

Creative Discussion Forums

Taking Discussions to the *Next Level*



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About This Guide

The iDesign *Creative Discussion Forums* guide is your one-stop resource for research-supported instructional design. It has been curated and organized by iDesign specifically to support faculty and instructional designers as they move through the course design process.

Each activity within the *Creative Discussion Forums* guide consists of a brief description of the featured design concept, and hyperlinked materials, articles, and other relevant Web resources that iDesign has vetted and curated. Pro-Tips are indicated by a large blue download button. Hyperlinks are indicated with bold blue text.

Creative Discussion Forums is part of iDesign's commitment to supporting Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. We support educational research and its dissemination through useful open education resources (OER) because we believe it will have a lasting, positive effect on teaching and learning that far outweighs T-shirts, pens, candy, or toys traditionally given away by instructional design and educational technology companies. We hope to be an industry trendsetter in this regard and challenge other organizations to follow suit.

Therefore, the *Creative Discussion Forums* guide is an open educational resource (OER). All original materials are licensed as Creative Commons BY-NC-SA4.0. You will find the license indicated in the footer of applicable downloadable materials. Citations and retrieval information are provided on curated materials.

Taking Discussions to the Next Level

Discussion is core to effective teaching and learning. In online environments, discussion-based activities can be important laboratories for today's learners and learning communities. The following resources and sample approaches can be applied to a variety of contexts for discussion-based learning. Successful discussion board activities create opportunities for students to learn core content in engaging and creative ways. Intentional faculty modeling and participation encourages learner engagement and builds community.

This guide hopes to serve faculty instructors across discipline and methodology. Instead of providing fully-scaffolded assignments for specific course-contexts, this guide distills each discussion board activity or approach into its component parts:

- Overview
- Research
- Outcomes
- Learning Design
- Evaluation
- Examples

Each *Creative Discussion Forums* activity is identified by name (as seen in the table of contents) and is categorized by type, such as problem-based, game-based, reflective, experiential, and more. Name and category are followed by an **Overview** section that describes the activity, a **Research** section that lists sources supporting the activity's methodology, and an **Outcomes** section that lists broad learning goals served by this activity and which are applicable across a variety of course contexts. In addition, we focus on several broad categories of discussions including:

The **Learning Design** section details planning and pre-work for each activity and includes instructional approaches that characterize the learner experience. Notes on **Evaluation** include relevant American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Value rubrics. Concrete **Examples** show different examples of the activity for undergraduate and graduate students.

Recommended Reading

- Boettcher, Judith. "[Four Types of Discussion Forums in Online Courses.](#)" *Designing for Learning*. April 22, 2019.
- [Discussion Strategies](#). *Visible Pedagogy: A Teach@CUNY Project*. 2017.
- iDesignEDU. [Design Educational Assets \(iDEA\) Book](#). 2019. CC-BY-NC-SA.
- iDesignEDU. "[Building a Community of Inquiry \(COI\)](#)." CC BY-NC-SA.
- iDesignEDU. "[Communication Plans](#)." CC BY-NC-SA.

- Gonzalez, Jennifer. “[The Big List of Class Discussion Strategies.](#)” Podcast. *Cult of Pedagogy*. Episode 28 (38:00). October 15, 2015.
- “[Key Questions for Designing Online Discussions.](#)” Teaching and Learning Resources. *The Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning*. Brown University.

About the Curators | The *Creative Discussion Forums* guide was created by the Learner Experience (LX) Design team at iDesign. The team contributed materials and tested the book as part of their ongoing work with subject matter experts, teachers, and faculty in K–12, higher education, and industry settings. We are proud to share this project with the rest of the world in the hopes of improving the course design process for educators everywhere—especially when it comes to leveling up discussion prompts!

About iDesign | iDesign partners with colleges and universities to build, grow, and support online and blended programs. We are passionate about helping faculty harness the potential of emerging technologies to design courses and degree programs that make an impact, whether they are fully online, flipped, blended, adaptive, or competency based. Our unbundled, fee-for-service model is rooted in a commitment to flexibility and institutional autonomy, while our analytics platform supports continuous improvement through rigorous measurement of student engagement and course quality. From statewide university systems to private colleges, our custom solutions pair instructional design with technologies to enable great teaching. To learn more, please visit www.idesignedu.org.

Become a Contributor | The *Creative Discussion Forums* guide is a living document filled with hyperlinks to other living documents and web-based resources. We know that over time hyperlinks will break, and some resources will become outdated or overshadowed by others in the field. Therefore, we are asking for your assistance to keep the *Creative Discussion Forums* guide fresh, current, and useful. See a typo, broken link, or other error? Alternatively, do you want to nominate a webpage or public web resource for inclusion in the next revision of the *Creative Discussion Forums* guidebook? Submit your proposed improvement through this [Google form](#) to let us know about errors, broken links, or other high-quality, public resources.

Playing the Part

Overview

This discussion-board activity first divides learners into teams on which they play discrete roles that must work together to engage content-related challenges that mimic professional realities and engage contemporary challenges. Discussions that pair role playing or simulation with active collaboration teach a variety of skills beyond core content areas.

Research

- UNSW Sydney. (2023, April 17). *Assessing with role plays and simulations*.
- Bawa, A. (2020). *Role-play*. In R. Kimmons & S. Caskurlu (Eds.), *The Students' Guide to Learning Design and Research*. EdTech Books.
- Barnard College. *Reacting to the Past*.
- Barnard College. *Game Development Resources*.

Outcomes

- Participate in authentic learning that supports core content.
- Apply learning to simulated challenges as individuals and in groups.
- Hone written and verbal communication skills.

Learning Design

This discussion forum activity is suitable for most course contexts and requires instructors to imagine and design a scenario in which groups of learners can meaningfully engage with a contemporary issue or challenge. In healthcare courses, for example, learners could be divided into patient care teams. In organizational management courses, learners could play various roles on a management team. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Designing a content-related context or challenge that involves team engagement.
- Defining team roles.
- Mapping a series of engagements for learners to experience both on individual teams and across the activity.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes for this discussion board activity. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Teamwork](#)
- [Problem Solving](#)
- [Integrative and Applied Learning](#)

➤ Examples

Government Affairs (Undergraduate)

In this team-based discussion, you and your group will simulate a non-governmental organization (NGO). Each of you has been assigned a discussion group and NGO role. Your team's goal is to propose a community intervention that will help your NGO reach its context-specific goals.

In preparation for this discussion, carefully engage the following resource:

- [“Non-governmental organization.”](#) New World Encyclopedia.

To successfully complete this discussion, you must:

- 1) Post a personal narrative that explains how your specific role supports the NGO's missions and approach.
- 2) Respond to each of your group members' narratives, considering the strengths and limitations of the way different team roles both support and constrain effective operations.
- 3) Reply to at least two responses to your personal narrative.

Nursing Practicum (Graduate)

In this two-part, team-based discussion you and your group will simulate a patient care team. Each learner has been assigned a discussion group and patient care team role. Your team's goal is to propose a health literacy intervention strategy that will help the patient access and comply with quality, coordinated health care.

In preparation for this discussion, carefully engage the following resource:

- [Are You Confused About Health Information?](#) (12:22)
TEDx Talks. (2016, June 29). *Are you confused about health information? You're not alone* | Lisa Fitzpatrick | TEDxMidAtlantic [Video]. YouTube.

To successfully complete Part One of this discussion, you must:

- Post a personal narrative.
- Post a response to each of your group member's narratives.
- Reply to at least two analyses of your personal narrative.

In preparation for Part Two of this discussion, carefully engage the following resources:

- Part One Discussion Board: In addition to reading and revisiting your team's Part One posts and replies, read at least one other group's work. What differences and similarities did you note? Consider both patient profile and team member roles.
- Zajac, S., Woods, A., Tannenbaum, S., Salas, E., & Holladay, C. L. (2021). [Overcoming challenges to teamwork in healthcare: a team effectiveness framework and evidence-based guidance](#). *Frontiers in Communication*, 6:606445.

To successfully complete Part Two of this discussion, you must:

- Submit an opening post about a health literacy issue and proposed intervention.
- Post substantive responses to each of your group members.
- Reply to at least two responses to your opening post.

Whose Label? Agreeing & Disagreeing

Overview

This activity is designed to avoid a situation in which the discussion board becomes an echo chamber. When learners encounter prompts that invite personal perspectives, they sometimes default to agreeing with initial posts and respondents instead of sharing individual opinions. To invite a diversity of perspectives from first to last comment, this activity's reflective approach encourages learners to articulate alternative points of view with clarity and confidence.

Research

- Resources for Thinking. (n.d.). *Considering alternative perspectives*. Teacher's Toolbox, Learning for a Sustainable Future.
- Instructional Moves. (n.d.). *Considering other perspectives through role play*. Harvard Graduate School of Education.
- Levinson, M. (2017, March 20). *Difficult topics: seeking and considering alternative viewpoints in the classroom*. Harvard Initiative for Teaching & Learning. Office of the Vice Provost for Advances in Learning.

Outcomes

- Encounter a range of opinions about course content.
- Communicate with clarity and empathy across lines of difference.
- Hone critical thinking and communication skills.

Learning Design

This approach is suitable for most discussion board activities. In introductory courses, this approach could shape assignments that invite learners to engage differences of opinion. In advanced courses, this approach could invite rigorous debate and civil disagreement about controversial course content. Before sharing any prompt that launches a new thread, the following pre-work should be introduced in class, articulated in a discussion board etiquette guide, or modeled in an opening post. Ideally, all three! Planning and pre-work includes:

- Explaining the concept of an alternative point of view and providing examples of diverse perspectives in a variety of contexts;
- Inviting learners to share strategies for thoughtfully engaging differing opinions and cataloging these in a prompt and/or online etiquette guide; and
- Prompting learners to include either “yes but...” or “yes and no” or “undecided” in the title of their posts, increasing awareness of their own perspectives in relation to core content and their classmates.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes for this discussion board approach. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning](#)
- [Intercultural Knowledge and Competence](#)
- [Written Communication](#)

➤ Examples

Organizational Behavior (Undergraduate)

Read “[How Good Leadership Can Minimize Microaggressions](#)” (Forbes, 2017) and share your *opinion* of the article. Articulate your opinion in relation to the text. Do you agree or disagree with the article’s recommendations?

If your opinion supports the article’s main recommendations, label your original post “AGREE.” If your opinion challenges the article’s assertions, label your post “DISAGREE.” Support your discussion with material presented in this unit’s chapter.

Communication (Graduate)

Watch Dan Lok’s TED Talk [The Unstoppable Force](#) (17:59). Draw on unit materials to write two competing paragraphs: One will support Lok’s ideas, the other will challenge his assertions. In a follow-up post, draw on course materials to discuss how information can be used to inform a wide variety of competing and complementary opinions.

Screening for Concepts

Overview

This discussion board activity asks learners to connect course content to its representation in a sitcom or other short media format. While many learners appreciate opportunities to bring popular culture into the classroom, faculty instructors should be mindful of barriers to full participation and take the multicultural learning needs of individual classes and cohorts into account. Done right, popular culture can serve a variety of engagement strategies and learning outcomes.

Research

- Doyne, S., Schulten, K., & Ojalvo, H. (2011, December 1). Everyone's a critic: analyzing sitcoms as cultural texts. *The New York Times*.
- Parker, N. (2016, October 5). Popular culture in the classroom. Not Even Past. The Department of History, The University of Texas at Austin.
- Jubas, K. (2022, August 26). Using popular culture in professional education to foster critical curiosity and learning. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 55(1), 240–258.

Outcomes

- Encounter course content in real world and professional contexts.
- Assess the relevance of core materials to individual contexts.
- Consider cultural norms embedded in course content and its representation in various contexts.

Learning Design

This discussion board activity is suitable for most course contexts and involves learners reviewing curated segments from a sitcom or other short media format to support engagement with key course concepts. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Selecting a sitcom or similar media format for its relevance to core content area;
- Curating short clips to pair with key terms or concepts; and
- Mapping a series of discussion board posts that invite learners to respond to the course material and to one another.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes for this discussion board activity. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning](#)
- [Integrative and Applied Learning](#)
- [Intercultural Knowledge and Competence](#)

➤ Examples

Economics (Undergraduate)

In this discussion, you will contribute a minimum of three posts that engage the following videos from the U.S. sitcom *The Office*.

Media Clips

- Concept: Fixed and Variable Costs | [Video Clip](#) (1:18)
- Concept: Cyclical Unemployment | [Video Clip](#) (0:56)
- Concept: Monetary Systems and the Function of Money | [Video Clip](#) (0:55)

Opening Post | For the opening post (200 words maximum), select one of the video clips and explain how it clarifies a key economic concept (e.g. fixed and variable costs, cyclical unemployment, or monetary systems and the function of money). Specifically, you will:

- First, discuss specific aspects of the video clip that helped illustrate the clip's associated economic concept. Consider body language, tone of voice, and key words or phrases.
- Second, demonstrate your understanding of this concept by *either* writing a short explanation of the economic concept in your own words *or* by designing the concept as a visual illustration or diagram.

Responses | Responses (150 words maximum) should engage posts focused on the video clips you did *not* use in your opening post. Specifically, you will:

- First, rewatch all three video clips before reading and engaging *two* of your classmates' posts. Compare your classmates' insights with your own impressions of that same clip.
- Second, respond to your classmates' written or visual responses that illustrate their understanding of the associated economic concept. Be explicit. Describe how their explanation or illustration impacts your understanding and application of the concept in a real-world context.

Social Work (Graduate)

In this discussion assignment, you will contribute a minimum of three posts that engage the following videos from the PBS series *Call the Midwife*.

Media Clips

- Concept/Context: Public Health | [Video Clip](#) (2:20)
- Concept/Context: Adoption | [Video Clip](#) (1:26)
- Concept/Context: Prejudice/Bias | [Video Clip](#) (1:28)

Opening Post | For your opening post (200 words maximum), select one of the video clips and explain how it clarifies a key area or concept in the field of social work (e.g. public health, adoption, prejudice/bias). Specifically, you will:

- First, discuss specific aspects of the video that helped illustrate the clip's associated concept or focus area. Consider body language, tone of voice, and key words or phrases.
- Second, draw on this unit's reading to describe at least two different approaches to this concept or area. How do public health, adoption, and prejudice/bias relate to the field of social work?

Responses | Responses (300 words maximum) should engage posts focused on the video clips you did not cover in your opening post. Specifically, you will:

- First, rewatch all three video clips before reading and engaging two of your classmates' posts. Compare your classmates' insights with your own impressions of that same clip.
- Second, consider contemporary contexts for the three concepts the videos illustrate. Drawing on readings from this unit, describe three improvements in these areas before detailing challenges that contemporary social workers continue to face in the areas of public health, adoption, and prejudice/bias.

Inside & Out, Offline & Online

Overview

This activity exemplifies how discussion forums can bridge online and offline experiences. This approach pairs qualitative research activities (field work, oral histories, focus groups, etc.) with online reflections, inviting learners to share and workshop in a virtual forum the research they conducted offline. Successful assignments will carefully scaffold and teach all offline and online activities. When navigating virtual or hybrid courses, learners benefit from assignments that pair real-world activities with online engagement.

Research

- Gonzalez, J. (2018, September 22). *Voice of witness: bring the power of oral history to your classroom*. Cult of Pedagogy Podcast.
- Ryan, F. (2020, November 4). *How to tackle fieldwork and real-world training online*. The Open University.
- Ubell, R. (2022, March 18). *Learning how to blend online and offline teaching*. EdSurge.

Outcomes

- Articulate research questions and practice discrete research skills.
- Discuss research experiences in relation to course content.
- Reflect on possibilities and limitations of various teaching and learning modalities.

Learning Design

This discussion forum activity is suitable for most course contexts and requires instructors to first design an offline qualitative research activity that learners later engage online. This approach will be especially useful to courses with an applied research or fieldwork focus. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Designing a field-based research activity that engages core content;
- Introducing and teaching all research skills; and
- Mapping a series of discussion prompts that invite learners to reflect on their own and others' research experiences.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes for this discussion forum activity. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Inquiry and Analysis](#)
- [Integrative and Applied Learning](#)
- [Oral and Written Communication](#)

➤ Examples

Political Science (Undergraduate)

In this discussion forum, you will consider the impact of new legislation on a community in your home county, state, or country. First, select legislation under proposal and conduct four informal interviews with community members about their perception of the proposed bill and its impact. In a minimum of five posts, you will draft research questions, brainstorm interview candidates, and participate in structured reflections about the research process and proposed legislation.

Opening Post | In an opening post (300 words maximum), share the proposed bill you will be exploring in this assignment and in your community. This post will include eight questions to guide conversational interviews, as well as the list of proposed community members you plan to engage.

Responses | In at least two response posts (250 words maximum), engage your classmates' work by considering the proposed legislative bills in relation to their draft interview questions. Provide specific feedback on your classmates' interview questions and the balance of proposed community members. Are there additional questions you could suggest? Are there community roles or perspectives missing in the initial list?

Summary And Reflection | In this summary and reflection post (250 words maximum), summarize key impressions and insights from your conversational interviews. Share conclusions about the impact that this proposed legislative bill will have on your community if it is approved or enacted.

Open Discussion | In this open discussion (100 words maximum), read, comment on, and respond to your classmates' summary and reflection posts. Reply to comments classmates have shared on your summary and reflection post. What are you learning about the work of research in the world? What about the impact of the proposed legislation?

Geography (Graduate)

In this discussion forum, you will consider the impact of development on diverse neighborhoods and communities. First, you will review a development slated to transform a local neighborhood before conducting four informal interviews with community members about their perception of the development and its impact on their lives. In a minimum of five posts, you will draft research questions, brainstorm interview candidates, and participate in structured reflections about your field work and the proposed development.

Opening Post | In an opening post (300 words maximum), explore the proposed development from various perspectives. What kind of development theories does this plan embrace? Which does it challenge? Your post will include five to eight questions to guide conversational interviews with community members, as well as the list of proposed community members you plan to engage.

Responses | In at least two response posts (250 words maximum), engage the proposed developments selected by your classmates. Detail both similarities and differences in approach across the various developments your classmates have selected. What does development look like in different contexts? What differentiates development from gentrification?

Summary and Reflection | In this summary and reflection post (250 words maximum), summarize key impressions and insights from your conversational interviews. Share conclusions about the impact this proposed development will have on community members if it is approved and built.

Open Discussion | In this open discussion (100 words maximum), read, comment on, and respond to your classmates' summary and reflection posts. Reply to comments classmates have shared on your summary and reflection post. Specifically, share recommendations that could enhance community experiences of and improve community relations with various developments.

Flipping the Board

Overview

This reflective approach requires learners to share ownership of the discussion board and its moderation. By taking turns curating content, raising questions, and scaffolding engagement, learners learn about both core content and learning itself. In this way, Flipping the Board discussion activities avoid the predictability and conformity that sometimes occur when an instructor posts a question or prompt to which learners respond, often mimicking the instructor's communication style and content curation.

Research

- K. F. Hew, K.F., Jia, C., Gonda, D.E. *et al.* (2020). Transitioning to the “new normal” of learning in unpredictable times: pedagogical practices and learning performance in fully online flipped classrooms. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 17(57).
- Ladd, T. (2020, October 9). Why flipping the classroom is even more important in large online courses. Harvard Business Publishing.
- Wenger, E. (1998, June/July). Communities of practice: learning as a social system. *The Systems Thinker*, 9(5).

Outcomes

- Curate and synthesize materials for their own and others' engagement.
- Process and share perspectives on their own and others' engagement with curated content.
- Model critical-thinking and generous communication.

Learning Design

This discussion board approach is suitable for most course contexts and involves learners taking the lead on designing and moderating online discussion. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Introducing and modeling best practices in communication and engagement;
- Sharing a course netiquette guide and detailed rubrics for various learner roles; and
- Scaffolding successful moderation hand-off between learners.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes for this discussion forum approach. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Critical Thinking](#)
- [Oral and Written Communication](#)
- [Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning](#)

➤ Examples

Biology (Undergraduate)

In this discussion board activity, you will take turns moderating a group thread. When it is your turn to lead, you will first consider the topic of the unit and/or chapter and carefully read all assigned materials.

Opening Post | In an opening post (200 words maximum), you will formulate guiding questions for each resource your classmates will engage. Each question should be accompanied by a rationale for its inclusion. Consider: How does this question reflect your own consideration of this content? How will it serve your peers' engagement and learning?

Responses | In at least two response posts (250 words maximum), respond to the resource-specific questions posed by your peer leader and share two additional questions that support individual and shared learning.

Reflection | In a final post (300 words maximum), reflect on the balance of content covered and questions asked. Consider how else you might have structured your own and others' engagement with the materials. Include three additional resources and guiding questions that prompt further learning for yourself and your peers.

History (Graduate)

In this discussion board activity, you will take turns moderating a group thread. When it is your turn to lead, you will first consider the topic of the unit and/or chapter, curate all materials, and design structured engagement for yourself and your peers.

Opening Post | In an opening post (300 words maximum), share 4 to 5 resources that introduce the unit's materials and connect key concepts to both course content and professional contexts. Each resource should be accompanied by a brief summary, a critical evaluation, and two guiding questions to support engagement. Include a rationale for the inclusion of each resource and

question. Consider: How do these materials and questions reflect your own consideration of this content? How will they serve your peers' engagement and learning?

Responses | In at least two response posts (250 words maximum), respond to both the resource-specific questions posed by the peer leader and share additional questions that support individual and collective learning.

Reflection | In a final post (300 words maximum), reflect on the balance of materials curated and the questions you and your peers both asked and answered. Consider how else you might have structured engagement with the materials. Include three additional resources and guiding questions that prompt further learning.

Category | Case-Based

Picture This

Overview

Picture This is a case-based discussion board approach that invites learners to take and share photographs that document pathways to individual and community flourishing. This discussion forum leverages the Photovoice methodology to engage learners in a multimodal approach with community-engaged application. Developed by Carolina Wang and Mary Ann Burris, Photovoice uses images to translate individual and community needs and solutions into action. This form of teaching elevates visual learning and community.

Research

- Center for Community Health and Development. (n.d.). [Implementing photovoice in your community](#). Community Toolbox. University of Kansas.
- Teti, M. (2019). [The murky ethics of visual qualitative methods: picturing a clear path forward](#). *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18(January/December), 1–4.
- Wang, C., & Burris, M.A. (1997). [Photovoice: concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment](#). *Health Education and Behavior*, 24(3), 369–387.

Outcomes

- Experience the politics of representation through the lens of their own and others' cameras.
- Consider the value of a variety of learning styles and pedagogies.
- Apply critical theories to community engagement and social action.

Learning Design

This discussion forum activity is suitable for most course contexts and requires instructors to both design and implement a community-engaged Photovoice activity. Influenced by Paolo Freire, critical theory, and documentary photography, the Photovoice methodology is applicable to a wide variety of disciplines and contexts that benefit from participatory research. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Researching and understanding the Photovoice methodology, considering specifically content-related, field-specific examples;

- Designing and sharing a prompt to which learners can respond with pictures and images;
- Moderating the discussion board to emphasize course content, the prompt itself, and the ways Photovoice relates to both.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes for this discussion forum activity. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Creative Thinking](#)
- [Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning](#)
- [Oral](#) and [Written Communication](#)

➤ Examples

Healthcare (Undergraduate)

In this discussion board activity, you will work individually and in small groups to document indicators of health in your home community. Following an introduction to the Photovoice methodology and its power dynamics, you will take and post four images that help you understand community health considerations. Each of your four posts will consist of an image that illustrates a health indicator in your community, a question the image raises, and a critical consideration of what the image does not convey. For extra credit, you may partner with a community member to compare and contrast your understanding and representation of community health and wellness with theirs.

Education (Graduate)

In this discussion board activity, you will research and share three completed Photovoice projects that document diverse communities across at least two disciplines. In a series of three posts, you will share the research design and outcomes of each Photovoice project. In three response posts, you will engage the ethics of the Photovoice methodology as documented in the example projects shared by your peers. A final open forum post will invite you and your colleagues to share designs for new Photovoice projects that take into full account the pros and cons of this methodology.

Research Dreams, Data Nightmares

Overview

This case-based discussion board activity features the steps of research design by introducing a hypothetical scenario that includes a series of challenges. Considering a variety of research protocols, learners learn how to evaluate questions, methods, and outcomes. In some iterations, this activity can set up a full research project. In others, this discussion board activity provides learners the opportunity to practice research skills without undertaking a large project.

Research

- Christenberry, H. F., & Brookbank, E. (2019, April 22). *Teaching research skills: an interview with librarians*. MLA Style Center.
- Gonzalez, J. (Host). (2021, September 19). How to find, read, and use academic research (No. 177) [Audio podcast episode]. Cult of Pedagogy.
- Rosowski, D. (2022, March 2). The role of research at universities: why it matters. *Forbes*.

Outcomes

- Learn research tools and skills.
- Assess the strength of research questions and the measurability of data.
- Apply research scenarios and skills to professional contexts.

Learning Design

This discussion board approach is suitable for most course contexts and involves learners tackling a hypothetical research scenario. Planning and pre-work includes;

- Devising a research scenario with a series of variables that amplify core content;
- Teaching introductory or advanced research skills, as needed; and
- Iterating the design to reflect learner progress and needs.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes across this activity. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Inquiry and Analysis](#)
- [Critical Thinking](#)
- [Quantitative Literacy](#)

➤ Examples

Public Health (Undergraduate)

The governor of your state is forming a task force to reduce childhood asthma. As an expert in the field, you have been invited to submit a research proposal that will generate actionable steps in response to this question: “How can we reduce hospital admissions for childhood asthma?” In a series of four discussions, you will design a research protocol to answer this question.

First Discussion | In this first of four discussions, begin by selecting a specific research focus to determine the scope of your research design. In this post, you will:

- Articulate the relationship between your research focus and broader considerations of childhood asthma and hospitalizations. State your focus in the form of an actionable research question;
- Indicate the terms you will need to define based on both the broader topic and your selected focus; and
- List the general topics for which you will need data to begin engaging and answering your research question.

Second Discussion | In the second of four discussions, you will return to the topics brainstormed in the previous thread. What dream data would provide the most insight to your question? Imagine you have unlimited resources to collect various types of data. In this discussion post, you will:

- Re-state your research question;
- List your dream datasets as specifically as possible; and
- Justify these datasets by clarifying how they relate to your research question.

Third Discussion | For the third of four discussions, you will face a series of constraints. How do researchers respond when they cannot access the best or most applicable data? How will you respond?

In this discussion post, you will:

- Re-state your research question and dream data;
- Share constraints for collecting this data, considering fully any ethical, moral, legal, financial, and technological limitations;
- Identify feasible alternatives to your dream data that take funding and access considerations into account; and
- Determine whether this or related data is currently being collected by any group.

Fourth Discussion | For the fourth and final discussion, you will reflect on the strength of your original question, available and accessible data, and the challenges of research design. In this discussion post, you will:

- Re-state your research question and list your “dream” datasets, highlighting what made the proposed data originally compelling;
- Identify two strengths and two limitations of this data; and
- Share two directions for future research that might flow from your specific research question. What is the relationship between your reformulated question and the kind of data you might be able to access or collect?

Criminal Justice (Graduate)

You have been tasked with supporting a law enforcement community in exploring the relationship between education-level and recidivism in first-time offenders. As an expert in the field, you have been invited to submit a research proposal that will help this law enforcement community reconsider its approach to education programs for incarcerated individuals. In a series of four discussions, you will design a research protocol that could guide the exploration and implementation of educational programming for first-time offenders.

First Discussion | In the first of four discussions, you will:

- Articulate a research question and scaffold a research protocol that considers the relationship between education-attainment and recidivism;
- Identify data sets that support your inquiry; and
- Share an annotated bibliography including 5–7 resources that support your research question.

Second Discussion | In the second of four discussions, you will:

- Review all peer research questions to consider whose approach and data best matches your own;

- Revise your initial question and approach to include considerations and resources shared by your colleagues; and
- Upload a PowerPoint presentation that reflects your revised approach for the law enforcement community.

Third Discussion | In the third of four discussions, you will:

- Upload a video presentation that simulates your pitch to the law enforcement community supporting your research and design approach. Specifically, the presentation will include:
 - Detailed research design and associated costs;
 - Affordances and limitations of the proposed data set;
 - An aggressive timeline for all research activities; and
 - Tentative conclusions and anticipated outcomes.

Fourth Discussion | In the fourth and final discussion, you will:

- Upload a letter of commitment from the law enforcement community detailing its decision to approve *one* of the research designs from the entire class. You may either draft the letter in support of your own proposal or write a letter in favor of one of your colleagues' proposals. The letter should draw clear connections between the research question, proposed methodology and data sets, and the cost of tentative outcomes.

The Sum of All Parts

Overview

In The Sum of All Parts, learners are assigned designated roles intended to support learner engagement across the arc of a discussion thread. This premise can be used in any course with enough learners to play each role. In larger classes, this approach can support small-group discussions. Successful implementation will require active instructor modeling of civil discourse and critical exchange, as well as a netiquette policy that encourages learners to respectfully agree and disagree with both course content and one another. As shown below, role playing can serve a variety of learning outcomes.

Research

- Ferlazzo, L. (2020, October 23). *Effective strategies for using online discussion boards*. EducationWeek.,
- Wise, M. (2018, April 24). *Improving learner-led discussions*. Edutopia.
- Waesche, J. (2017). *Use role play to increase learner engagement in online discussions*. In B. Chen, A. deNoyelles, & A. Albrecht (Eds.). *Teaching Online Pedagogical Repository*. University of Central Florida Center for Distributed Learning.

Outcomes

- Consider and engage diverse perspectives.
- Work together toward shared learning goals.
- Practice critical communication skills.

Learning Design

This approach is suitable for most course contexts and involves learners playing specific roles in a discussion. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Writing, sharing, and modeling netiquette standards that govern all course behavior and communication;
- Assigning learner roles for a given discussion thread;
- Actively teaching core communication skills required for civil discourse;

- Monitoring all learner participation and sharing role-specific feedback during and upon completion of the activity.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes for this approach. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Written Communication](#)
- [Critical Thinking](#)
- [Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning](#)

➤ Examples

English (Undergraduate)

Books have been the target of small and large-scale bans since early print history. Why are books such powerful conveyors of both cultural norms and differences? What makes them effective as both learning tools and political targets? Is book banning an effective means of shaping both what and how people learn?

In this discussion forum, we will consider the impact of book banning from a variety of perspectives. Specifically, this discussion will use a protocol with assigned roles. Please see the course announcement for your role in this discussion. Once you have determined your assigned role, review the information below and the rubric specific to your role so that you are prepared to actively support all shared learning.

Cyber Security (Graduate)

Social media platforms adopt a range of security protocols that strive to balance consumer protections with freedom of speech. In this discussion forum, we will consider how various platforms approach the balance between privacy and protection. Specifically, this discussion will use a protocol with assigned roles. Please see the course announcement for your role in this discussion. Once you have determined your assigned role, review the information below and the rubric specific to your role so that you are prepared to actively support all shared learning.

Question Poser | After reviewing the assigned materials for this week, formulate a question intended to produce a robust class discussion. This question should invite synthesis, ask classmates to make an informed decision, direct a comparison/contrast, or elicit evaluation of the week's content. Your only role in this discussion is to share this initial question. Your post should

be no more than 100–150 words. If you are the question poser, you will post your question by DAY and TIME.

Responder | After reviewing the assigned materials for the week and reading the initial question posed by your peer, offer a thoughtful, well-reasoned response. This response should be 150–200 words and cite one source from this week’s class materials, as well as one additional source you identify through independent research. You are responsible for replying to one peer in any role, although you are welcome to engage more frequently. If you are the responder, you will make one response post by DAY at TIME and reply to at least one peer in any role by DAY and TIME.

Provocateur | After reviewing the assigned materials for the week, reading the initial question posed by your classmate as well as the responses to this question, you will invite your peers to consider perspectives they may have overlooked or theories that contradict the tone of the discussion. You might also raise hypotheticals that point to significant gaps in the discussion thus far. These posts should be 100–150 words. Your role is to “stir the pot” in a way that advances the discussion while contributing in a friendly and respectful manner. If you are the provocateur, you will make three posts by DAY at TIME.

Evidence Evaluator | After reviewing the assigned materials for the week, reading the initial question posed by your classmate as well as the responses to this question, you will invite participants to consider the quality of evidence being shared and its relationship to all claims. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these studies in light of the question under consideration? What do we still need to know to provide a good answer? You should engage all class-based and outside sources shared by your peers. These posts should be 100–150 words. If you are the evidence evaluator, you will make three posts by DAY at TIME.

Summarizer | After reviewing the assigned materials for the week, reading the initial question posed by your classmate as well as the responses to this question, you will conclude the discussion by offering a synthesis in three areas: 1) Identify the common themes and questions, noting important divergent perspectives; 2) Offer guidance on what the current evidence suggests while outlining further research needs; and 3) State how insights from this discussion connect to our class learning outcomes. Your post should be 200–250 words. Tip: You will be most successful in this “thinking big” role if you have carefully followed the discussion during the week. If you are the summarizer, you will make one post by DAY at TIME.

Game On – A Discussion Quest

Overview

The Game On discussion quest is an effective way to teach strategy. In this activity, members of a small-group discussion team contribute strategically to a “game” played by the entire class. The instructor awards tokens for different types and qualities of posts and detracts penalties for various infractions. With the total number of posts per individual and per group capped, discussion teams must strategize how to collect the most tokens while contributing effectively to the discussion.

Research

- Bovee, B., Jernejcic, T, & El-Gayar, O. (2020). A method for gamifying online discussions. *AMCIS 2020 TREOs*. 41.
- Ding, L. (2018). Applying gamifications to asynchronous online discussions: a mixed methods study. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 91(2), 1–11.
- Chen, C.M. & Chen, P.C. (2022). A gamified instant perspective comparison system to facilitate online discussion effectiveness. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 54(3), 790–811.

Outcomes

- Apply gaming strategies to core content.
- Creatively approach communication challenges.
- Work collectively to solve problems.

Learning Design

This approach is suitable for most course contexts and involves learners playing specific roles in a discussion. In small classes, individuals can be a one-person team. Larger classes can be divided into smaller sections to better manage the full discussion. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Introducing the gamified element and discussion teams approach;
- Setting up the whole-class discussion topic and forming small-group discussion teams that have access to a private communication channel;

- Assigning learners into groups and communicating all expectations about this game-approach to a discussion board;
- Actively monitoring learner participation to provide timely awards of “tokens” based on learner engagement; and
- Facilitating a post-game “debrief” session that underscores both core content and all player strategies.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes with this approach. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Teamwork](#)
- [Creative Thinking](#)
- [Critical Thinking](#)

➤ Examples

International Relations (Undergraduate/Graduate)

Welcome to the International Relations Theory Quest!

This week, we will play a team game to examine the international relations conflict we studied in this unit. You can find your team assignment in this week’s course announcement.

Your team will earn tokens based on the discussion posts made by members of your team. Beware! Your team can also lose points for engaging in any of the designated penalty behaviors.

Your team has access to a private discussion board in the Discussions tool. Use this private board to strategize about your collective participation in the class discussion. Because each individual is limited to making only five posts, team collaboration is essential.

Discussion Quest Topic | What explains the enduring conflict between Japan and South Korea?

Quest Rules

- Clearly identify your team name in each post.
- A member of your team must make an initial post of 200–250 words by DAY and TIME. No outside research is expected.
- Three different team members must offer reply posts of 200–250 words to three other teams by DAY and TIME. No outside research is expected.

- Two different members of your team must reply in 200–250 words to at least two replies by DAY and TIME. No outside research is expected.
- Additional posts are allowed and encouraged as a way to earn extra tokens for your team. No individual may post to the discussion more than five times total.
- Every member of your team must post at least two substantive posts to the discussion.
- Tokens will be awarded within 24 hours as replies to each post.

Examples of Actionable/Gradable Criterion

- Posting quality content aligned with course content and game expectations;
- Articulating connections across course materials and peer posts; and
- Posing substantive questions that engage peer posts, the discussion quest topic, and course content.

Examples of Actionable/Deductible Criterion

- Posting late for an initial post, reply post, or replies to replies;
- Exceeding post word count by more than 20%;
- Failing to provide evidence or citation requested by a peer; and
- Failing to identify your team name in your post.

As the game master, I reserve the right to adjust individual grades from team tokens awarded. Any adjustments made will be communicated privately to impacted learners.

Sample tokens:       

Touring Together

Overview

Touring Together is a forum activity that promotes engagement and can take learners in many different directions. This discussion activity consists of a virtual tour where learners share examples from online research and justify all selections in relation to course content. Follow up posts “add-on” to the tour by proposing similar materials or “detour” to document different approaches. Working individually, learners co-create a compelling “tour” of curated web-based content that deepens engagement with and understanding of course material.

Research

- Curts, E. (2016, February 25). [4 fake sites to teach students website evaluation](#). Control Alt Achieve.
- Crockett, L. (2021, December 16). [Ten strategic steps for teaching online research skills](#). Future Focused Learning.

Outcomes

- Conduct online research.
- Compare and contrast research approaches to diverse subject areas.
- Distinguish between real and fake data.

Learning Design

This approach is suitable for most course contexts and involves learners “touring” a concept, key term, methodology, or element related to core content. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Selecting a topic for which a robust and varied web presence exists;
- Ensuring all learners have access to web browsing;
- Sharing a clearly designed netiquette policy and discussion participation rubric; and
- Active teaching of any content the learners will be evaluating.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes for this activity. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Information Literacy](#)
- [Inquiry and Analysis](#)
- [Creative Thinking](#)

➤ Examples

Education (Undergraduate)

School leaders approach kindergarten registration in different ways. As a future principal, you will face registration and enrollment decisions each year. In this discussion, you will investigate how different schools approach the kindergarten registration process. In total, you will share links to three different kindergarten registration processes. Together, the class will take a virtual tour of a variety of kindergarten registration strategies.

Departure Time! For Your Initial Tour Post, Complete the Following:

- Review current research and data about kindergarten registration, including all relevant course materials;
- Research a school whose kindergarten registration process seems especially aligned with the research you reviewed;
- Share a link to the school’s kindergarten registration page; and
- In 150–200 words, summarize the registration process and relate it to key research findings. Why is this particular process effective for its target community? In your response to this question, cite at least one source from this module’s content.

“Add On” and “Detour”! As the Journey Continues, You Will Post At Least Two Replies:

- In your “add on” post, share a link to an example of a school whose registration process is similar to the example shared by a peer in their initial post. In 200–250 words, articulate how your example aligns with the registration process and research rationale shared by your peer.
- In your “detour” post, share a link to an example of a school whose registration process is different from the example shared by a peer in their initial post. In 250–300 words, articulate how your example differs from the registration process and research rationale shared by your peer. Share two research-aligned suggestions for ways to make each registration process more effective.

Biology (Graduate)

This unit has explored diverse approaches to funding research. As future scientists, you will encounter various funding models for both individual and large-scale research. In this discussion, you will investigate how diverse labs and research projects are funded. In total, you will share links to three different labs with a range of funding and operation models. Together, we will take a virtual tour of various ways research is funded and managed.

Departure Time! For Your Initial Tour Post, Complete the Following:

- Review research about diverse funding models for local, state-wide, and national science labs;
- Document your research in an annotated bibliography featuring five resources. Each resource will include a correct citation, short summary, and critical evaluation.
- Provide a link to a research lab whose funding model reflects best practices according to your research.
- In 450 words, summarize the lab's funding structure and relate it to key research findings. Why is this funding model effective? Your response to this question should make use of four resources from your annotated bibliography and at least two from this module's content.

"Add On" and "Detour"! As the Journey Continues, You Will Post at Least Two Replies:

- In your "add on" post, share a link to an example of a funding model shared by a peer in their initial post that resembles your example. In 300–500 words, articulate how both examples effectively respond to funding constraints and challenges.
- In your "detour" post, share a link to an example of a funding model shared by a peer that differs markedly from the initial example you shared. In 300–500 words, articulate how your examples differ. Share two research-aligned suggestions for ways to make each funding and organizational model more aligned with the research design.

Time for Town Hall

Overview

Time for Town Hall is a roleplay activity that helps learners move beyond identifying with one particular role, consider a variety of perspectives, and experience how stakeholders learn to work together. In this discussion board activity, learners assume several different roles over the course of a multi-week discussion. Working in various configurations, learners practice solving complex problems.

Research

- Lynch, M. (2022, February 14). [How to implement the town hall circle teaching strategy in your classroom.](#) The Edvocate., 2022.
- Facing History and Ourselves. (2018, January 29). [Town hall circle.](#)
- reDesign. (n.d.). [Town hall circle.](#)

Outcomes

- Explore multiple and diverse viewpoints.
- Assess the impact of various stakeholder roles.
- Practice problem-solving in real world contexts and communities.

Learning Design

This approach is suitable for most course contexts. With learners playing various roles in a discussion, this forum activity is ideal for courses that feature policy-making and problem-solving at all levels. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Designing a complex problem that requires stakeholder buy-in and influence to address;
- Assigning learners stakeholder roles;
- Presenting the scenario to the course and iterating the design as needed;
- Highlighting learner challenges and successes as they strive toward a common solution to the hypothetical problem.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes with this activity. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Teamwork](#)
- [Integrative and Applied Learning](#)
- [Problem Solving](#)

➤ Examples

Government (Undergraduate)

You and your classmates are hosting a series of town hall meetings to engage diverse constituents debating a controversial education tax. Over the course of this four-week discussion, you will play different stakeholder roles including: a local homeowner with no children; a local parent with children attending both middle and high schools; an expectant mother; a senior citizen with grandchildren in a different state; a local official with no children in the school system; and a local official with children enrolled in the school system. All roles will be shared in advance and listed publicly for the full class.

First Discussion | In the first discussion, each stakeholder will present their case at a town hall meeting. Specifically, each stakeholder will explain how their unique role is impacted by the proposed education tax. These presentations will take the form of 250-word public statements uploaded to the discussion forum.

Second Discussion | In the second discussion, you will draft a “letter to the editor” documenting your experience of the initial town hall discussion. In the letter, you will assume a different stakeholder role and document evidence supporting the impact of the proposed education tax on this second role. All letters will be 350–500 words in length and include at least one outside resource providing important support for your letter’s argument.

Third Discussion | In the third discussion, stakeholders will work together to form alliances that might move the community toward consensus. Within these alliances, stakeholders will share a written plan and rationale for adopting, amending, or rejecting the proposed education tax. This plan will be shared as a powerpoint presentation to the discussion board.

Fourth Discussion | In the final week, all stakeholders will vote on the implementation plans for the proposed education task. For this vote, learners will adopt yet another stakeholder role and vote on its behalf. In a final summary post, you will reflect on the various roles played across this discussion.

Management (Graduate)

A Fortune 500 business is hosting a series of town hall meetings to work through its controversial organizational restructure. Over the course of this four-week discussion, you will play different stakeholder roles including: CEO, HR representative, team leader, middle manager, long-term employee, new hire, board member, trustee, and consumer or client.

First Discussion | In the first discussion, each stakeholder will present their case at a town hall meeting. Specifically, each stakeholder will explain how their unique role is impacted by the proposed organizational restructure. These presentations will take the form of 350-word public statements uploaded to the discussion forum. Each statement should connect its case to research and data considered in this unit.

Second Discussion | In the second discussion, you will draft a formal letter for your employee file, documenting your experience of the initial town hall discussion. In the letter, you will assume a different stakeholder role and document evidence supporting the impact of the proposed organizational restructure on this second role. All letters will be 350–500 words in length and include at least three outside sources providing important support for your letter’s argument.

Third Discussion | In the third discussion, stakeholders will work together to form alliances that hope to impact the organization’s structure. Within these alliances, stakeholders will share a written plan and rationale for adopting, amending, or rejecting the proposed organizational restructure. This plan will be shared as a PowerPoint presentation to the discussion board. Each presentation will include three examples of similar restructures you have researched that benefitted specific stakeholder roles.

Fourth Discussion | In the final week, all stakeholders will share a final summary post that reflects on the various roles played across this discussion. Specifically, you will consider which roles seem to have the most power at the organization and which need to work collectively to impact change.

Who's Who? Attending to Audience

Overview

In the Who's Who? discussion board forum, learners tailor communication approaches for an intended audience. Understanding how to adapt written communication for a discrete purpose is a skill set beneficial to most courses of study and professional contexts. This case-based activity helps students understand that effective communication often targets a specific audience.

Research

- Champion, B. (2019, April 30). *Understanding your audience: who are you writing for?* The Center for the Professional Education of Teachers, Columbia University Teachers College.
- Guadalupe, J., Palacios, T., & Costilla Cruz, E. (2022, June 3). *Promoting communication skills is just as important as course content.* Times Higher Education.
- Thompson, T.J., Thomas, G., & Irvine, L. (2021, August 24). *Communication is changing – and most universities haven't kept up.* The Conversation,.

Outcomes

- Practice written communication skills.
- Adapt tone and style of written communication for diverse audiences.
- Consider the relationship between content, context, and audience.

Learning Design

This approach is suitable for most course contexts and involves learners adapting a series of documents for a specific audience. It is especially useful for communications, composition, and other writing-focused courses. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Identifying a course-relevant context;
- Preparing a series of documents for learner engagement; and
- Active teaching of audience and genre analysis.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Written communication](#)
- [Inquiry and analysis](#)
- [Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning](#)

➤ Examples

Composition (Undergraduate)

In this discussion activity, you will consider a marketing strategy's relationship to its core audience.

First Post | In this first post, you will identify key elements of the marketing strategy and suggest the advertisement's target market. In 150 words, explain how this particular strategy is tailored for this specific audience.

Second Post | In this second post, redesign the advertisement for a different demographic. Do not specify your target audience. In the next post, your classmates will try to determine your target audience.

Third Post | In this third post, respond to three peers. In 250 words, describe the audience you believe they are targeting in their revised advertisements. Each post should clearly describe characteristics that suggest a particular demographic.

Fourth Post | In a final and fourth post, share a summary that reveals the target audience for your revised copy. Your summary should address any incorrect guesses made by your peers. How could your language have been more specific to your proposed audience?

Nursing (Graduate)

In this discussion activity, you will consider discharge instructions shared with a patient after surgery.

First Post | In this first post, describe who you believe the intended patient to be. Your assumption should take age, gender, household structure, and access to services into account. In 150 words, explain how these discharge instructions are tailored for the specific demographic you propose.

Second Post | In this second post, rewrite the discharge instructions for a different demographic. Do not specify your target demographic. In the next post, your classmates will try to determine your hypothetical patient demographic.

Third Post | In this third post, respond to three peers. In 250 words, describe the target demographic you believe they are addressing in their revised discharge information. Each post should clearly describe characteristics that suggest a particular demographic.

Fourth Post | In a final and fourth post, share a summary that reveals the target demographic for your revised instructions. Your summary should address any incorrect guesses made by your peers. How could your language have been more specific to your proposed demographic?

Category | Problem-Based

Twists and Turns

Overview

This discussion board activity requires learners to proactively anticipate “twists and turns” as they address unfolding and unexpected problems. It helps students develop creative problem-solving skills, which are prized in job candidates by most industries. Well suited to most content areas, this approach is especially effective for students learning to understand risk management and complex problem-solving.

Research

- Jonassen, D. (2011). [Supporting problem solving in PBL](#). *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, 5(2), 95–119..
- Jonassen, D.H. (2000). [Toward a design theory of problem solving](#). *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 48(4), 63–65. Reprinted in B. Evrim (Ed.), [Learning Environments Design Reading Series](#). PressBooks.
- The Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning. [Teaching problem solving](#). Brown University.

Outcomes

- Solve complex problems.
- Respond to real-time challenges.
- Work together to adapt to changing circumstances.

Learning Design

This approach is suitable for most course contexts and involves learners responding to problems in the context of a hypothetical scenario. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Designing an initial scenario with a complex problem;
- Assigning all learners a response order that informs the flow of the activity; and
- Clarifying what constitutes a “twist” or “turn” so that all learners can effectively participate.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes for this activity. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Problem Solving](#)
- [Creative Thinking](#)
- [Inquiry and Analysis](#)

➤ Examples

Healthcare (Undergraduate)

You and your team are hosting a vaccine clinic in a rural county with a diverse population. The county infrastructure includes a local university, small baseball stadium, shopping mall, and hospital. There is no public transportation. The vaccine clinic will take place in March when the average temperatures are between 38° and 53° F with snow and ice regularly anticipated. For this activity, each learner will post in the order assigned. You will build on the previous classmate's post and adjust all plans to accommodate their "twist." All "twists and turns" should reflect real-world situations that could impact an event of this kind. Each post should include a detailed rationale explaining all choices and necessary resources.

First Post | Learner One will identify and share three steps toward planning a vaccination clinic in the county. With the three steps identified, the post will conclude with a "twist" that will require the original plan to be altered in some way.

Subsequent Posts | Remaining learners respond to each subsequent post in numbered order, continuing to plan for the vaccine clinic while responding to "twists and turns" shared at each turn.

Management (Graduate)

You and your peers are hosting a convention of global political leaders and their staff. In addition to full group events, you should plan to accommodate multiple small group sessions during the weeklong event. All participants will need access to accommodations, and the political leaders have requested recreational activities for their staff. There is no convention center in town, but many hotels have individual conference areas that can accommodate 10–50 people. The town includes a range of restaurants, from fast food to fine dining. There is a fairground with two large covered pavilions that can accommodate 100 people each, as well as an amphitheater that seats 250 people. There is also a recreational lake with cabins and a small meeting space. Resources include a small police department, local fire and rescue, and a small hospital. The event will take

place in mid-May when the weather is traditionally between 55° F and 78° F. Rain is common 10 days out of the month with a strong potential for severe thunderstorms.

For this activity, each learner will post in the order assigned. You will build on the previous classmate's post and adjust all plans to accommodate their "twist." All "twists and turns" should reflect real-world situations that could impact an event of this kind. Each post should include a detailed rationale explaining all choices and necessary resources.

First Post | Learner One will identify and post three detailed proposals for major components of the convention. With these details shared, the post will conclude with a "twist" that will require the original plan to be altered in some way.

Subsequent Posts | Remaining learners respond to each subsequent post in numbered order, continuing to plan for the convention while responding to "twists and turns" shared at each turn. Each reply post should include research derived from course materials that support best planning and management practices.

Two Truths & a Lie

Overview

Mimicking the classic party game Two Truths and a Lie, this discussion board activity helps learners navigate ambiguous or difficult subject matter. Trying to fool their classmates, this approach builds learners' analytic and critical thinking skills in relation to course content. Importantly, this approach can encourage productive conversations about controversial and divisive material.

Research

- Smith, J. A. (2017, February 8). *What's good about lying?* Greater Good Magazine. The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley.
- Wineburg, S., McGrew, S., Breakstone, J., & Ortega, T. (2016). *Evaluating information: The cornerstone of civic online reasoning*. Stanford Digital Repository.

Outcomes

- Practice rhetorical skills.
- Engage content critically.
- Analyze their own and others' communication.

Learning Design

This approach is suitable for a wide variety of courses. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Articulating a relevant prompt that will encourage enthusiastic participation;
- Deciding whether learners should post individually or be divided into small, competitive teams; and
- Assigning point values for lies both detected and undetected.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes for this activity. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Written Communication](#)

- [Critical Thinking](#)
- [Ethical Reasoning](#)

➤ Examples

English (Undergraduate)

In *Stand Out of Our Light*, James Williams categorizes attention in three forms: “the spotlight,” “the starlight,” and “the daylight.”

- How does each form of attention work?
- According to Williams’ argument, how are these forms impacted by digital technologies of communication and convenience?

Initial Post | Choose one form of attention, describe how it operates, and explain how it is impacted by personal digital technologies. In this initial post, weave in one incorrect fact, detail, assumption, or application. What might be commonly misunderstood about this form of attention and therefore go unnoticed?

Responses | In the first response round, you will engage an initial post by identifying the mistruth and correcting it. You may not respond to a post that already has a response. In the second round, respond only if you believe a lie was not accurately called out or appropriately corrected. Explain what was missed or not fully accounted for.

After Round 2, we will tally points and announce a tentative winner. You can appeal the decision if you can explain: 1) How you sneaked an undetected lie past the class, or 2) How you substantially improved another’s response. Post your appeals as a reply to the “Totals Post.” We will then adjust totals, if necessary, and declare the winner.

Anthropology (Graduate)

In this unit, we have been exploring the concept of culture. In this discussion forum, you will share two truths and a lie about cultural norms around the world.

Initial Post | Research a country or ethnic group that is not your own and share three “facts” about its culture. In this initial post, weave in one incorrect fact.

Responses | In the first response round, you will engage an initial post by identifying the mistruth and correcting it. You may not respond to a post that already has a response. Integrate course materials to refute each misrepresentation with research and data. Where course materials are not sufficient, bring in outside research to ensure accurate representation of cultural differences.

In the second round, respond only if you believe a lie was not accurately called out or appropriately corrected. Explain what was missed or not fully accounted for. You are, in effect, responding to the response.

After Round 2, we will tally points and announce a tentative winner. You can appeal the decision if you can explain: 1) How you sneaked an undetected lie past the class, or 2) How you substantially improved another's response. Post your appeals as a reply to the "Totals Post." We will then adjust totals, if necessary, and declare the winner.

Picturing Process

Overview

The Picturing Process discussion forum activity supports learners in visualizing abstract concepts and processes. It encourages learners to use both left and right brain capacities in their learning and development. Specifically, this approach encourages learners to draw analogies that deepen their understanding of core content.

Research

- Bartha, P. (2019, January 25). Analogy and analogical reasoning. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Haspar, A. (2018, September 7). Why Images are Powerful for Learning. National Geographic Learning,.
- Gavetti, G. & Rivkin, J.W. (2005, April). How strategists really think: Tapping the power of analogy. *Harvard Business Review*.

Outcomes

- Visualize abstract concepts and integrate new forms of information.
- Practice self-reflection and evaluation.
- Enjoy creative learning through analogous thinking.

Learning Design

This approach is suitable for a wide range of courses in which learners consider processes as well as abstract concepts. Planning and pre-work includes:

- Designing an activity in which learners translate a concept or process into visual form;
- Teaching learners to understand different kinds of visual representation; and
- Emphasizing the importance of creativity to all learning.

Evaluation

Faculty instructors could use a variety of evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes. The most relevant [AAC&U VALUE Rubrics](#) for this approach include:

- [Creative Thinking](#)
- [Critical Thinking](#)
- [Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning](#)

➤ Examples

Humanities (Undergraduate)

This semester, we have examined and experimented with writing skills to build a tool kit useful to a variety of contexts. Reflect on how your own writing process has evolved by creating a visual representation that illustrates important strategies that serve you as a writer.

First Post | In an introductory post, brainstorm a few options to fill in this blank: “My writing process is like a ____.” Select the most compelling and then respond to the following questions: (1) Why is my writing process similar to ____? (2) What are the various components of this simile? (3) How do they relate to various elements or stages of your writing process?

Second Post | In a second post, use any tool (pens, collage, illustrator software) to illustrate one peer’s writing process. Drawing on the simile they selected, label all component parts and/or steps of their writing process clearly. Post your work as an embedded image to the discussion board.

Responses | Respond to any peers that illustrated your writing simile. How did their representation of your thinking inform the way you understand your own writing process? What questions do their representations elicit?

Biology (Graduate)

This semester, we have studied several hard-to-observe biological processes. Select one and move through the following discussion board activity.

First Post | Illustrate a hard-to-observe biological concept and post it to the discussion board with neither context nor title.

Responses | Respond to two peers, describing what you see in their illustration. Avoid labels or titles; instead, focus on detailed descriptions.

Revisions | Considering your peers' descriptions, revise your initial illustration. How could you change elements to prompt greater recognition of your concept or process?

Open Forum | In this final round, review all revised illustrations and guess what concept or process each of your peers hopes to depict. In a final summary post, share reflections about the work of illustrating abstract concepts and translating them for others' consideration.

Appendix

Categorization of Articles by Content

This appendix categorizes the articles included in this document according to their content themes. Each article is listed under one or more relevant categories.

Case-Based

Playing the Part	5
Picture This	19
Research Dreams, Data Nightmares	21
Who's Who? Attending to Audience	37

Connected

Screening for Concepts	10
Touring Together	31

Experiential

Inside & Out, Offline & Online	13
Research Dreams, Data Nightmares	21
Picturing Process	46

Game-Based

The Sum of All Parts	25
Game On - A Discussion Quest	28
Two Truths & a Lie	43

Problem-Based

Playing the Part	5
Time for Town Hall	34
Twists and Turns	40

Reflective

Whose Label? Agreeing & Disagreeing	8
Flipping the Board	16