

Discussion Paper Guidelines SOC 571

This class deals with complex ideas that require regular and thorough **completion of reading** and **engagement with ideas**. To ensure that you do the reading, you are required to complete **discussion papers on course readings, to be posted in the homework vaults of the IS page for the class.**

Guidelines for discussion papers are as follows:

- They should be about **300 words** in length (and SHOULD NOT exceed 500 words).
- They are due by **Wednesday at 13:00, in the Homework Vault** but don't hesitate to send your paper even if it is late.
- These writings can be quite informal, but thoughtless or cursory thought pieces will not receive credit. They must be in your own words, and must respond to the readings.
- They must also include **at least one, but preferably several, discussion questions**.
- The responses should be a reaction/critical engagement rather than a simple summary of the readings assigned for the week. You might focus on the questions you want to ask in the class, or point to gaps and conflicts in one or more readings.
- These writings will be graded according to the guidelines below, for a maximum of 2 points. This is to provide you with some idea about how I expect you to engage with the readings. You will only be graded on the discussion papers if you show up and speak in class.

(2 points): An excellent paper. You clearly understand and engage with the readings and focus on major points/arguments from them. You are able to cohesively tie the readings together (if there is more than one). You make sophisticated connections from the readings to the real world. This is reserved for truly excellent responses that provide thoughtful discussion questions.

(1-1.5 points): A good paper. You make a good attempt to engage with and understand the readings, to tie them together and to address major arguments, or points of interest. You may also make good connections from the readings to the real world. But your analysis remains more of a surface reading/summary and you may have forgotten to provide discussion questions.

(.5 point): A weak paper. You seem to have done some of the reading but do not demonstrate a clear understanding of the major points/arguments. There may be some factual errors/misunderstandings that could have been avoided from more focused reading. You don't really engage with the reading or provide discussion questions.