

Graded Discussion Rubric

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Unacceptable
Conduct	Demonstrates respect for learning process by: 1) showing patience with opinions of others; 2) showing initiative by asking others for clarification; 3) moving conversation forward; 4) speaking to all participants; 5) avoiding talking too much.	Generally shows composure but displays impatience with contradictory or confusing ideas, makes comments but does not necessarily encourage others to participate, may tend to address only the teacher, or may get into debates with others (rather than discuss).	Participates and expresses a belief that his or her ideas are important in understanding the text (without acknowledging the importance of others' ideas), may comment but is either too forceful or too shy, does not contribute to the progress of the conversation, tends to debate not discuss.	Displays little respect for the learning process, is rude and argues without respect for others, takes advantage of minor distractions, uses inappropriate language, speaks to individuals rather than ideas, arrives unprepared without notes, a pencil, or even the text.
Speaking/ Reasoning	Understands question before answering, cites evidence from the text to support arguments (with page #), expresses thoughts in complete sentences, is logical and insightful, moves conversation forward, makes connections between ideas, resolves apparent contradictory ideas, considers others' viewpoints as well as his or her own, and avoids bad logic.	Responds to questions voluntarily, comments express opinions about the text and not arguments based on textual evidence, comments are logical but are not connected to those of other speakers, ideas are interesting enough that others respond to them.	Responds to questions but may have to be called upon, has read the text but not put much effort into preparing ideas and marking passages for the seminar, comments take details into account but may not flow logically in conversation.	Is extremely reluctant to participate even when called upon, comments are illogical and meaningless, may mumble or express incomplete ideas, takes little or no account of previous comments or important ideas in the text, has not read the text.
Listening	Pays attention to details, writes down questions, gives responses that take into account all participants, demonstrates that h/she has kept up, points out bad logic, overcomes distractions.	Generally pays attention and responds thoughtfully to ideas and questions of other participants and the teacher, but absorption in own ideas may distract the participant from the ideas of others.	Appears to find some ideas unimportant while responding to others, may have to have questions repeated while not having confusing comments restated, takes few notes during discussion.	Appears uninvolved in discussion, comments display misinterpretation of questions or comments of other speakers.
Reading	Is thoroughly familiar with the text, has notations and questions in the margins (or on paper in class set), has key words, phrases, and ideas underlined or written down, supplies page numbers.	Has read the text and comes with some ideas from it but these may not be written out in advance.	Appears to have read or skimmed the text but has not marked the text or made meaningful notes or questions, misunderstands key concepts, demonstrates little evidence of serious reflection prior to seminar.	Is unprepared for seminar, important words, phrases, and ideas in the text are unfamiliar, has no notes or questions marked in text or written down, has made no attempt to get help with difficult material.
Literary Analysis (use this criterion if applicable to the subject of discussion)	Insightfully analyzes the effect of literary features of the text, connecting them to the significance of the passage and the meaning of the whole.	Analyzes the effect of literary features of the text, making connections to meaning.	Mentions literary features, but analysis of the effect is unclear or incomplete.	Does not really discuss the effects of literary features,

The Harkness Discussion & “Round Table” Guidelines

- Listen carefully.
- Don’t address everything to the instructor. Make eye contact with the person whose points you are addressing. Look around the table; let people know that they’re included. Use names to focus interaction.
- Stick close to the text in discussion. Keep the text/source open. When appropriate, be prepared to cite specifics in the language of the text/source to support, challenge or question. The discussion is not a test of memory.
- Collaborate, don’t compete. It is not a debate, but a discussion. Discussion is collaborative: multiple sides work toward shared understanding. Debate is oppositional: opposing sides try to prove each other wrong.
- Don’t raise hands; take turns speaking. It is OK to “pass” occasionally if asked directly to contribute.
- Affirm comments made by other students. Encourage others to clarify or expand ideas that might be foggy. Ask for more information or further explanation. Don’t hesitate to summarize. Discuss ideas rather than one another’s opinions.
- Challenge politely if you disagree. Let any student finish phrasing a question or developing an idea before you jump in. Clarify a difference of opinion first.
- Be sure that the class is content with the exploration of one topic before heading off into new territory. In moments of silence, determine whether the group is wrestling with an idea or passage, or whether to pursue a new line of inquiry. Ask each other: Can we summarize the discussion so far? Did we take it as far as it could go? Are we content?
- You are responsible for the success of the discussion. Prepare and participate thoughtfully. Don’t BS if you don’t know; admit it and move on.
- If you’re not a reluctant participant, and suspect that you might have a dominant presence at the table, police your own frequency of involvement. Don’t answer every question; don’t jump in at every opportunity. Pull your weight, but not everybody else’s.

“Round Table” Guidelines adapted from “Some Thoughts About the Harkness Table

