

CE 401 FALL 2025 Group Discussion Procedures

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OVERVIEW

Each week, there will be discussion questions based on the reading and video assignments for the week. These discussion questions will provide one basis for in-class discussions on Friday. The number of questions for the week, and the number of questions that each discussion group must address during the week vary. There will be 15 sets of discussion questions over the course of 14 weeks, and each set of discussion questions is worth 15 points. The grade will consist of the highest fourteen (14) discussion grades by ignoring the lowest discussion grade in the set of 15, for a maximum possible 210 points for the semester.

This is an important activity for class preparation and its participation each week is mandatory, even when a student will be absent from class on the following Friday. **Please make every reasonable effort to comply with these procedures and timing requirements because failure to do so can negatively affect your discussion group partners.**

INTERIM GROUPS FOR FIRST CLASS MEETING

Depending upon the total enrollment in the section, there will be two to six (2-6) fixed groups consisting of three to five students for discussion question activities throughout the semester. I randomly assign students to discussion groups for the week 01 class session for the sole purpose of initiating the weekly group discussion process for our initial class session in Week 01, and I randomly select one group member to function as this group's "Leader" for each Week 01 discussion question as posted on the CE-401 website.

Each group will have a specific table for seating during class so the group members can sit together during class, even for Week 01. For Week 01, there are six (6) discussion questions, and I have assigned three (3) of those questions to each Week 01 Interim Group.

PERMANENT GROUP FORMATION FOR WEEK 02 AND BEYOND

You can form your own fixed groups to work together for the rest of the semester. It will be better if you form your own discussion groups, and you will have until Monday, September 1, 2025, at 5:00 PM to form your own discussion group that will stand for the remainder of the semester. Subject to change and based on current enrollment levels, Section 1 will have 5 groups and Section 2 will have 5 groups. Groups will range in size from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 5, depending upon final enrollment levels. If enrollments indicate variable group sizes and if you want a specific size group within the available group size range, you must be first to request it until all available groups of that size have been fully subscribed. The status of the group formation process is posted on the CE-401 website. If you request a maximum sized group after these groups have been fully subscribed, I will notify you by return email that you must reform your group request to fit the group sizes still available at that time. If you request a minimum sized group, it could be necessary to add another student to your group if all students do not self-organize into groups.

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To create your own discussion group, send an email to ce-401@windstream.net with the subject “**Discussion Group Formation Request**” no later than 5:00 PM on Monday, September 1, 2025. **Your email must identify all prospective group members AND have each prospective group member’s email address in either the “From” or “Cc” boxes of the email so I can communicate with the entire group using the “Reply All” option.** I will acknowledge your email with a reply to all members in which I will either provide your group’s designation, e.g., Group A, B, C, D, E, or F or additional directions. I will randomly assign any student who does not request a specific group prior to 5:00 PM on Monday, September 1, 2025, to a group for the remainder of the semester. I will notify all students by 6 PM on Monday, September 1, 2025 via a CANVAS Announcement of the group assignments for the remainder of the semester.

THE WEEKLY PROCESS

Getting a Week Started

Each student should determine the group’s assigned discussion questions for the upcoming week and confirm CANVAS access for your group’s assigned questions. **IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT STUDENTS ACCESS ALL QUESTIONS FROM THE APPROPRIATE MODULE. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO ACCESS QUESTIONS FROM THE CANVAS CALENDAR!!!!**

- CANVAS will release the activities for the upcoming week at 12:01 AM on Saturday.
- I will post a matrix showing the group assignments on the CE-401 webpage at: http://richardcheeks.com/professor/New%20Front%20Page%20Format/CE-401_Front_Page.htm and the matrix will look like the example shown below:

Timely Initial Posts: 0.0%		Current Participation: 0		Last Update 6-Aug-25 11:13 AM	
Section 2		Week 1		Discussion Question Activity Report	
Question	Group	Leader	1	2	3
1	A	Audi	Audi	Conley	Howe
1	C	Brooks	Brooks	Holt	Paxton
1	E	Kane	Combs	Kane	Thomasy
2	B	Hamblin	Barber	Hamblin	Morrison
2	D	Buckner	Buckner	Jude	Sturgeon
2	F				
3	A	Howe	Audi	Conley	Howe
3	C	Paxton	Brooks	Holt	Paxton
3	F				
4	B	Barber	Barber	Hamblin	Morrison
4	D	Sturgeon	Buckner	Jude	Sturgeon
4	E	Combs	Combs	Kane	Thomasy
5	A	Conley	Audi	Conley	Howe
5	D	Jude	Buckner	Jude	Sturgeon
5	F				
6	B	Morrison	Barber	Hamblin	Morrison
6	C	Holt	Brooks	Holt	Paxton
6	E	Thomasy	Combs	Kane	Thomasy

Font Legend			
non-bold	No post made, time for posting remains	non-bold	Late Post before consensus, 20% loss
Bold / Bold	Post made within Time	Bold	Post is made after consensus, 60% loss
Non-Bold Leader-No Consensus Posted, -5 Points		<i>Ital. non-bold</i>	No Post Made, 100% loss

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Please note: The top section identifies the Section Number, Week Number, and a date and time stamp indicating the last update moment; the left frame shows the question number, the Group assignments for each question, and the Group Member who is the “Leader” for that question and group. The right frame shows the group members; and the bottom summarizes the meaning and significance of the color and font characteristics.

In the right frame, the font indicates the status of a member’s participation on the question as follows:

Black-non bold: The starting condition before any activity.

Black-Bold: Member has posted on the question prior to the initial posting deadline for the week, noon Wednesday.

Red-Italics: Member has not posted on the topic as of the initial posting deadline, noon Wednesday.

Red: Member posted on the question after the initial posting deadline and before the Group Leader posts the group’s consensus.

Red-Bold: Member posted on the question after the Group Leader posted the group’s consensus.

In the left frame, the font indicates the status of the leader’s participation on the question as follows:

Black-non bold: The leader has not posted a group consensus.

Black-Bold: The Leader has posted a Group Consensus.

Black-Bold Italics: *The Leader has posted a Group “No Consensus Reached” decision for the group.*

- I will post the starting matrix for the upcoming week’s questions by Friday afternoon of the prior week.
- I will update the matrix for the current discussion activities throughout the week, and the date and time stamps identify when the most recent update occurred.
- I will remove the matrix for a completed week after each Friday’s class session.
- The information on this matrix provides the basis for each student’s point totals for the week’s discussion question activities.

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Respond To Discussion Questions After Readings and Other Materials

Each student should complete the assigned readings and view the assigned videos for the week PRIOR to responding to the discussion questions. **It is essential that you respond to the questions ONLY after you have read and viewed all of the assigned materials. Otherwise, your posts will probably be non-responsive to the question and impede your group's progress toward an appropriate consensus on the question.**

Postings Should Occur In the Group Discussion Thread Only (Access in MODULE not CALENDAR)

Each student should post an initial response to each assigned question ONLY in a group discussion thread created specifically for the Group's private conversation. Let me know if you cannot locate or access your group's private discussion thread for the question.

- **DO NOT POST ANY REPLIES ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE DISCUSSION TOPIC AS I WILL DELETE IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!! DELETED POSTS CANNOT BE RECOVERED.**
- **IF YOU CANNOT ACCESS YOUR GROUP'S DISCUSSION THREAD, CONTACT ME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO WE CAN RESOLVE THE CANVAS ISSUE.**

Initial Posting and Consensus Building Process

Each student should write and post an initial response to each assigned question in cogent sentences and paragraphs. After a student has posted an initial response in the Group's Thread, CANVAS will allow that student to view the responses already submitted by other group members and participate in the conversation within the thread that follows the initial postings. **DO NOT POST EMPTY RESPONSES TO GAIN ACCESS TO OTHERS' POSTS. THIS PRACTICE IS EASILY IDENTIFIED AND WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. THIS PRACTICE WILL COST THAT STUDENT POINTS!**

- Each student should make the initial post into this group discussion thread (*not the front page or CALENDAR based thread*) no later than noon Wednesday. This will provide 1 1/2 days for the leader to bring the group to a consensus on the question.
 1. In addition, each group member should revisit the thread to understand the range of responses provided by the entire group membership, and
 2. If a group member wants to modify an initial response, the group member should do so in a new post that explains the change and why it occurs.
 3. **DO NOT EDIT OR DELETE YOUR POSTS!!!**
- The Group Leader is responsible for leading the group to a consensus on the issue.
 1. **Consensus = Agreement.** The questions can elicit a range of views, and the discussion that occurs between members' initial posting and the leader's consensus posting should reveal how the group reconciled their differences in reaching agreement.

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2. A Consensus is **NEITHER** a summary of the expressed points of view **NOR** the leader's personal point of view. A Consensus is the group's agreed upon conclusion.
3. The leader can initiate the consensus building process at any time after all group members have posted an initial response to the question or after the noon Wednesday initial posting deadline, **whichever occurs first**.
4. The consensus building process requires a discussion among and between the group members, with the leader's function to maintain focus, identify the relevant details of the issue, and bring the group to agreement on the question.
 - While you could engage in these group discussions and consensus building activities outside the CANVAS environment, you should build the consensus within CANVAS, in a transparent process that includes responsive posts within the group discussion thread, so all members of the group can participate in the process and be completely aware of the group's diverse ideas and the development of the consensus.
 - Each leader will apply his/her own leadership style to bring the group to a consensus.
 - Discussion and debate should continue until the leader brings the group to a **CONSENSUS** on the question or time for discussion expires late on Thursday, at which time the leader may find it necessary to decide the issue on behalf of the entire group based on the leader's informed position and the need to close the matter with a decision as described in Part 5 below.
 - When the leader has led the group to **CONSENSUS**, the leader should post the **CONSENSUS** on behalf of the entire group into the group discussion thread to conclude the activity of that group for that question, clearly identifying the post as **THE CONSENSUS**.
 - In the final **CONSENSUS** post, the leader should:
 1. State that that the group reached agreement on the issues, and
 2. State the final decision reached by the group on the issues.
2. If the leader cannot bring the group to a consensus (agreement), the leader must decide the issue for the group. In a final post on the issue, the leader should:
 - State that the leader was not able to bring the group to an agreement, and
 1. State that the final decision represents the leader's conclusion about the best possible answer or resolution for the issue/question under consideration.
 2. Identify the range of dissenting views that remain at odds with the leader's decision on the question.
 3. State the final decision reached by the leader on the issue on behalf of the group.

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- The leader should be prepared to explain in class the range of dissenting views and why he/she has acted in this way despite the dissenting views.
- 3. The leader shall make a final post to close the group's discussion on the question.
 - Final posts on an issue that reports a group **CONSENSUS** may occur at any time after the group reaches **CONSENSUS**, and no later than 10 PM on Thursday.
 - Final posts on an issue that fails to report a group **CONSENSUS** should neither occur prior to 8 PM on Thursday nor without evidence of the group's stalled discussion posted within the group thread.
 - **A leader should not use a failed consensus report as an easy exit strategy when the group's discussion thread does not demonstrate a diligent effort to develop a consensus for the group.**
 - **If a leader does not make a final CONSENSUS/NO CONSENSUS post, the leader should be prepared to explain in class why no final CONSENSUS/NO CONSENSUS post occurred on the questions.**

In Class Leader Functions

In class on Friday, the leader shall serve as the primary, but not exclusive, spokesperson for the group on that question.

- If a leader cannot be present in class on Friday, the leader should:
 1. Delegate leader reporting responsibilities to another member of the group for that Friday's class session, and
 2. Provide the delegated leader the responses to in class explanations necessary for either a NO CONSENSUS outcome, or a no final CONSENSUS/NO CONSENSUS outcome as described previously; and
- The leader should notify me of the anticipated absence and the name of the substitute in-class leader no later than 10 PM on Thursday.

Discussion Question Point Values

Participation in these weekly group discussion activities is worth a maximum of 15 points.

- Each discussion question participation is worth at least 5 points, except:
 1. Two Modules will have only one question worth 15 points, and
 2. One Module will have one question worth 10 points and another question worth 5 points.
- Posting on the front page of a discussion question will **NOT** earn points, and
- Posting responses for unassigned questions will **NOT** earn points.

Discussion Question Point Deductions

Deductions from these maximum points will occur under the following circumstances:

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- If a student has not posted an initial response to a question in the discussion group thread by noon on Wednesday, that student's participation will be "red-flagged" as late, and if a post occurs before the consensus post, the late posting student will lose 20% (1 of 5, 2 of 10, or 3 of 15) of the available points for that question.
- If a student makes an initial post in the group's discussion thread after the Leader posts the group's consensus for that question, that student's participation will be "Bold Red-Flagged," losing 60% (3 of 5, 6 of 10, or 9 of 15) of the available points for that question.
- If a student does not post into the group's discussion thread by 10 PM Thursday, that student will lose all points for that question.
- In summary:
 1. 100% (5, 10, or 15 points) for timely initial participation
 2. 80% (4, 8, or 12 points) for late participation of initial posting
 3. 40% (2, 4, or 6 points) for very late participation of initial posting AFTER the leader posts the group's consensus, and
 4. 0% (0 points) for no participation.
- If the leader does not post a consensus on the topic by 10 PM Thursday, the leader loses five (5) points, despite the number of points the leader earned for the questions for the week in question. This could result in a negative score for the week.
- No point deductions will occur based on the content of a student's initial response **UNLESS** I conclude that the student's initial posting is non-responsive to the question due to a failure to read the assigned materials prior to posting the response based solely on my subjective opinion.
 1. If I conclude that a student's initial post is non-responsive, I will notify that student with a CANVAS IM of the point deduction and the reason for the deduction.
 2. I will give the student time to post responsively on the question to potentially earn some of the deducted points. This second post should be posted as a "reply" post to that student's initial posting.

Postings by Richard Cheeks

As I read posts during the week, I may post comments and questions.

- These posts may provide a different perspective or context for the issue under consideration.
- These posts do not require a specific response from any student engaged in that discussion **unless I ask for a reply to a specific question.**
- When these posts occur within a Group's discussion thread, members of that specific group should consider the post.
- When these posts occur on the front page of the discussion question, members of all groups assigned that specific question should consider the post.