previous things we've read/talked about in the course.* Point out links that we may not have thought about and that haven't yet been discussed. Include a discussion of why these links are important, how considering them may help us look at one or both of the texts in a new way. Then raise questions related to what you've said for the rest of the group to discuss.

Written and oral portions to the assignment

Oral: Your presentation to the small group should be between 2 and 5 minutes (no more than five, so there is adequate time for discussion of your questions in your small group). Be sure to remind people in the group of the author's main point(s) in the texts so they understand where your questions are coming from. Reading particular passages from the texts may help.

Written: In addition to speaking to your group, you'll need to post a summary to the class website. See this page for videos to help you learn how to make these posts on the site and how to make them anonymous or private just to the instructor/TA's if you wish:

<http://blogs.ubc.ca/phil102/assignments/how-to-post-on-this-site/>

This post should have:

- (1) at least two discussion questions you brought to the group to talk about
- (2) an explanation how these questions relate to one or more of the author's main argument(s) in the text(s) assigned for that week
 - be sure to link the questions to particular passages in the text and give page numbers for those (if the text has page numbers)
- (3) a brief summary of what your group discussed in trying to answer one or both of your questions

Your post should have enough detail to explain what you said, because the discussion leader can't hear all of the presentations in each group when they're going on simultaneously.

Your post must also have the following categories and tags. See this page for how to add categories and tags: <http://blogs.ubc.ca/phil102/assignments/how-to-post-on-this-site/>

- Categories:
 - Click "discussion summaries" as a category
 - Click the number of your discussion class meeting (e.g., L01, Wed. 12)
- Tags
 - Give the author's last name as a tag (the author of the text you're writing about)
 - if you're writing about a text by Plato, use "Plato" rather than "Socrates"

This summary must be posted on the class blog **no later than 5pm on the Monday after you do your presentation.** It's probably best if you post it shortly after the class meeting in which you do your discussion, before you forget!

How the post will be marked

Only the written portion on the class site will be marked, on a scale of 1-4, with 4 being full marks (there can be partial marks, so you could get, e.g., 3.5). Here are the things that go into your mark:

- The **clarity** of the issue you are bringing up and how they relate to the text(s): Can we follow what your point is in raising the questions and how they relate to the main point(s) in the text(s)? This includes the depth of explanation you give for these things; be sure to explain carefully how what you're raising for discussion relates to the text(s).
 - Give **quotes** where you think it would help to illustrate the author's main points, and/or give **paraphrases** of the author's main points. For both, give page numbers from the text(s), if there are page numbers (some may be online & may not have page numbers).
- The **accuracy** in your discussion of how the issues you raise are related to one or more of the main point(s) in the text.
- The **significance** of what you bring up: Is it something important in relation to the themes/issues in the text, or is it something very small and relatively insignificant? Focus on the former!
- The degree to which the questions you raise **could lead to discussion**: we're not looking at whether or not they actually do—that depends in part on the group, not only you! But some questions are not very good for discussion, such as those that can be answered in only a few words, or that are answered in other parts of the texts, or that were answered in lecture or a previous seminar, or that are factual questions that can't be answered without further research.

Late or missing work

You must be in class on the day you've signed up to speak. If you are not in class, without a valid excuse for your absence, you will only get a maximum of 2 out of 4 marks for the assignment.

Your summary of the presentation must be posted by 5pm on the Monday after you do your presentation. If it's late, and you don't have a valid excuse, you will lose 0.5 points out of the 4 for each weekday late. If you don't do the blog post at all, you will lose 2 points out of the 4.

CHECKLIST BEFORE YOU DO YOUR PRESENTATION/SUBMIT YOUR POST

- Your oral presentation has the two required elements listed above: (1) at least two discussion questions for the group to talk about, (2) a discussion of how these questions relate to one or more of the author's main argument(s) in the text(s) assigned for that week
- Your written blog post summary has the two things in the previous bullet point, PLUS ALSO: (3) a brief summary of what your group discussed in trying to answer one or both of your questions.
- Your written blog post has references to the text to support how your questions relate to one or more of the main point(s) of the text—either quotes or paraphrases, complete with page numbers for where those can be found (or, if no page numbers are on the text, at least section numbers if those are available).
- Your blog post has **two categories**—"presentation summaries" and the course number of your discussion meeting class—and **one tag**—the last name of the author of the text your presentation was on.
- You have submitted your blog post by 5pm on the Monday after your in-class presentation of the discussion questions.