THE INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL-DISCUSSION

OSUN Connected Learning Contest Winner

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The assignment – The International Virtual-Discussion – was focused on postcolonial literature. It is a student-centered assignment that can be given within the framework of multidisciplinary courses. My colleague from Nigeria, Ms. Emilienne Akpan, and I conducted it between two continents: students from both the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) and from the American University of Nigeria (AUN) participated. The Virtual Discussion can be of two types: the first type is devoted to general topics and the second one is focused on specific topics that are interesting to the participants. In our case, the topic of the discussion was relevant to both Kyrgyzstan and Nigeria. Students particularly wanted to find out how the life of Kyrgyz and Nigerian people changed after they got their independence. The goals of the assignment are to (a) provide students with a global arena to share their insights on a target topic so that they can see what their peers think of the issue worldwide and think of themselves in a critical way, i.e. estimate their knowledge and skills and whether they are compatible in a particular field of study, (b) improve their critical and analytical thinking, stimulate students to conduct research and consequently evolve their research skills, (c) develop students' listening comprehension and speaking skills, as well as (d) conceive a tangible project after the online event and (e) open up new horizons in their field of study and maybe make necessary connections to be used in the future and make a difference within their communities and the world.

First Year Seminar

First-Year Seminar (FYS) is a yearlong course that introduces students to some foundational texts and genres of world culture from across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Focusing on literary, philosophical, religious and historical works, it explores various ways in which different civilizations, from antiquity to the contemporary era, have imagined and responded to the relationship between self and community. Topics to be considered include

human existence, truth, love, authority, reason and religion as they have been explored by individuals and societies throughout history.

In the first semester, students engage with texts that primarily address notions of selfhood and individuality and in the second semester they study texts that primarily address notions of community and collective identity.

Practical and pedagogical value

This task was assigned at the very beginning of the Spring semester in 2020 and conducted at the end of the same semester due to the unexpected changes in the teaching and learning process caused by Covid-19 pandemic. Ideally, the assignment requires not more than a month for the students to be ready. Longer terms might allow students to forget about it, whereas shorter terms might not fit the students' schedule.

Since it was the first time we had given this assignment, we came to the conclusion that to meet the requirements and goals of the assignment, it would be better to conduct it at the beginning of the semester. The earlier the event is conducted, the sooner the students will be able to critically evaluate themselves and identify their short/long term goals within the framework of the course, and maybe willing to have another discussion.

Below are abstracts from the article published on the AUCA website and student entries from the e-course online forum:

> ...Right after the winter break, my AUN colleague and I discussed the logistics of our project and the feasibility of the initial online discussion. The next step was to encourage students to participate in the event as some apathetic students are not ready to be involved in this sort of initiative due to their modesty, incompetency in English, or because of some other reasons. As professionals, implementing student-centered approaches, the instructors from both universities understood the need of the students' consent to participate in online discussions with their international peers and having got a positive response from students we started our preparations for the discussion. Having selected 20 argumentative topics we shared them with our students to ascertain the top five they could relate with and discuss. At both universities, the selections were arrived at through voting. After exchanging via email the top picks, we once again asked our students to choose their favorite topic for the online discussion. The majority of the votes went to the topic on what motivates people to work. For the subsequent month, students from both universities prepared for the discussion while their instructors worked with their respective IT departments to determine the best medium of the online discussion. We started our trial sessions with Webex but after two unsuccessful connections, we moved to Skype. But the quality of the audio and video was not satisfactory and although being a little frustrated by this, we stayed hopeful about the interclass

discussion, especially as our students were now looking forward to its happening. While mulling over what action to take next, AUN IT specialists offered to try Zoom. Oh, blessed Zoom, our savior! We connected immediately with no audiovisual problems. That was the moment when I felt that my dream would have finally come true. We were so happy! Having already discussed the 'ground rules' prior to this moment, we finally, agreed on the day and time for the class interface. As we looked forward to the pioneer interaction, the Coronavirus pandemic scuttled our plans as globally, schools had to shut down while students went home. With the migration to online instruction via different platforms, we still had a chance to actualize the project. Besides Time difference between our countries, AUN had a different academic calendar and had a few weeks left to complete instruction and examinations. We had to schedule our inter-class meeting in between competing engagements for faculty and students.

(Galimova & Akpan 2020)

Based on the online follow-up forums, the Virtual Discussion on Postcolonial Literature discussed with AUN students played a great role in the arc of the FYS course. This assignment let the teacher realize some of the goals set in the syllabus. An online discussion gives all students the chance to express themselves because they may not feel comfortable speaking up in class to enhance interaction and collaboration. For instance, one of the aims of the FYS course was to stimulate students to conduct research; so, preparing for the online event, students had to look for the material that would be used in the online international discussion. Another aim of the course was to critically analyze the information, evolve research skills, and write a mini research paper on the students' investigations. The most active were those students whose research topics were about Human Rights, Gender Issues, and Post-colonialism. Having read such books as Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, Tell My Horse by Hurston, Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness by Frantz Fanon, Rivonia Trial Speech by Nelson Mandela, or Letter from a Birmingham Jail by Martin Luther King students got some information, took notes, analyzed the material. During the discussion the participants had a chance to ask any questions that interested them.

Thanks to the answers of their new friends from the AUN, AUCA students clearly understood the problem and wrote about their outcomes in their mini research papers. It is also worth mentioning that conducting research through talking to real/live people and getting first hand information is much more inspiring and encouraging rather than merely reading primary or secondary sources in the library or at home.

Some might claim that interviewing requires a lot of preparation, overcoming psychological problems (shyness, communication problems, language barrier), as well as linguistic ones (listening comprehension, speaking, etc.) Yes, that is true, discussion in a non-native language is hard; however, we – EFL/ESL teachers – need to take into consideration the fact

that students have already had their basic knowledge and experience of discussion with their peers and teachers. Really what matters is that they need to get practice of communication with native speakers. To illustrate, one of the freshmen – Ratibor Goriainov – noted in this newspaper article (Gaoriainov 2020) that there were differences in Nigerian English dialect. Is it not fascinating? The more English dialects students hear and comprehend, the more chances to talk to different people from various countries, the better opportunities they will have in future, considering their long term goals, launching their businesses in their home countries and abroad.

Although FYS does not seem to be connected to real life, conceiving assignments to involve students into real life, so that students would be able to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice is rather challenging. This assignment did work well to achieve this aim too.

Besides evolving research skills that included preparing research questions for the discussion, leading talks, as well as improving analytical and critical thinking skills, students got acquainted with Nigerian culture. Some students were surprised to find out that people in that part of the world do have their own identical moral values, principles, and problems. Fulfilling this assignment students were able to learn about ethics in leading online discussions at the international level, based on the online follow-up forum. Moreover, students also learnt that they should be more prepared for such events. (The second online discussion proved that self awareness of their shortcomings did work!). Their answers became more detailed as they had read more material, some students worked on the pronunciation of the geographical names, author's names, and others overcame their shyness and the language barrier and started to ask questions.

Here are some quotations from Forum and articles published on websites of AUCA and AUN:

> ...Following the first online discussion, AUCA students shared their impressions and concerns via an on-line forum posted on the e-course. Summarizing the forum entries and comments, students came up with the ideas that they needed more participants to take part in the event. They also noticed that they needed to practice their speaking and listening skills more, e.g. Zuhaylo Zulfova was impressed with the language skills of AUN students. Having read this comment, I understand that to improve English skills of my students more discussions with different peers are necessary to improve our students' self-awareness, self-assessment! I should also mention that there were times when it was hard for AUCA students to understand the accent of AUN students, and during those moments, Professor Emilienne Akpan was helpful with the interpretation of the main idea in the student's contribution. Despite the few linguistic challenges, AUCA students did

a great job.

<div align="right">(Galimova & Akpan 2020)</div>

Ratibor G.
Tue Apr 18, 2020 at 11:18 pm

...I cannot single out anyone in particular as they all seemed to complement each other; we were like a real family. At the end of the second discussion, I wondered if everything was clear to the AUN students. Personally, it seemed to me that it was not difficult at all to understand the Nigerian students, they just had a slight accent when they pronounced the sound [o], like we used to hear ['mʌni] while the AUN students said [moni], but in general there were no problems in understanding.

<div align="right">(Goriainov, "Ratibor Goriainov_image AUN&AUCA online
discussions_galimova", 2020)</div>

The two Zoom-enabled discussions were a success for both students and organizers. If the former were able to get acquainted with another American university, its students and Nigerian culture, the latter were happy to be a part of a new tradition that will hopefully hold annually. In addition, students from both universities overcame their shyness, personal reservations about language competencies or peer acceptability, and participated actively in the discussions. Moreover, as AUCA students were writing their research on similar topics, they were eager to get relevant information from first-hand sources. For example, Nazarbakht Yoftova, whose research paper was about human rights in Africa, asked AUN students questions regarding the human rights of African citizens; Behruz Shabolov inquired about the positive and negative effects of the colonial era in Nigeria ...While exchanging ideas, both AUN and AUCA students were able to practice their English language skills, such as reading, listening, and speaking. A review of the post-discussion comments on the AUCA online forum revealed that some AUCA students were very critical of themselves and resolved to do better participating in future events. For instance, Laliza Umatova, who used to be far from politics, wrote that the second online discussion inspired her to learn more about post-colonialism and politics in general.

<div align="right">(Galimova & Akpan 2020)</div>

Laliza U.
Tue Apr 28, 2020 at 10:29 pm

Meeting different people from various countries always awakens in me the desire to learn more and more. Even better when I meet well educated or erudite people. It happens because during the conversation I start to feel weak in some educational aspects as I cannot freely support certain topics. This time me and my classmates met AUN students online and discussed a little bit about postcolonialism. Despite the fact that I am a person who is not into politics at all I decided to listen to the lecture and prepared some questions based on our program and text itself. It was my first time participating in such an activity. I really enjoyed the process and would like to do this activity more often. At the end and even after finishing the conference, I was thinking about improving myself, namely in history and politics. It gave me some kind of motivation to find out as much more information as possible, read more books, travel depending on possibilities and just be better day by day. Maybe my conclusions seem too serious and unexpectable because of its unrelated source of inspiration. But it happens to me almost every time and I consider it as a normal thing. Thus, it is important (not only for me I guess) to get the moral of any event that happens in our life.

(Umatova, "Laliza Umatova_image AUN&AUCA online discussions_galimova", 2020)

In general, the AUCA students agreed on the need to have more engagements of this kind with students from other American universities in future. Because students change each semester, a new section of students will benefit from the interaction when next it holds.

(Galimova & Akpan 2020)

...From AUN, the reflections were also very positive and the students appreciated the initiative and were happy to connect with intelligent peers who gladly shared their opinions and patiently listened while contributions were made. They were equally excited that they could support each other on relatable points and appreciate the flexibility in understanding the contexts, which guided their perspectives. For some of the students, this was the first time they were engaging with peers in an institution separated by time and continent. One remarkable takeaway from the connection was a revelation by a participating student. When Philip Bill Hansen shared the success of the discussion with his father, little did he know that he would be the catalyst for the second discussion that students were already looking forward to having. His father William "Bill" Hansen moved to the American University of Nigeria from the American University of Central Asia! Professor Hansen

was very ecstatic about the collaboration and hoped to participate in a subsequent one. So just before examinations started at AUN, another interface was scheduled and our special guest was Prof. Bill Hansen, chair of International and Comparative Politics and director of the Center for Governance, Human Rights and Development at AUN...

(Galimova & Akpan 2020)

From the pedagogical point of view, the International Virtual Discussion of Postcolonial Literature was successful in a remote learning context as it let students interact with people they would have never met during their lifetime. In addition, students were grateful that they could have got answers to their questions right from the representatives of the Nigerian culture. Furthermore, a remote learning format does not need much financial support, which is a great help for young researchers. Moreover, students of both universities exchanged their emails and who knows maybe they would talk more about issues that had not been touched during the online event via private correspondence.

Likewise, this assignment helped me to demonstrate some ambitious students that they needed more practice in English as some of them are accustomed to speaking fluently without appropriate grammar, literally translating their mother tongue. They were reluctant to correct their grammar mistakes thinking that if the instructor understands them, others will understand their ideas too. For example, there was one case when Pr. William Hansen (one of the guest participants) directly mentioned that he did not understand what the student said and the host had to come to her rescue, to clarify what she meant. That is why the student wrote in the Forum about her desire to improve her pronunciation and grammar.

Not once do we hear from our students that modern education lacks real-world connections. In times of Globalization, the mission of professors is not only to provide students with the theoretical material but also to reveal new horizons of students' future activities in the field of international communication, business negotiation, entrepreneurship, and leadership within the framework of the English Language classes. So according to NextThought Team, "CL is based on the notion that learning is about expanding the connections between people and information within a learner's personal network. In this model, the individual learner exists at the center of his/her own learning network and expands knowledge and understanding by increasing the number of connections between nodes in that network. ("What Is Connected Learning?" 2019) In other words, "CL leverages the advances of the digital age to make that dream a reality — connecting academics to interests, learners to inspiring peers and mentors, and educational goals to the higher-order skills, the new economy rewards.

This Virtual Discussion is worked out according to the scholar Terry Heick's approach to learning built around student curiosity, self-directed learning, and passion-based work.

Students themselves are in control, choosing what they study, how they study it, and what they do, produce, or create as a result. As a learning model, it promotes inquiry, research, creativity, and self-directed learning. (Heick "6 Design Principles Of Connected Learning" 2020)

Our university provides connected learning environment, so the Virtual Discussion assignment under consideration is:

- **Interest-Powered** as students were eager to participate in the online event and were really willing to ask questions they were interested in because (1) they themselves picked the topic of their international discussion not teachers, (2) they wrote a research paper on the topic they were passionate about, (3) they met live representatives of the culture they had read in the book and asked them up-to-date questions is a breathtaking experience, isn't it?

- **Production-Centered** as Connected learning promotes skills and dispositions for lifelong learning and for making meaningful contributions to today's rapidly changing work and social conditions." Heick "6 Design Principles Of Connected Learning" 2020); The learning comes from actively producing, creating, experimenting, and designing. After the virtual discussion, students were free to choose either to write about their findings in their research paper, or participate in forums, or publish an article in The New Start student newspaper. If students produce a tangible project, it boosts their self-confidence and they are sure to be able to do something more complicated. If you are interested, you can find Ratibor Goriainov's article that he posted on the AUCA website. (Goriainov 2020)

- **Peer-Supported** because "Connected learning thrives in a socially meaningful and knowledge-rich ecology of ongoing participation, self-expression, and recognition. In their everyday exchanges with peers and friends, young people fluidly contribute, share, and give feedback. Powered with possibilities made available by today's social media, this peer culture can produce learning that's engaging and powerful." (Heick "6 Design Principles Of Connected Learning" 2020) Based on the online follow-up forum, students who did not take part in the discussion due to technical reasons got jealous and expressed their strong desire to take part in the next virtual event.

> Bilaliddin T.
>
> Fri May 8, 2020 at 5:48 am
>
> > I never was in this online discussion because of my time conflicts.I think the students who participated in this discussion take a good experiences to improve their self.I mean they improve thair knowledge and their relationships also thair society.In addition, the AUN students are also liked this kind of discussion with us.Im not participating this is because i can say just may opinion.
>
> > (Tojmatov, "Bilaliddin Tojmatov_image AUN&AUCA online

There were several shy students who kept quiet during the virtual discussion got inspired by the topic and said they would be better prepared for the next time. Nobody and nothing can stimulate students to study better than their peers.

- has a **Shared Purpose** as well. In the times of Coronavirus lockdown, when students have a feeling of depression and insignificance of their existence, such type of activity with shared purpose gives students a feeling of unity and significance. In addition, it inspires students to self-studying and discovering new solutions to their problems. Despite being located on two continents, students were surprised to find out that human beings have identical moral principles.

- **Academically-Oriented** as Connected Learning recognizes the importance of academic success for intellectual growth and as an avenue towards economic and political opportunity. When academic studies and institutions draw from and connect to young people's peer culture, communities, and interest-driven pursuits, learners flourish and realize their true potential. (Heick "6 Design Principles Of Connected Learning" 2020) With the help of this virtual assignment, students are able to see that their FYS class can be directly connected to the real world. They admit that such types of activities help them to overcome their shyness, boost their self-confidence, think of themselves critically, and realize their potential in the future.

- **Openly-Networked** since Connected Learning environments link learning in school, home, and, community because learners achieve best when their learning is reinforced and supported in multiple settings. Online platforms can make learning resources abundant, accessible, and visible across all learner settings." (Heick "6 Design Principles Of Connected Learning" 2020) That is to say, International Discussion conducted with the help of the Zoom platform gave students from both continents a sense of importance and mutual understanding merely staying at home and conducting inquiries on issues they are interested in.

The assignment

The Virtual Discussion assignment consisted of four stages: (a) Prior to giving the assignment, (b) While preparing for the assignment, (c) During and (d) After having conducted the assignment.

(a) Prior to giving the assignment to students, the teachers should agree on the topic and the time of the virtual event. Because of different syllabi the target topic, which is supposed to be connected to the two syllabi and be interesting to students of both universities, is very

hard to choose. The procedure of choosing the topic can be conducted through teachers or group monitors' correspondence, which is rather time-consuming. In our case, it took us up to 3 weeks to determine the topics.

(b) While preparing for the assignment each student is assigned for individual consultations via the teacher's "Personal Meeting room" on Zoom. In addition to the core texts that students discuss in class, it is important for teachers to facilitate students in searching for other materials and post them on the e-course, such as scientific articles, documentaries, movies, or other fiction stories related to the topic. To check the students' preparedness, we had debates on Post-colonialism and its Values. It is important to note that the teacher should give guidelines on how students should watch, read, and gather the material, i.e. the teacher can give leading questions, for instance, while watching to take notes answering the following questions: Who is the main character, where does the action take place, what is the main idea of the text/ documentary? What connection does the main idea have with your own research paper? What is the most surprising/shocking episode in the movie/article? Explain why? In what part of your research paper you are going to use it and why? To provide mature communication it is worth mentioning that students should have practice in using transitional phrases and sentence starters to agree with a previous speaker, express polite disagreement or ask a clear question. If the teacher notices that students have not had enough practice during class activities and need support, the instructor can advise students to have a handout next to them during the online event.   (See Handout 2 "Transitions")

(c) During the virtual discussion, teachers ask students to take notes too as after the discussion students will be asked to submit follow-up assignments to get extra points. (See Handout 1 "Questions to keep in mind during the discussion or text annotation")

(d) After having conducted the virtual discussion, the teacher may ask students to participate either in the online follow-up forum posted on the e-course, write a 500-word argumentative/compare and contrast essay devoted to the online international event, or write a newspaper article and publish it in AUCA student paper. (Rubrics and Peer Review Forms to argumentative, comparative essays, and newspaper article, as well as self-assessment are attached below)

As our International Virtual Discussion of Postcolonial Literature was conducted between two universities located in two different countries, the hosts presented themselves, guests of the Discussion, and students from both universities by playing videos about the countries and universities. The videos were taken from the main websites of both universities. If students are willing to create their own introductory videos, do not hesitate to give them this chance.

0:01/3:45 My AUN." YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzIrh_fr3Y4.

0:01/2:57 Students from USA about AUCA." YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsnIojeYr8c&t=1s.

Secondly, to briefly introduce the target topic, students of both universities gave general information about the authors, their backgrounds and the books that students were going to discuss just in case someone is not familiar with. (Please see the sample of it below.)

> ...Born in 1930, Mr. Achebe was raised by Christian parents in the Ebuke village of Ogidi, in Southeastern Nigeria. He excelled in school and won a scholarship for his undergraduate studies. He became fascinated with world religions and traditional African cultures, and began writing stories when he was a university student. After graduation and work as a teacher, he joined the Nigerian Broadcasting Service, and it was during this period he wrote his first and, of course, his most famous novel, Things Fall Apart. It was one of the first African novels written in English to achieve national acclaim.
> Set in the early days of colonization, Things Fall Apart tells the tragic story of a warrior, Okonkwo, who rigidly identifies himself with the values of traditional Egbo culture. For this reason, he lacks the flexibility of mind and heart to adapt to the changing conditions under imminent European colonization.
> One of the first works of fiction to present African village life from an African perspective, Things Fall Apart was published in 1958, just two years before the end of the Century of British rule in Nigeria.
> Written primarily for an African audience, Achebe's novels have gained universal appeal. Things Fall Apart is the most widely read African novel and has become one of the most important books in African literature. It has been translated into 50 languages and has sold well more than 10 million copies.
> Through subsequent novels, short stories, poetry, critical essays, and political commentary, Mr. Achebe has consistently argued for the right of Africans to tell their own stories in their own ways.

> (Reference "Famous Professors from Nigeria")

Then the floor was given to the guest speaker – William Hansen – Chair of Political Science Department at AUN, who gave a succinct talk about colonial and postcolonial times. After his speech, students started asking questions.

Here are the questions that AUCA students were interested in:

(1)   What was the historical background of colonization? What were the aims of

colonization?

(2) Do you agree with all the events that were described in the book Things Fall Apart? In other words, did Achebe manage to describe the Nigerian life accurately?

(3) According to the book Okonkwo, the main character, was rather rude to his wives. Are women's rights violated nowadays?

(4) Do you know any people like Okonkwo nowadays?

(5) What can you say about violation of Human Rights in general in your country?

(6) Are there any Voodoo people left in Nigeria?

(7) Do you believe in "zombies"?

(8) Does religion play a significant role in the life of Nigerian people?

(9) What customs and traditions reappeared in post colonial era? What customs and traditions came back in postcolonial times?

(10) How did colonialism affect the life of Nigerian people from economic perspective?

Finally, the hosts asked students from both universities if the discussion had met their expectations. The hosts wrapped up the virtual discussion, thanked the guest speaker and the participants, and invited the students to continue the newly born tradition and take part in the next virtual discussion.

[Handout 1] Questions that students should keep in mind when annotating or analyzing the text or discussion

1. Why am I asking this question? How is it relevant to my research paper or project?

2. What does this add to what I already know about the topic?

3. What is the most/least convincing here? What do I dis/agree with? What do I think about differently?

4. What is its relationship to other things I've read? Does it verify, extend, or contradict what others have said?

5. How might I use this text in my project? Does is provide background (general information or factual evidence) I need? An argument whose claims I will engage? Evidence I will analyze and interpret? Where in my project might I use parts of this discussion?

6. Tell the story of your thinking about what you're reading as you read: my initial reaction to this is … but now I think … and now I think …

7. What questions does it raise?

8. How reliable or authoritative is this source? Have you seen it cited elsewhere? Where?

(Source: Bruce Ballenger's The Curious Writer "Advising Senior Projects: Helping Your Advisees Organize Their Ideas, their Materials, and Their Research Papers". Handout. Workshop, Jane Smith, December 2018, AUCA, Handout.)

[Handout 2] Transitional words, phrases, sentence starters to be used to join the discussion smoothly and politely:

If you want to add your opinion:

"And +S+V+O…"

"Plus, +S+V+O…"

"Moreover, +S+V+O…""

"In addition, +S+V+O…"

"I wonder, why/when/how/where +S+V+O…"

"I can't help saying that +S+V+O…"

<u>If you want to contradict:</u>

"Nevertheless, +S+V+O…"

"However, +S+V+O…"

<u>If you want to conclude:</u>

"So +S+V+O…"

"Therefore, +S+V+O…"

"As are result, +S+V+O…"

"In conclusion, +S+V+O…"

<u>If you have a question, wish to disagree with the speaker, or make sure you understand the speaker clearly:</u>

"Although the idea of the author/speaker may seem obvious, it still remains unclear how/why/in what case/under what circumstances/what would happen if +S+V+O…"

"I hear you are saying that +S+V+O…+ FANBOYS, I want to add that +S+V+O…"

"I find that really interesting; however, I doubt that +S+V+O…"

"In other words, the speaker/the author wants to say that +S+V+O…"

Note: On the e-course students can get a longer list of transitions if needed.

Grade Equivalents: A = 20-18   B = 17-15   C = 14-12   D = 11-10   F = 9 or below   **GRADE:**

Categories	4	3	2	1
INTRODUCTION Background/History; Define the Problem; Clear Thesis Statement	Well-developed introductory paragraph contains detailed background information, a clear explanation or definition of the problem, devices to create interest, and a well-formed, properly placed thesis statement.	Introductory paragraph contains some background information, a technique for creating interest, and states the problem, but does not explain using details. States the thesis of the paper.	Introduction states the thesis but does not adequately explain the background of the problem nor does the writer attempt to create interest. The problem is stated, but lacks detail.	Thesis and/or problem is vague or unclear. Writer does not attempt to create interest. Background details are a seemingly random collection of information, unclear, or not related to the topic.
CONCLUSION	Conclusion summarizes the main topics without repeating previous sentences; writer's commentary and suggestions for change are logical and well thought out.	Conclusion summarizes main topics. Some suggestions for change are evident.	Conclusion summarizes main topics, but is repetitive. No suggestions for change and/or commentary are included.	Conclusion does not adequately summarize the main points. No commentary or suggestions for change are included.
MAIN POINTS Body Paragraphs Refutation Paragraphs	Three or more main points are well developed with supporting details. Refutation paragraph acknowledges the opposing view and argues it logically. It is obvious that a plan was developed to create sound, logical development.	Three or more main points are present but may lack detail and development in one or two. Refutation paragraph acknowledges the opposing view, but does not present sound counterpoint. Overall, the paper is logically developed.	Three or more main points, but all lack development. Refutation paragraph missing and/or vague. There are one or two examples that are not sound, logical argument. Paper itself is repetitious, contradictory, or shows lack of organizational planning.	Fewer than three main points, with poor development of ideas. Refutation missing or vague. Obvious lack of sound, logical argument throughout. There are many examples of poor organizational planning.
Organization, Structure And Coherence (transitions)	The essay is well-organized. The purpose of each paragraph is clear, with strong topic sentences linked to the thesis. The content of each paragraph is consistent and appropriate. The paragraphs are logically sequenced.	The essay is well-organized. The purpose of each paragraph is clear, but there may be weak topic sentences. Some content may be inconsistent or irrelevant, and there may be minor problems of logic and paragraph sequence.	The essay is not especially well-organized. The purpose of some paragraphs is unclear, and some have weak topic sentences. Some content may be inconsistent or irrelevant, and there may be problems of logic and paragraph sequence.	The essay is poorly organized. The purpose of some paragraphs is unclear, and many have weak topic sentences. Content is inconsistent and/or irrelevant, and there are significant problems of logic and paragraph sequence.
APA format (Title Page, Abstract, Essay, Reference List)	The paper consists of all the APA format paper sections.	The paper is missing 1 of the APA format paper sections.	The paper lacks 2 of the APA format paper sections.	The writer fails to meet requirements of the APA format paper.
SOURCES	Source material is smoothly integrated into the text. All sources are accurately documented in the desired format on the Reference List page. The authors uses 6 sources; at least 3 of them are primary ones.	Source material is used. All sources are accurately documented, but a few are not in the desired format. The authors uses 5 sources; at least 2 of them are primary ones.	Source material is used, but integration may be awkward. All sources are accurately documented, but many are not in the desired format. The author uses 4 sources; at least 1 of them is primary.	Lacks sources and/or sources are not accurately documented. Format is incorrect for all sources. The authors uses 3 sources; no primary sources used.
MECHANICS AND STYLE Sentence Structure, Sentence Variety Punctuation, Capitalization, Spelling.	Sentence structure is correct and sentences are varied (beginnings, lengths, structures). Diction is at a college level or the appropriate level for the audience. Punctuation, spelling and capitalization are correct. No other mechanical errors.	Sentence structure is generally correct. Some awkward sentences do appear. Sentences show some variety, with an occasional (1 or 2) repetition of sentence beginnings or a number of consecutive sentences of the same length or type. Diction is mostly at the college level, with some examples of unsophisticated or poor/incorrect word choices. There are one or two errors in punctuation, spelling, capitalization and/or other mechanics.	Work contains some sentence errors (2 or 3) and grammatical errors. There are three or four errors in punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and/or other mechanics. Many consecutive sentences begin with the same words, are of the same length or the same sentence construction. Diction is very elementary and lacks flair.	Work contains multiple incorrect sentence structures (more than 3). There are more than 4 errors in punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and/or other mechanics. Diction is elementary and often writing is awkward due to many examples of poor/incorrect word choice.

Source: *Common Core Rubrics Gr11-12.*
www.chino.k12.ca.us/cms/lib8/CA01902308/Centricity/Domain/1769/CCSS%20Argument%20Rubric%201 1-12.pdf.

Single-Point Peer Review Form

Things we can improve: ☹	I will be assessing your essay on its...	Things that were amazing: ☺
	INTRODUCTION provides Background/History; defines the Problem; introduces the clear thesis statement that addresses the prompt, and makes a creative and interesting argument. **CONCLUSION** summarizes the whole essay	
	ORGANIZATION and STRUCTURE of the MAIN POINTS **1.** All the Essay parts are included (Introduction, Body Paragraphs (BP), Conclusion, References/Works Cited). **2.** All the Topic Sentences (TSs) of BPs support the Thesis Statement. **3.** Details and Supporting **4.** Arguments/Ideas support the TSs. **5.** Refutation paragraphs and **6.** Paragraphs with Quotes are organized and structured appropriately.	
	COHERENCE (TRANSITIONS) Transitional words, phrases, or sentences help the reader smoothly follow the logic of the writer. Identify where the writer should add transitions.	
	LENGTH and ASSIGNMENT The essay is 3-5 pages long and includes all the requirements of the assignment (6 structurally organized quotes from the FYS reader, one Refutation Paragraph, 5 paragraphs with direct or indirect quotes).	
	GRAMMAR, SPELLING, STYLE and MLA/APA FORMATTING All the Direct and Indirect quotes have in-text citations. The paper should have at least 6 in-text citations and 6 Works Cited/References.	

Created by Danah Hashem, adapted by Ekaterina Galimova.

Hashem, Danah. "6 Reasons to Try a Single-Point Rubric." *Edutopia*, George Lucas Educational Foundation, 24 Oct. 2017, www.edutopia.org/article/6-reasons-try-single-point-rubric.

Rubric for Classroom Discussion*

Task Description: (Teacher may explain specific assignment in this space.)

Criteria	weight	Exemplary	Effective	Minimal	Unsatisfactory
Level of Engagement	50%	☐ Contributes to class activities by offering quality ideas and asking appropriate questions on a regular basis ☐ Actively engages others in class discussions by inviting their comments ☐ Constructively challenges the accuracy and relevance of statements made ☐ Effectively identifies and summarizes main points	☐ Contributes to class activities by offering ideas and asking questions on a regular basis ☐ Often engages others in class discussions by inviting their comments ☐ Challenges the accuracy and relevance of statements made ☐ Identifies and summarizes main points	☐ Occasionally contributes to class activities by offering ideas and asking questions ☐ Sometimes engages others in class discussions ☐ Sometimes has an understanding of main points ☐ Identifies and summarizes some of the main points	☐ Fails to contribute to class activities ☐ Fails to invite comment/opinions from other students ☐ Demonstrates little understanding of main points ☐ Does not identify or summarize main points
Preparedness	25%	☐ Always prepared for class with assignments and required materials ☐ Accurately expresses foundational knowledge pertaining to issues raised during the discussion	☐ Usually prepared with assignments and required materials ☐ Expresses basic foundational knowledge pertaining to class discussions	☐ Seldom prepared with assignments and required materials ☐ Expresses limited foundational knowledge pertaining to class discussions	☐ Consistently unprepared for class ☐ Expresses no relevant foundational knowledge
Attitude	25%	☐ Consistently positive, cooperative attitude during class ☐ Always supportive of other students' ideas	☐ Usually positive and cooperative with classroom projects and discussions ☐ Often supportive of other students' ideas	☐ Seldom actively participates in classroom projects and discussions ☐ Sometimes supportive of other students' ideas	☐ Rarely if ever participates in classroom projects and discussions ☐ Occasional disruptive behavior

Assignment Score _____   +   Beyonder/Bonus _____   =   Final Score _____

_____

Peer Review Form for the Comparative Essay

Writer of the paper _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

To the reviewer: Look through this form, at first. Then listen to/read the writer's paper attentively. While listening/reading, write down your comments regarding <u>each part</u> of the paper in the space provided. In the left-hand column, point out your likes (+) whereas in the right-hand one, write your dislikes (--). If you need more space, feel free to use the back of the list; make sure to indicate what part you provide comments on, e.g. *(8)Luir*

Be as critical and helpful as possible. Return the form to the writer <u>at the end of the class</u>. Enjoy!

++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++		-- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- --
	1. INTRODUCTION Background/History; Definition of the Problem / Similarities / Differences; Clear Thesis Statement with at least 3 items / ideas / categories to be compared **CONCLUSION**	
	2. SUPPORT and ACCURACY FACTS Topic Sentences support the Thesis Statement; Details and Supporting ideas support the topic sentences. Paragraphs with Quotes are organized and structured appropriately and provides 3 or more well-developed examples or reasons for each similarity or difference	
	3. ORGANIZATION, STRUCTURE AND COHERENCE (TRANSITIONS) similarities-to-differences OR point-by-point structure	
	4. MLA/APA FORMAT (Title Page, Abstract, Essay, Reference List, In-text citations, References)	
	5. SOURCES (3 primary and 3 Secondary sources)	
	6. MECHANICS (Spelling, grammar, style [non-academic words] syntax, punctuation)	
	7. OTHER COMMENTS	

Compare and Contrast Essay Rubric

GRADE: _____

Grade Equivalents: **A** = 20-18   **B** = 17-15   **C** = 14-12   **D** = 11-10   **F** = 9 or below

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Introduction, Thesis statement, and Conclusion	The introduction has a hook, provides background information, states the main topic and previews the structure of the paper. The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader with a feeling that they understand what the writer is "getting at." It states a thoughtful or logical conclusion based on similarities and differences.	The introduction clearly states the main topic and previews the structure of the paper, but is not particularly inviting to the reader. The conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all the loose ends. It states a conclusion based on similarities and differences.	The introduction states the main topic, but does not adequately preview the structure of the paper nor is it particularly inviting to the reader. The conclusion is recognizable, but does not tie up several loose ends. It is evident but does not draw on any similarities or differences.	There is no clear introduction of the main topic or structure of the paper. There is no clear conclusion, the paper just ends. No evidence of any conclusion or summary.
Support and Accuracy of Facts	Areas of comparison are stated clearly and all supportive facts are reported accurately. Includes 3 or more well-developed examples or reasons for each similarity or difference. The paper includes only the information relevant to the comparison.	Almost all supportive facts are reported accurately. Includes at least 2 examples or reasons for each similarity or difference. The paper includes only the information relevant to the comparison.	Most supportive facts are reported accurately. Includes at least 1 example or reason but some information maybe incorrect. The paper may include information that is not relevant to the comparison.	Provides little support for each similarity or difference. NO facts are reported OR most are inaccurately reported.
Organization and Structure APA format (Title Page, Abstract, Essay, Reference List)	The paper breaks the information into similarities-to-differences or point-by-point structure. It follows a consistent order when discussing the comparison. The paper consists of all the APA format paper sections.	The paper breaks the information into similarities-to-differences or point-by-point structure but does not follow a consistent order when discussing the comparison. The paper is missing 1 of the APA format paper sections.	The paper breaks the information into similarities-to-differences or point-by-point structure, but some information is in the wrong section. Some details are not in a logical or expected order, and this distracts the reader. The paper lacks 2 of the APA format paper sections.	Many details are not in a logical or expected order. There is little sense that the writing is organized. The writer fails to meet requirements of the APA format paper.
Style: sentence flow, tone and Transitions Sources	Writing is smooth, skillful, and coherent. Consistent and appropriate tone and word choice is used throughout the essay. A variety of thoughtful transitions are used. They clearly show how ideas are connected. Source material is smoothly integrated into the text. All sources are accurately documented in the desired format on the Reference List page. The authors uses 6 sources; at least 3 of them are primary ones.	Writing is clear and sentences have varied structure. There is consistent tone and word choice is appropriate. Transitions clearly show how ideas are connected, but there is little variety. 1-2 sentences need transitions. Source material is used. All sources are accurately documented, but a few are not in the desired format. The authors uses 5 sources; at least 2 of them are primary ones.	Writing is clear, but sentences may lack variety. The tone is inconsistent and word choice, while inadequate, could be better. Some transitions work well; but connections between other ideas are fuzzy. 4-5 sentences need transitions. Source material is used, but integration may be awkward. All sources are accurately documented, but many are not in the desired format. The author uses 4 sources; at least 1 of them is primary.	Writing is confusing and hard to follow. Contains fragments and/or run-on sentences. The tone and purpose is inconsistent and difficult to determine. The transitions between ideas are unclear or nonexistent. Lacks sources and/or sources are not accurately documented. Format is incorrect for all sources. The authors uses 3 sources; no primary sources used.
Grammar & Spelling	Writer makes no errors in grammar, punctuation or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar, punctuation or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar, punctuation or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar, punctuation or spelling that distract the reader from the content.

Sources: *Comparison and Contrast Rubric*.
www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson275/compcon_rubric.pdf.

Newspaper Article Rubric

	Excellent 4 (pts)	Good 3 (pts)	Fair 2 (pts)	Poor 1 (pt)
Important information	The article provides information on all five W's with descriptive language. A captivating title is given to the article.	The article contains all 5 W's: who, what, where, when, and why/how. The facts are complete and correct. Simple is given to the article.	The article tells 3 of the following: who, what, when, where or why/how. The facts are primarily correct. Title has nothing to do with the article.	The article does not tell who, what, when, where or why/how. The facts are incomplete or wrong. No title is given to the article.
Reporting format	The article begins with an exciting lead, followed by a reasonable and purposeful argument/supporting details. The article does not conclude abruptly.	The article contains an interesting/ exciting lead. The article is free of opinions and has a headline.	The article contains a lead but it is not interesting. The article contains an opinion.	The article is more like a short story and not journalistic. Does not contain a headline.
Writing mechanics	Writing is descriptive, providing detailed information. An extensive vocabulary is used to keep the reader interested and informed. The article contains no grammar errors.	The article is clear and concise. The article contains only 1 or 2 spelling errors. The article contains only 1 or 2 grammatical errors.	The article contains few sentences that are unclear to the reader. The article contains few spelling errors. The article contains few grammatical errors.	The article is vague and unclear. The article contains many spelling errors. The article contains many grammatical errors.
Editing and improving	The article is formatted clearly and concisely, with little room for improvement.	The article was completely edited and improvements were made.	The article shows some improvements and edits.	The article was neither edited nor improved.

Source: andyrogers. "iRubric: WRITING A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE Rubric." *RCampus*, iRubric. www.rcampus.com/rubricshowc.cfm?code=U397CW&sp=yes&.

This rubric may be used for self-assessment and peer feedback.

Online Discussion Rubric

Criteria	Unsatisfactory = 0	Limited = 1	Proficient = 2	Exemplary = 3	Score
Critical Analysis **(Understanding of Readings and Outside References)**	Discussion postings show little or no evidence that readings were completed or understood. Postings are largely personal opinions or feelings, or "I agree" or "Great idea," without supporting statements with concepts from the readings, outside resources, relevant research, or specific real-life application.	Discussion postings repeat and summarize basic, correct information, but do not link readings to outside references, relevant research or specific real-life application and do not consider alternative perspectives or connections between ideas. Sources are not cited.	Discussion postings display an understanding of the required readings and underlying concepts including correct use of terminology and proper citation.	Discussion postings display an excellent understanding of the required readings and underlying concepts including correct use of terminology. Postings integrate an outside resource, or relevant research, or specific real-life application (work experience, prior coursework, etc.) to support important points. Well-edited quotes are cited appropriately. No more than 10% of the posting is a direct quotation.	
Participation in the Learning Community	Discussion postings do not contribute to ongoing conversations or respond to peers' postings. There is no evidence of replies to questions.	Discussion postings sometimes contribute to ongoing conversations as evidenced by — affirming statements or references to relevant research or, — asking related questions or, — making an oppositional statement supported by any personal experience or related research.	Discussion postings contribute to the class' ongoing conversations as evidenced by — affirming statements or references to relevant research or, — asking related questions or, — making an oppositional statement supported by any personal experience or related research.	Discussion postings actively stimulate and sustain further discussion by building on peers' responses including — building a focused argument around a specific issue or — asking a new related question or — making an oppositional statement supported by personal experience or

				related research.	
	Discussion postings are at midpoint or later in the module or contributions are only posted on the last day of the module.	Discussion postings respond to most postings of peers several days after the initial discussion.	Discussion postings respond to most postings of peers within a 48 hour period.	Discussion postings are distributed throughout the module (not posted all on one day or only at the beginning or only on the last day of the module).	
Etiquette in Dialogue with Peers	Written interactions on the discussion board show disrespect for the viewpoints of others.	Some of the written interactions on the discussion board show respect and interest in the viewpoints of others.	Written interactions on the discussion board show respect and interest in the viewpoints of others.	Written interactions on the discussion board show respect and sensitivity to peers' gender, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation, political and religious beliefs.	
Quality of Writing and Proofreading	Written responses contain numerous grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. The style of writing does not facilitate effective communication.	Written responses include some grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors that distract the reader.	Written responses are largely free of grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. The style of writing generally facilitates communication.	Written responses are free of grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. The style of writing facilitates communication.	
				TOTAL	/9

* Open class discussion is an important and significant part of an online course. While class discussion whether online or face to face, can be characterized by free flowing conversation, there are identifiable characteristics that distinguish exemplary contributions to class discussion from those of lesser quality. The criteria found on the rubric above will be used to assess the quality of your initial postings and responses to the postings and comments of peers during class discussion. Note: Initial postings are your comments based on the discussion prompt posted by the instructor. Responses to others are your replies to your peers' initial postings.

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