

Structuring Asynchronous Discussions

Contextualize the assignment

How the discussion fits into the course.

Delineate the steps

Be specific and clear about the content, structure, and format of submissions.

Advise students

It is harder for students to ask casual questions outside of synchronous class time. Build in help.

Clarify the grading

Specify grading guidelines, or how to find a rubric.

Scaffold the responses

If students are meant to reply, specify what those replies should be.

Week IV Discussion: Intentional Divergence

In this week's lectures, Prof. Smith offers 3 frameworks for structuring creativity in order to produce innovative solutions to health care problems: deletion, analogy, and behavioral science.

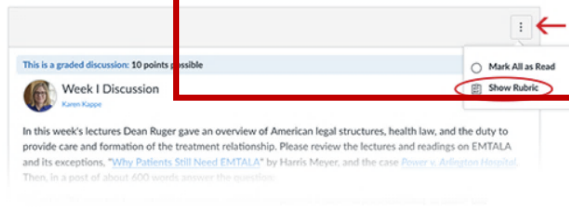
For this discussion, start with any health care problem you have identified so far in the course—in the lectures and readings, idea generators, your contextual inquiry, discussions, etc. Use **2 of those 3 techniques** to generate potential solutions. Then **in a post of a few paragraphs:**

- Articulate the problem you chose to work on.
- List 10 potential solutions that you have derived from using those techniques (in no more than 1 sentence apiece).
- Choose the 2 solutions you think are most promising and explain why.

Assignment Help

Get started on this discussion by reviewing Prof. Smith's lecture, "[Approaches to Creative Divergence](#)," as well as the [Intentional Divergence handout](#) ↓. If you choose to consider behavioral science, you may also want to review [this list of common cognitive biases](#) ↓.

A rubric is located under the more options icon (three vertical dots), above right.



Discussion Responses

By November 23: In addition to making your own post, **you must reply to at least 2 posts from your classmates in this forum.** As you reply, consider:

- What parts of the original poster's ideas did you find most exciting?
- What are 1 or 2 ways to make the original poster's ideas more effective or easier to adapt?
- Who would be best served and who would be left out if the original poster's solutions were implemented?
How can they make their solutions more equitable?

Your responses should be 1 or 2 paragraphs. They must be thoughtful, civil, and add something constructive to the conversation. You can find [further instructions and a discussion response rubric here](#).

Specify the quantity of work or time investment you expect from students at each step.

Clarify specific tasks you are asking students to complete.

Provide downloadable handouts or external links to help students grasp skills they will need to complete the assignment.

Deploy rubrics that clarify priorities and streamline grading and feedback for students and instructors.

Models for Better Asynchronous Discussions

Scaffolded discussions

Extend student thinking about specific course concepts. Review, analyze, and synthesize; connect to prior knowledge; and critically evaluate the analyses of other students.

- Identify, define, and/or critique a course concept.
- Explain the shortcomings or implications of a given idea.
- Provide constructive criticism for classmates.

Application exercises

Identify an exigent issue from relevant content inside or outside the course, and apply course concepts to address that challenge. Students integrate knowledge from beyond the course, reflect on the value of their peers' work, and offer advice.

- Teach-to-learn exercises—teach course materials to a person outside the class.
- Apply a concept from a core reading to a scenario from a secondary reading or to a real-life situation.
- Practice key skills like ethnography or interviewing and report back to the class.

Forced debate

Students critically evaluate a proposition, then take and defend a position. In their responses, students test the validity of ideas by making counterarguments.

- Each student takes a position on an issue; classmates are required to disagree.
- Small groups develop arguments asynchronously in preparation for a synchronous debate either in person or virtually.

Role-playing discussions

Students are presented with one or more real-world scenarios, take on a role, and use course concepts to address a challenge. In their responses, students may extend the role play or reflect on what they have learned.

- Take on the role of a consultant and offer advice in response to a scenario.
- Take part in a negotiation exercise.
- Present ideas in a fictionalized high-stakes setting like a conference or courtroom.
- Simulate participation in real-world historical, contemporary, or future events.

Reflection exercises

Students review course material—and their experience in courses—to integrate and consolidate knowledge. Research suggests students who reflect on knowledge are more likely to retain and apply it beyond the course.

- Reflect on how coursework aligns with course or weekly learning objectives.
- Delineate how course materials can be applied in real-world settings.