

What is a seminar?

A seminar, as the term is used here, refers to a group of people who share a common interest, have done some advanced reading and preparation, and come together to share insights, explore ideas, and learn from one another through a process of discussion. A specific text provides the focus for the discussion and the goal is to collectively mine the text by exploring it, drawing insights from it, and critiquing it. The purpose of a seminar is not to impress others, but to deepen our collective comprehension. The underlying assumption is that knowledge and insight are most fully present in the collective intelligence of the group, and every individual has valuable contributions to make. In this regard, our diverse life experiences and educational backgrounds are sources of collective richness and strength that we are seeking to tap into.

How does one prepare for a seminar?

Although a seminar is a group activity, it requires advanced preparation. Preparation includes actively (rather than passively) reading and often re-reading a text. As you read, you should make notes, look up important terms that you do not understand, struggle to understand major concepts used in the text, and bring questions about difficult concepts to the seminar if necessary. Also, bring the readings to class so that you can refer to them during the discussion.

Study Notes

For this seminar, you will need to type up study notes in response to questions posed in the online schedule for each set of readings. Your response to each reading should be labeled with the author name(s). Under each author, your responses to each question should be in a separate paragraph, numbered to correspond to the question numbers on the schedule. Email these notes to your professor before the class we discuss them (send to [REDACTED] do not send through the Canvas system). The header of the email should read "COMM 498 Study Notes". During class you should refer to these notes for discussion purposes. These notes will be part of your seminar participation grade.

Objectives

Students who participate in this seminar should:

- (a) develop active reading and seminar preparation skills
- (b) learn about a range of ethical theories and systems
- (c) develop their capacity to contribute to a collective learning process

Evaluation

Seminar participation will be evaluated in three ways. First, every student will perform a self-evaluation at the midpoint of the quarter, worth 10% of their total course grade. The instructor will also evaluate each student at the midpoint of the quarter, worth 15% of the course grade.

Then the instructor will evaluate the student again at the end of the quarter, worth 15% of the course grade.

Evaluation Rubric

Attended class regularly in order to contribute to collective learning process.	1	2	3	4	5
Consistently arrived on time and stayed to the end of class.	1	2	3	4	5
Emailed study notes that reflect depth and insight before each class.	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrated a grasp of the assigned readings.	1	2	3	4	5
Contributed regularly to the seminar discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
Contributed to the depth, insight, and coherence of the seminar discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
Contributed to energy level and dynamism of the seminar discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
Exercised self-discipline in seminar discussion (i.e., did not dominate discussion).	1	2	3	4	5
Helped create an inclusive atmosphere in which everyone felt comfortable contributing.	1	2	3	4	5
Overall contribution to collective seminar experience.	1	2	3	4	5
Total =					/ 50

unsatisfactory = 1 / poor = 2 / satisfactory = 3 / very good = 4 / excellent = 5

Absence / Illness Policy

To be successful, a seminar needs everyone to participate and contribute. Therefore, attendance is required for this class.

However, if you have a contagious illness such as a flu or cold, you should not attend class. You should notify your professor as soon as you are physically able to, by email, preferably in advance of the missed class, to explain the circumstances. When this is done in a timely manner, such absences will not impact your seminar participation grade. A doctor's note is not needed.

Similarly, if you have a medical or family emergency, you are not expected to attend class. However, you should notify your professor as soon as you are physically able to, by email, preferably in advance of the missed class, to explain the circumstances.

On days that a student misses class, study notes for homework readings should still be emailed to the professor as soon as the student is physically able to complete the readings.