

Guidelines on Active Participation

What is active participation?

Active participation is not simply the amount or number of times one talks in class, but the quality of our contributions to class discussion and the culture of our shared learning.

How to actively participate in class

- Attend class regularly (i.e. as many classes as you can attend) having completed all the readings.
- Come to class prepared to discuss the readings by bringing notes and/or marked up copies of your readings.
- Connect your contributions to class discussion by referencing the readings.
- Draw class attention to the content of the readings and objects we examine.
- Offer insight and analysis using the texts we've read together on the topics and objects being discussed.
- Stay focused on discussion and try to avoid looking at your phone, social media, email, texting, chat, web browsing, etc.
- Participate in discussion to the best of your ability in a way that fosters peer participation.

How do I know if I'm participating actively?

You can self-assess your participation in classes using the following guide.

	Excellent Participation	Meets Expectations for Participation	Adequate Participation	Inadequate Participation	Does Not Meet Expectations
Completing Readings	<input type="checkbox"/> I always attend class having completed all the readings in full.	<input type="checkbox"/> I try to complete most of my readings before class but find myself missing some.	<input type="checkbox"/> I find it difficult to complete all the readings and end up only partially reading.	<input type="checkbox"/> I find it difficult to complete all the readings and end up hardly completing any.	<input type="checkbox"/> I generally am not completing my readings for this class.
Preparing Notes	<input type="checkbox"/> I come to class with notes on the readings to help me prepare for class discussion.	<input type="checkbox"/> I come to class with some ideas of what I'd like to talk about, but no actual notes.	<input type="checkbox"/> I come to class hoping to be inspired by the discussion, rather than preparing.	<input type="checkbox"/> I rarely prepare for class discussion before class, I find I can participate anyway.	<input type="checkbox"/> I generally don't prepare for class, since active participation is not a current priority.
Attending Class	<input type="checkbox"/> I attend class regularly; when I miss class I negotiate my absence with the professor in advance or soon after.	<input type="checkbox"/> I try not to miss class; when I do, I usually contact the professor about my absence.	<input type="checkbox"/> I sometimes miss class; I don't always communicate with the professor about my absence.	<input type="checkbox"/> I have missed many classes, am often late, or don't attend the full class. I'm concerned about my participation and struggle to find effective strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am missing many classes, am usually late, and don't attend the full class. There are other things taking priority over this class.

Developed by Natalie Kouri-Towe (Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Concordia University), with thanks and acknowledgement to Sarah Ghabrial (Department of History, Concordia University) for sharing her model of self-assessment for participation.

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	Excellent Participation	Meets Expectations for Participation	Adequate Participation	Inadequate Participation	Does Not Meet Expectations
Contributing to Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> I contribute regularly and meaningfully to class discussion, at least once a class, connecting my contribution to the readings. If I'm not comfortable speaking each class, I bring a prepared question to pose to the class and might share it with a peer or the professor to read on my behalf.	<input type="checkbox"/> I contribute often to class discussion, at least every other class, connecting my contribution to the readings. If I'm not comfortable speaking each class, I bring a prepared question to pose to the class and might share it with a peer or the professor to read on my behalf.	<input type="checkbox"/> I occasionally contribute to discussion, but don't always connect to the course readings. I often find myself uncertain about how to participate, contribute, or respond to discussion prompts.	<input type="checkbox"/> I infrequently contribute to class discussion, and when I do, I don't usually connect to the readings. I usually attend class by listening. I may not have figured out how to participate in discussion in a way that feels comfortable for me yet.	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't usually contribute to discussion in class, and when I do, my contributions are disconnected from the class topic. I may not be thinking actively about how I contribute to discussion at this point in time.
Posing Questions	<input type="checkbox"/> I regularly pose questions that show my interest and effort in understanding the readings and thinking through course concepts.	<input type="checkbox"/> I usually pose questions that show effort to understand the readings and course concepts.	<input type="checkbox"/> I sometimes pose questions that show I'm trying to understand the readings and course concepts.	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't often pose questions in class, and when I do, it's often because I can't follow discussion, I may not have completed or understood the readings.	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't really pose questions in class, but if I do, it's often to ask for an explanation of something that would have been clear if I had completed my readings.
Connecting to the Readings	<input type="checkbox"/> I draw attention in class discussion to key passages in the readings to help ground our discussion with the texts we've all read.	<input type="checkbox"/> I usually reference the readings in class discussion, but don't always point to specific passages of the text.	<input type="checkbox"/> I sometimes reference the readings in class discussion, but don't usually point to specific passages of the text.	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't really refer to the readings during class discussion, and if I do, I don't reference specific passages of the text.	<input type="checkbox"/> I rarely reference the readings in class discussion and I don't ever connect to specific passages in the text.

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<i>I make efforts to encourage my peers to participate in discussion, by:</i>					
referring to my peers by their self-identified names and pronouns in class	<input type="checkbox"/> Always	<input type="checkbox"/> Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
referring to my peers' comments or contributions in class discussion to give them credit for their work in thinking through ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> Always	<input type="checkbox"/> Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
focusing on class discussion and not getting distracted by my phone or computer	<input type="checkbox"/> Always	<input type="checkbox"/> Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
offering critiques and disagreements by highlighting the analytic differences in our ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> Always	<input type="checkbox"/> Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
<i>I use respectful communication in the class, by:</i>					
making sure to use language that is respectful and to the best of my knowledge not oppressive or harmful	<input type="checkbox"/> Always	<input type="checkbox"/> Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
apologizing when I make a mistake and committing to working to do better next time	<input type="checkbox"/> Always	<input type="checkbox"/> Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
challenging people's ideas rather than making personal attacks or challenging them as people	<input type="checkbox"/> Always	<input type="checkbox"/> Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
not making assumptions about where people come from, their experiences, identities, or subject positions	<input type="checkbox"/> Always	<input type="checkbox"/> Often	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never

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