Online discussion in English studies: resource overview

Collection: Online teaching

Learning outcomes

1. To have a clearer understanding of how and when to use online discussions in your modules.
2. To have thought through the pros and cons of building assessment into the use of discussion forums.

Overview

Online discussion activities can be integrated into the modular structure in several ways. Some tutors use them to prepare students for seminars – developing material, discussion questions, and fact sheets collaboratively that will then be brought into the classroom, where tutors can help demonstrate the links between these preliminary discussions and module goals and outcomes. We more customarily use discussion activities to extend seminars and lectures, giving students hands-on applications that can deepen, or fruitfully complicate their understanding of our inquiry. In this way, the discussion board can also extend the reading list of a module, as students bring seminar questions to bear on works they have found for themselves.

In its post-seminar incarnation, the discussion board has been used as a student-led, interactive notice board, where students might post summaries of seminars, generate their own essay questions or topics, solicit commentary and feedback from tutors and colleagues, and share writing advice. The discussion board also becomes a valuable tool for revision insofar as discussion itself becomes a resource that might include reading lists and links, activities and practices, set tasks, and the like.

Although many use discussion space in this informal manner, some have had success in integrating discussion activities into formal assessment patterns, encouraging students to feel that this kind of writing is as valuable in its way as other more traditional expository forms. The assessed discussion board also allows us to get students to reflect on a wider range of readings than they might consider if assessed by an essay alone, with online discussion often helping them to develop questions and approaches of direct relevance to their essay research.

(extract from *Online Discussion and programme design* - Benjamin Colbert)

The activity in this resource, available for a group or individual, exposes the student to a selection of voices within the discipline who have different perspectives on the use and assessment of online discussion.

Links & references

- Miles, R. ,Colbert, B., Wilson, F. et al (2010) *Online Discussion in English Studies: A Good Practice Guide to Design, Moderation and Assessment*. HEA English Subject Centre Report Series, No. 21. ISBN: 978-1-905846-40-5.

Activities within this resource

- Should online discussion be assessed?: group activity
- Should online discussion be assessed?: individual activity

Resources in the Online teaching Collection

- Online teaching: introduction to the collection
- What are VLE's good for?: resource overview
  - What is a VLE and why use it?: group activity
  - What is a VLE and why use it?: individual activity
- The design of online activities in English Studies: resource overview
  - Evaluating online activities in English Studies: group activity
  - Evaluating online activities in English Studies: individual activity

- Designing learning with new media: resource overview
  - Exploring new media and its potential in teaching: group activity
  - Exploring new media and its potential in teaching: individual activity
  - Designing an online activity in English Studies: group activity
  - Designing an online activity in English Studies: individual activity
- Teaching with digital archives: resource overview
  - Teaching with digital archives: group activity
  - Teaching with digital archives: individual activity
- **Online discussion in English Studies: resource overview (*you are here)**
  - Should online discussion be assessed?: group activity
  - Should online discussion be assessed?: individual activity
- Workshopping online: resource overview
  - Designing an online Creative Writing workshop: group activity
  - Designing an online Creative Writing workshop: individual activity