

SEMINAR GUIDELINES AND REMINDERS

Come prepared by having read (repeatedly if necessary), annotated and written a journal entry on the assigned text(s).

Keep the text at the center of the discussion. The full name of this academic exercise is "book" seminar.

Use personal knowledge, but keep personal, anecdotal experiences and history to a minimum.

Point to and quote specific passages from the text to illustrate what caught your attention and stimulated your thinking, or to illustrate your observations, insights or assertions.

Include references to relevant ideas and materials to demonstrate and discuss connections to the text.

Include commentary and discussion that addresses the contexts (e.g., social, cultural, political, economic, historical) to which the readings relate, or in which they are included. Likewise, consider the points of view of those who belong to social or other groups of which you are not a member.

Listen to understand rather than to respond. Listen and respond respectfully.

Avoid personalization. That is, keep other speakers' comments and contributions separate from their personhood. Likewise, avoid being too possessive about ideas or points.

Consider points of disagreement as opportunities for learning and gaining new insights rather than sources of contention or conflict.

Avoid interrupting speakers, particularly in mid-sentence.

Express your understanding of what a speaker has said before stating your response, whether complementary or contradictory.

Observe the "rule of three." Speak no more than three times during a session unless or until all others have had an opportunity to participate in the conversation.

Consider (book) seminars as opportunities to share points of view, to be enriched by a variety of perspectives on the readings, to improve both your listening and oral communication skills, and to enhance your skill and experience in collaborative learning.