

# AGS ONLINE GRADING & DISCUSSION GUIDE

{SPRING 2017}





# AGS GRADING SCHEME



ONLINE

## OKWU GRADING SCALE

A	93% >
A-	90%
B+	87%
B	83%
B-	80%
C+	77%
C	73%
C-	70%
D+	67%
D	63%
D-	60%
F	< 60%

**A (Excellent with Distinction):** Stellar, outstanding work that exceeds stated requirements. Demonstrates a superior standard of academic rigor and thought, exceptional understanding of the subject matter, and initiative in applying major concepts beyond the assignment. Has a “WOW” factor.

**A- (Excellent):** Thoughtful and clear work that clearly meets stated requirements. Demonstrates thorough understanding of subject matter and critical thinking supported with scholarly sources. Papers are properly formatted with a well-developed thesis and structure. Writing is free from grammar or mechanical errors.

**B+ (Great):** This is above average work that needs just a little improvement. Work is really close to meeting stated requirements and includes all significant components, but needs to strengthen one or two areas. Writing generally meets minimum guidelines but may have numerous grammatical, syntax, or other mechanical errors.

**B or B- (Good/Average):** Average work that meets most of the requirements but needs significant development in several areas. May be missing a key requirement or have key arguments that are unsupported. Lacks appropriate scholarly support or contains significant writing or grammatical errors.

**C or C+/- (Average/Below Average):** Work is below average and demonstrates superficial work at best. Likely missing multiple requirements or only addressed them at a very minimal level. Lacks appropriate scholarly support or contains significant writing or grammatical errors.

**D or D+/- (Needs Significant Improvement):** Minimum requirements were not met or work is missing several significant components; assignment was incomplete. Indicative of student needing to reread or pay better attention to instructions. Writing fails to meet several of the minimal writing standards and has substantial grammatical and syntax errors.

**F (Failing):** Work was not submitted or is below a minimal threshold for college-level work.

# SUBSTANTIVE POSTS

Thread Starter  
**200+**  
words \*

Replies  
**100+**  
words \*

## INTEGRATION

Intersects all 3 dimensions of Integrated Learning Model: academic/scholarly, practical/experiential, and ethical/spiritual

## RESEARCH & SUPPORT

Post supports arguments with logical thought & data; invokes relevant theory/concept, connects to real-life experience; by default, post has at least 1 solid *scholarly* source w/ citation\*\*

## PROFESSIONALISM

Considerate of views of others; respectful in tone & manner; challenges others in humility but shows willingness to learn.

## CRITICAL THINKING

- beyond summarizing or describing
- evaluates, analyzes, critique, applies
- shows good grasp of key content
- constructively challenges others

\* excluding citations, notes, quotes, assignment text

\*\* such as journals, books, professional publications, research findings; however, blogs, newspapers, magazines, or dictionaries are *not* scholarly sources.

# OVERVIEW

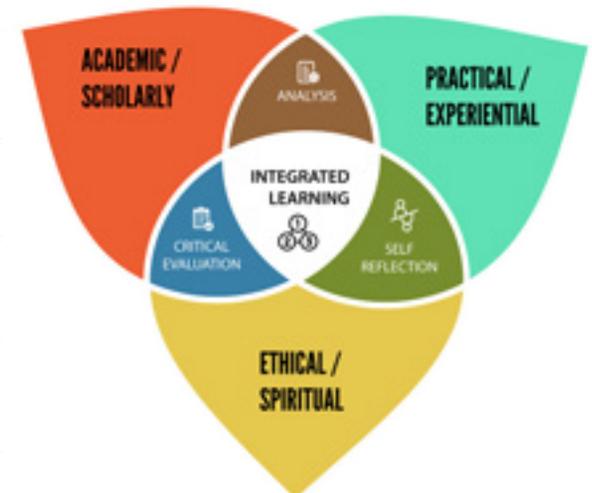
## MINIMUM COLLEGE WRITING STANDARDS

- ❓ Basic sentence structure & punctuation
- ❓ Uses complete sentences vs. fragments & run-ons
- ❓ Subject-verb & antecedent-pronoun agreement
- ❓ Correct spelling and word choice
- ❓ Capitalizing proper (not common) nouns & adjectives
- ❓ Apostrophe in possessive rather than plural nouns
- ❓ Clarity and unity of paragraphs
- ❓ Lead-in phrases introduce quotes in a sentence

## EXPECTATIONS for PARTICIPATING in CLASS DISCUSSION

SUBSTANCE	A minimum of 3 SUBSTANTIVE posts including a thread starter & replies (in any given Discussion Topic). Thread starter fosters further discussion and engagement with classmates rather than merely displays content knowledge. See SUBSTANTIVE POSTS above.
FREQUENCY	Post at least one <b>substantive</b> post on four (4) separate days of the week. A minimum number of replies may be required in topic instructions (generally 2-3 <i>replies</i> plus thread starter per topic)
TIMELINESS	First post made early in the week (ideally by Tuesday night) and replies are spread across the week, not just one one or two days. This helps ensure that all students are actively engaged early in discussion so that learners benefit from an ongoing conversation.
CLARITY	When making replies, the individual and key ideas being responded to are clearly and succinctly identified in the reply post. Replies begin by naming the individual being responded to, along with one sentence that summarizes his/her original point.
DUE DATE	By default, Discussion Topics are completed within the assigned week. Posting for a new week begins on Monday and remains available through the due date on Sunday at 11:59pm Central. On occasion, the particular topic or structure of a course may call for a different due date.
APA & WRITING	Writing in posts should be logically coherent, focused on the topic, and meet minimum college writing standards (above). APA (or designated writing style of program) rules should be generally adhered to, although the requirements in discussions are somewhat relaxed.

## INTEGRATED LEARNING MODEL



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# Steps to Grading ONLINE CLASS DISCUSSION

## Timeliness of Participation

All discussion posts are made on the same day.

## Poor Writing

Writing generally at or below minimum expected level expected of college writing. See "Minimum College Writing Standards" on next page.

### LIMITS ON FINAL GRADE

3+ SUBSTANTIVE posts, inc. thread starter & 2 replies	11	All of the below but has additional WOW! factor that stands above the crowd
	10	3 <b>Substantive</b> with all ILM* <i>dimensions</i> ; analyzes/evaluates topic
3+ POSTS	9	2-3 <b>Substantive</b> ; 2 of 3 ILM* <i>dimensions</i> ; analyzes & applies ideas
	8	1-2 <b>Substantive</b> ; one <i>dimension</i> of ILM*; summarizes /describes; some scholarly support
	7	<b>Substantive</b> starter & replies. No citations/scholarly support; "nodding head"
2 POSTS	6	Level 5, but includes some scholarly insights & citations
	5	<b>Substantive</b> starter & reply. No citations/scholarly support; "nodding head"
	4	Level 3, but includes some scholarly insight & citations
	3	<b>non-Substantive</b> or no starter post. No citations/scholarly support
1 POST	2	Only 1 post, <b>Substantive</b> thread starter only
	1	Only 1 post, <b>non-Substantive</b> , or lacks <b>Substantive</b> thread starter
NO POSTS	0	No participation

LEVEL

\* Integrated Learning Model



**Start at Level 0. Move up to the highest level that best describes student work.** Assign the letter grade/score that matches the corresponding blue box. A typical numerical score is suggested but instructor should use their discretion to decide the grade number within the range provided at top for each letter grade. Apply any GRADE LIMITS or writing error deductions to determine the Final Grade.

Final grade is capped no higher than 86

Final grade is capped no higher than 76

Not eligible for grade

If either condition above applies, final grade must be capped as marked regardless of grade level below

										-5 ⚠	96 >
										-5 ⚠	93-95
										-5 ⚠	89-92
										-5 ⚠	83-88
										-5 ⚠	80-82
											80-82
											78
											74
											72
											66-72
											65
											0
F	D	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A		
<60	60-69	70-72	73-76	77-79	80-82	83-86	87-89	90-92	93-98		



### WRITING ERRORS

up to 5-pt deduction for *multiple* errors in grammar, syntax, APA formatting. Excessive errors or poor writing should have the *Poor Writing* grade cap applied above.

# SUBSTANTIVE THREAD STARTERS

# TIPS FOR SUCCESS

## EXPLORATION

What parts of the topic do you see? What do you think these various parts mean? How do they relate to one another? Break down big themes into small parts - what do they look like? How is the material categorized or arranged?

## EVALUATION

How would you assess the main theme(s) in light of your own experience or understanding regarding this topic? How does it stack up against other material we've read thus far in the course or that you've read on your own? Are the ideas presented well supported? Why or why not?

## CLARIFICATION

Note ideas, phrases, words, or concepts that are fuzzy or difficult for you to grasp. Pose these to the class as "What is meant by..." questions. State what you think it means? What parts are clear to you? What makes it unclear?

## EXPANSION

What additional things does the author's key idea make you think of? How would you add to his ideas? Is there something important that you see was overlooked or left out?

## QUESTION & ANSWER

What questions came to your mind throughout the reading or discussion? (You might consider keeping a journal or notebook of questions along the way.) Pose these in a helpful and meaningful way for the class to consider. How would you answer these? What is one question you would ask the author of the material being investigated?

Try applying one of these approaches to help you interact more meaningfully with course content or the posts of others in the class.

## CAUSE & EFFECT

What lies behind the argument or propositions made in the material? What might have led to these conclusions? What would be the outcome of the key idea(s) being carried out? What impact could this fact have on you or others? Where does the author draw their ideas from?

## CRITIQUE

What argument(s) would you raise with this subject or discussion? How strong is the logic or rational of the author's argument? How would you attack it? Defend it? (For added challenge, take both positions simultaneously in one post!) What weaknesses do you see? What strengths?

## EXPERIENCE

What story from your life that might be a good example of the subject under discussion? How and where have you seen the themes or ideas at work? What failure or successes that you know about bring more light onto the subject? Do you think this idea works or not? Why or why not?

# THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN RESPONDING TO ANOTHER POST

# TIPS FOR SUCCESS

<b>PURPOSE</b>	Is their position, purpose, or argument clear? Is it justifiable?
<b>QUESTION</b>	Do they state their question or issue clearly and unbiased? Is their question or critique relevant to the larger discussion topic or theme?
<b>INFORMATION</b>	Do they cite relevant information, evidence, or experiences in support of their argument? Is their information essential to the discussion? Is it accurate? Does it address or overlook the complexities of the issue under consideration? What new insights or possibilities does it provide for you?
<b>CONCEPTS</b>	Do they clarify their key concepts when necessary? Do they expand upon new concepts they've introduced into the discussion? Do they apply or describe them correctly? Do they seem to understand the concept?
<b>ASSUMPTIONS</b>	Do they show sensitivity to what they may be taking for granted or assuming? Can their assumptions be reasonably questioned? Do they do so? Do they use questionable assumptions while overlooking problems that might arise from those assumptions?
<b>INFERENCES</b>	Do they develop a line of reasoning that demonstrates how they arrived at their conclusions? Do their arguments support their assertions?
<b>POINT OF VIEW</b>	Do they address or show a sensitivity to other view points? Do they consider and respond to objections presented by other points of view? Is there an alternative point of view they did not consider?
<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>	Do they address or consider the implications and/or consequences raised by the position they take?
<b>ANALYSIS</b>	Do they merely describe or summarize information or do they provide some level of analysis, evaluation, or critique of their ideas?



# GRADING PHILOSOPHY



ONLINE

Grading in most college programs and courses ultimately involves letter grades. Both faculty and students have a clearer understanding of grading performance when there is a common definition of letter grades and some indication of how assignments and number grades relate to those letter grades.

- Instructors are expected to give specific feedback for each grade. But this guide is also designed to help students have a basic foundation for understanding how grading works.
- If you meet all the requirements for an assignment in a thoughtful, clear, and accurate way, it will be an A- (90-93).
- If you do all of that PLUS add some significant insights, analysis, research, or in-depth argument that goes well beyond what is expected, that's is a full A (93 and up). An 'A' is stellar work that really excels and goes above and beyond expectations and has some sense of a "WOW" factor.

**Why do we reserve the highest grade for superior work that exceeds standards?** While many students are understandably looking for the lowest threshold at which they can still get a high grade, there are those students who really want to push themselves and go further. It's important to reward those looking to push beyond what is required in assignment.

One common philosophy is that students start with an A and have points deducted when they fail to adequately meet the stated requirements. Our grading philosophy is different: a B+ is the standard for work that minimally meets well-defined criteria for assigned work. Exceeding those criteria can result in a higher grade. Failure to meet these can result in a lower grade.

Most good students will fall between a B+ and an A- (87-92). This is the minimum expected of a serious university student. You have to work hard to get an A (93 and up) and almost as hard to get below a C. Usually, when students make below a B- (83), it is a self-management and discipline problem: the failure to follow instructions and to remain involved and diligent to complete work on time.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE WITH DISTINCTION

1. Demonstrate strong critical thinking and analytical reasoning in your writing. Make arguments that go well beyond summarizing materials or generalized application. Identify and thoughtfully address objections to or problems with the main topic.
2. When using supporting sources: (1) paraphrase extensively and be very selective with direct quotations, (2) use sources that are clearly academic and scholarly, not blogs, magazines, and personal websites; (3) use more than the required number of sources.
3. Produce writing that is concise, coherent, and error-free. Take the time to write a draft, review and edit, and then produce a final version.
4. Master the basics of APA style rules and formatting in formal papers.

# GUIDELINES ONLINE CLASS DISCUSSION

## WEEKLY THREADED DISCUSSION

Students are required to participate in weekly class discussion around one or more posted topics. Threaded discussion provides the opportunity for students and instructor to interact back and forth throughout the week. Discussion topics usually last for the duration of the week of the course with new topics starting each week.

## HOW DISCUSSIONS WORK

Class discussion involves posting written comments and notes to a discussion topic and engaging the posts of others.

- Each topic includes one or more prompt questions or statements drawn from the weekly course materials.
- Students respond to the prompt by submitting a post that creates a new “discussion thread”.
- Students post replies to the threads of others that challenge or support the original premise. Dialogue develops as others add their thoughts to the thread.
- The faculty member will step in from time to time to support, clarify, or further facilitate the discussion.
- Posts should aim to be substantive (see next page) and contribute to the overall learning of the whole class.



You should aim to post consistently throughout the week. Start by creating a new thread for topic early in the week. First familiarize yourself with the topic prompt. Then review the assigned reading materials with an eye towards composing your first post. Have the topic in mind as you start reading. Look for initial ideas, definitions, or key concepts from the materials. Put these in your own words. Ask some questions in your post that come to mind. Use these questions to help you further engage the reading as you work toward a creating reply posts to others in the discussion.

# POLICIES

***Policy of Online Discussion Forums:*** Content posted in online discussion topics does not necessarily reflect the views of OKWU. In no event shall OKWU assume or have any responsibility or liability for any information posted or for any claims, damages, or losses resulting from the use and/or appearance of such information. OKWU reserves the right to refuse to post, edit, or remove, in whole or in part, any information that is, in the University's sole discretion, of unacceptable or undesirable content.

***Authorship and Credit:*** Students are advised that all material must be of their own authorship, and when quoting another source or referring to another person's work, proper attribution and reference should be made in the appropriate manner.



# SUBSTANTIVE POSTS

Thread Starter  
**200+**  
words\*

Replies  
**100+**  
words\*

## INTEGRATION

Intersects all 3 dimensions of Integrated Learning Model: academic/scholarly, practical/experiential, and spiritual/biblical

## PROFESSIONALISM

Considerate of views of others; respectful in tone & manner; challenges others in humility but shows willingness to learn.

## RESEARCH & SUPPORT

Supports arguments in each post with at least one solid *scholarly* source & citation\*\*, invokes relevant theory/concept, connects to real-life experience.

## CRITICAL THINKING

- beyond summarizing or describing
- evaluates, analyzes, critique, applies
- shows good grasp of key content
- constructively challenges others

\* excluding citations, footnotes, long quotes

\*\* journals, books, professional publications, research findings; blogs, newspapers, magazines, or dictionaries are not scholarly sources.

# OVERVIEW ONLINE CLASS DISCUSSION

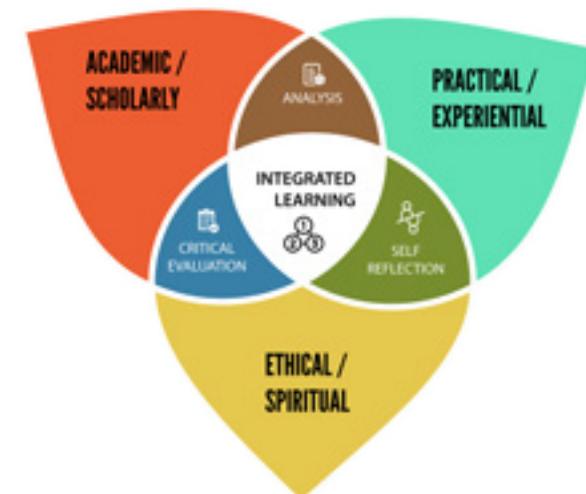
## MINIMUM COLLEGE WRITING STANDARDS

- ❓ Basic sentence structure & punctuation
- ❓ Uses complete sentences vs. sentence fragments & run-ons
- ❓ Subject-verb agreement
- ❓ Correct spelling and word choice
- ❓ Capitalizing proper nouns, not common nouns
- ❓ Apostrophe in possessive nouns (not in plural nouns)
- ❓ General clarity and understandability of sentences
- ❓ Signal phrases introduce research or source material

# STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

SUBSTANCE	A minimum of 3 SUBSTANTIVE posts including a thread starter & replies (in any given Discussion Topic). Thread starter fosters further discussion and engagement with classmates rather than merely displays content knowledge. See SUBSTANTIVE POSTS above
FREQUENCY	Along with thread starter, at least 2 substantive, thoughtful replies to classmates for each topic (multiple topics); 3 replies if only one assigned topic. At least one <b>substantive</b> post on a four (4) separate days of the week (across all discussion topics, not per topic).
TIMELINESS	First post made early in the week (ideally by Tuesday night). The goal is consistently posting throughout the whole week. This helps ensure that all students are actively engaged early in discussion so that learners benefit from an ongoing conversation.
CLARITY	When making replies, the individual and key ideas being responded to are clearly and succinctly identified in the reply post. Replies begin by naming the individual being responded to, along with one sentence that summarizes his/her original point.
DUE DATE	By default, Discussion Topics are completed within the assigned week. Posting for a new week begins on Monday and remains available through the due date on Sunday at 11:59pm CST. On occasion, the particular topic or structure of a course may utilize a different due date.
APA & WRITING	Writing in posts should be coherent and understandable and meets minimum college writing standards (above). Although other APA rules for written material may be more relaxed, APA formatting of inline citations should be followed.

## INTEGRATED LEARNING MODEL



# SUBSTANTIVE THREAD STARTERS

## ONLINE CLASS DISCUSSION

### EXPLORATION

What are the parts of the topic as you see them? What do you think these various parts mean? How do they relate to one another? Break down big themes into small parts - what do they look like? How is the material categorized or arranged?

### QUESTION & ANSWER

What questions came to your mind throughout the reading or discussion? (You might consider keeping a journal or notebook of questions along the way.) Pose these in a helpful and meaningful way for the class to consider. How would you answer these? What is one question you would ask the author of the material being investigated?

### CRITIQUE

What argument(s) would you raise with this subject or discussion? How strong is the logic or rational of the author's argument? How would you attack it? Defend it? (For added challenge, take both positions simultaneously in one post!) What weaknesses do you see? What strengths?

### EVALUATION

How would you assess the main theme(s) in light of your own experience or understanding regarding this topic? How does it stack up against other material we've read thus far in the course or that you've read on your own? Are the ideas presented well supported? Why or why not?

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What story from your life that might be a good example of the subject under discussion? How and where have you seen the themes or ideas at work? What failure or successes that you know about bring more light onto the subject? Do you think this idea works or not? Why or why not?

### CAUSE & EFFECT

What lies behind the argument or propositions made in the material? What might have led to these conclusions? What would be the outcome of the key idea(s) being carried out? What impact could this fact have on you or others? Where does the author draw their ideas from?

### EXPANSION

What additional things does the author's key idea make you think of? How would you add to his ideas? Is there something important that you see was overlooked or left out?

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Note ideas, phrases, words, or concepts that are fuzzy or difficult for you to grasp. Pose these to the class as "What is meant by..." questions. State what you think it means? What parts are clear to you? What makes it unclear?

Try applying one of these approaches to help you interact more meaningfully with course content or the posts of others in the class.