

# Suggestions for Comments and Posts

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## 1 Reading Posts and Comments

**Subject of Posts.** Be sure to make the subject of the post *reflect the content of the post* as precisely as possible. In this manner, specific posts can be much more easily located. Subject titles such as “Test,” “Post,” “Question,” “Chapter 3,” or “Grades” are much too imprecise to be helpful. Construct a topic which accurately portrays the content of the message such as “Russell’s enlargement of self,” “Problem of the soul in Socratic Paradox,” or “Socrates neglects unconscious thought.”

Rather than just naming the subject as very general category such as the name of a chapter or the name of a philosopher, please take a moment to state the subject more specifically as shown in the examples above. Refer to the readings by title or author rather than, for example, “Chapter 2” or “this week’s reading” since your posts are accessed by persons at different times and dates not familiar with the class schedule.

**General Nature of Posts.** The comment should give reasons supporting the point of the post. Try to avoid comments such as “I agree” or “I disagree” *unless* reasons are given explaining why you agree or disagree. Philosophy is based on rational discourse rather than feelings of likes or dislikes. *Do not* state or describe your religious beliefs *unless* you are providing rational or empirical evidence or support for those views. To do so is difficult since religious views are normally ultimately based on faith rather

than reason. *A critical post should express reasons, grounds, or evidence for agreement or disagreement with the philosophies you read about.* A critical post is an attempt to prove or elucidate some conclusion or point of view.

**Asking for Help.** It is always relevant to state difficulty in understanding after an attempt to explain, explicate, or analyze a philosophical point of view in your own words. Asking for confirmation of your interpretation of the author is a standard way of posting. Note that your post must have critical content of some kind—even if your post is to ask for help in understanding a philosopher or reading. So the post can be anything that you agree with or disagree with in the readings and your reasons why you agree or disagree. You can also try to restate or clarify some point in the reading or ask for help in the interpretation. Asking for help is essential for philosophical inquiry—this kind of inquiry was the method Socrates used.

**How to Find Ideas to Post.** Before reading the assignment, spend a moment as ask yourself what you already know about the subject. As you read, question the readings with your own ideas in mind. Question what you are reading, and mark or copy out passages which are either unclear or important. In this manner your reading is active: your ideas will either be supported or opposed by the writers. Consequently, specific issues should suggest themselves to you.

## 2 Suggested Ways to Post

Here's a quick outline of some of the ways the ideas for posts arise together with what might be posted on the Forum.

Observations	Your Comments
1. There are conflicts of assumptions, theories, or approaches to a subject.	You explain the conflict and then show which solution is adequate.
2. The author and some other writer with whom you are personally acquainted give different conclusions on the same subject.	You contrast them and show which one has a stronger position.

Observations	Your Comments
3. Two different disciplines approach the same topic using different methods.	You explain the different methods and describe the respective insights into the topics according to the method used.
4. The language used to explain something is uncertain, and the explanations are no more than rationalizations.	You analyze the language and explanations. Then, you finish the reasoning or at least clarify the language.
5. Conclusions are offered, but no supporting arguments are given.	If you agree, give detailed supporting reasons; if you disagree, give your reasoning.
6. Different parts of the text seem contradictory or in opposition.	You can reconcile the difference or explain the intellectual development of the text or show that the opposition cannot be reconciled.
7. New facts, discoveries, or ideas demand that the text be modified or supplemented.	You explain the new developments and show how the text can be modified.
8. You are sure that the author is mistaken or the author upsets you.	Reconstruct your own point of view and evaluate it with respect to the author's point of view.

### 3 Related Matters

**Threaded Messages.** If your comment is in relation to another post, click on the “Reply” button under to the message you are commenting on. You are expected to read all messages since the purpose of the Forum is class discussion of the philosophy readings. In addition, some test questions occasionally come from discussions on the Discussion Board.

**Late Posts.** No credit is given for posts on readings from past or future weeks since the value of posting is for *class discussion* of current topics. Posting deadlines are Friday midnight, unless stated differently in the Forum.

**Evaluation of Posts.** Everyone enrolled in the class needs to post a minimum of seven times over seven weeks during the semester in order to pass

the class. These posts count as “class attendance” and are a help in keeping up with the readings—a function which is usually served in on-campus courses by class attendance.

Special Forums are set up during the semester for extra credit on tests, and these Forum usually relate to the application of philosophical ideas to a practical problem. Not all posts are counted for credit in Forums—only those posts which are “critical posts” or comments which contain reasoning, insights, or philosophical thought about the subject under discussion are counted. Short written evaluation of posts are given three times a semester at the end of the comments to tests emailed to everyone enrolled in the course.