How much are the Discussion Forums worth?

Every student enrolled in this course will be required to participate in FIVE (5) Discussion Forums worth TWENTY (20) points each. Forums are basically platforms where we will “meet” as a class. You will be able to discuss contemporary issues in American Government with your classmates through the Discussion Board on the Blackboard System (http://acconline.austinec.edu/). The following are the most frequently asked questions about the Discussion Forums along with some advice.

How do I participate in the Discussion Forums?

You will need to log into the Blackboard System to participate in the Discussion Forums either on or before the discussion forum due dates. (The due dates are noted below and on the online orientation page). When you log into blackboard, click on the tab labeled Discussion Forums, and you will then see the discussion forums. You can add new threads under each forum. Click on “THREAD” and it will provide you a place to write your subject as well as to offer your response. Now, the catch is that you MUST participate two (2) times in each Discussion Forum, at the minimum, to be eligible for up to twenty (20) points. Thus, you must have two (2) or each discussion forum to be eligible for the twenty points. Furthermore, I should also mention that you should click on “SUBMIT” to officially submit your posts. If you click on “SAVE” it is only saving a draft of what you wrote versus officially submitting your response(s). Be sure to hit “SUBMIT.” Otherwise, I will not be able to see what you wrote and won’t be able to grade it or offer your any points for the forum as a result.

How are the Discussion Forums Styled?

The discussion forums are like a double-edged sword, and this means that you must participate in each discussion forum two (2) times. You must have two (2) threads for each discussion forum to be eligible for the points.

**FIRST**, you will have to post your own INITIAL RESPONSE to the topic given in the discussion forum. In other words, when you log on and click on the Discussion Forum tab you will see the overall topic and question(s) that I have posted in order to prompt responses. Initially, you are to provide your own response to the prompt. Your initial posting should be sure your own opinion that you support with **at least TWO (2) citations from the internet!!!** The sources you use should be credible. It is plausible to find credible information either on the internet or through the library by using articles. In fact, the discussion forums are styled so that you go hunting for information on the internet relevant to the topic at hand. You must back up your reasonable observations with **at least TWO (2) citations from the internet or with evidence (i.e. article reference)** that you have found to support your position. You must do research to back up what you are saying, since it is simply not enough to give your two cents without supporting your statements. To put it simply, no citations or not meeting the minimum number of citations means no points for the forum. More importantly, your initial post should also address the question(s) or prompts given per each forum.

The citations that you note should be done in MLA Format. This is the same writing style that is oftentimes used in English courses at ACC. For information about the MLA style or how to cite internet sources, consult
the ACC Learning Resource Service’s MLA Documentation Guide at http://library.austincc.edu/help/MLA/. (Now, remember that these are considered writing assignments, which means it might be worth for you to write your response in word and then cut and paste it into the discussion forum module.)

SECOND, you will need to post a CLASSMATE RESPONSE in which you read the initial postings of a classmate and you analyze their observations. Say you read a posting by a classmate by the name of Yasar Arafat, you will have to post a response in which you explicitly state, "I read Yasar's posting and I agree/disagree with his comment and this is why...." Thus, your response should be a posting in which you specifically reference the posting of that one classmate. It is not enough to simply say, though, "I agree with what you wrote. Well done." You should make it obvious and clear that you have read and evaluated what your classmate has written. This also includes considering their source(s). In other words, if someone cites an either liberal or conservative web site, it is witty to note that and to have others consider how this might slant what has been posted and how that might impact what someone might think about an issue. Perhaps noting the credibility of the source is also another way to weigh what someone has stated in their posting.

What happens if I only do one of the two required responses?
What happens if I don’t do them at all?

You must post one response being your own observations (with at least two (2) internet citations). Then, you need to make an additional response to at least one of your classmates in which you analyze the initial observations made by your classmates!!! Otherwise, you will not be awarded any points for that given forum and a zero will be plugged into Blackboard!!! Be sure to submit two postings per forum and note that there is an original response along with a classmate response to be given.

In other words, say you log on and give your two cents, but never log on again to read what a classmate has written about the topic, you will not be awarded any points for that discussion forum! It is not enough to log on once and give your observation, but never consider those of your classmates! You will not get half (1/2) the points or partial credit if this is the case!!! Much like the Electoral College which is a winner-take-all system, you must participate two times, at the minimum, to be eligible for up to twenty (20) points. You must have, at the minimum, two (2) threads for each discussion forum to be eligible for the points.

Now, in the event that you choose not to participate in a given forum (don’t participate, miss the deadline, do nothing at all), three (3) points will be deducted for non-participation. This means, technically or quantitatively, that you would lose out on a total of twenty-three points in all, since you won’t quality for the initial twenty and then you will get three points deducted on top of that. I will plug in a -3 into the column in Blackboard for the forum you do not officially participate in.

How are the Discussion Forums Graded?
What advice should I consider?

You can find a rubric that I will be using to score the discussion forums within Blackboard as well as an example of a forum posting. (Click on Forum Examples/Rubric when you log into the class in Blackboard). Now, don't pre-suppose that just because you participate two (2) times that you will get all of the points. If the responses are mediocre, short-sighted, or shallow, it is unlikely that you will receive all of the possible points for that given discussion forum. Plus, feel free to post more postings than just the minimum requirements! This is the logic behind the discussion forums. Your initial postings and responses are meant to take the shape of a discussion. Thus, if you are moving the dialogue along, you are achieving this goal.
The quality of the responses and the quantity of the response will be considered. Someone whose initial response is 2 phrases in length will not receive as many points as someone who makes an effort to participate more fully in the discussion forums. I am looking for substantially healthy commentary in the discussion forums. In addition, be sure that you dissect the responses made by your classmates. It is not enough to simply state, "so and so said so and so." You need to state their position and either concur or counter what has been stated. In addition, I will also consider the sources that students use to back up their claims and you should, too.

The thoughtfulness of both responses will also be considered. I will gauge whether the student is just posting something to get that particular requirement out of the way, or whether you are writing a well thought out original response and a classmate response in an analytical manner.

As with any writing assignment, the rigor clarity and organization are important. I view these responses as writing assignments and as an opportunity for you to demonstrate your understanding of the learning objectives. This means that proper grammar and spelling are required. Be sure to clearly write your position, support your claims, and go beyond merely pointing out the obvious. Likewise, I should also add that it might be worth it for you to work on this assignment in a word document to work on rough drafts.

Please note, that just as in a real class, manners and diplomacy are important. We may not agree with each other all the time, but we will treat each other with respect. This is just as important in writing as it is in person. There will be a place for jokes and kidding around, but let us do it with full regard for others’ feelings. There will be no room for disrespectful comments, insulting, or the like.

You should Post Early and Post Often. Don’t post five minutes before the deadline and expect to do well by offering a short, mediocre response. Keep in mind that you should have your official submissions in by the deadlines. So, just like you would need to print out a paper and submit it in an inbox by a certain time you must do the same for the forums. This means having everything written up and polished in order to “SUBMIT” it by the deadlines. You should not attempt to devise any other approach to submitting your forum responses aside from doing so in the Blackboard setting. This simply makes it more equitable in terms of everyone in the class operating within the same parameters which includes meeting deadlines.

What are the Deadlines for the Discussion Forums?

These are the following DEADLINES for the Discussion Forums (see chart below). You are responsible for knowing them and heeding them. Once the deadline has passed, there is no recourse!!! Thus, it follows that it would be wise to print these deadlines out and write them in your planner. It is imperative that you participate in the discussion forums either on or before the deadlines. And remember the advice of posting early and posting often and how this can help you avoid problems if something either tragic or dire arises. You should also keep in mind that either three (3) points will be deducted per form for non-participation or a zero will be plugged into Blackboard if you only do half the forum/assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion Forums are due by Noon (NOT Midnight)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Wednesday, Oct. 11th by Noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>#2 Wednesday, Nov. 1st by Noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>#3 Wednesday, Nov. 22nd by Noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>#4 Wednesday, Dec. 6th by Noon</td>
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<td>#5 Wednesday, Dec. 13th by Noon</td>
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