**Participation Guidelines**

**(Courtesy of Rachael Goodyer, Harvard University)**

In this course, good participation does not necessarily mean talking a lot or presenting one’s views in a particularly confident way. It will involve building upon and synthesizing comments from others and on showing appreciation for others’ contributions. It will also involve inviting others to say more about what they are thinking. Below are some specific behavioral examples of how you can participate well in class:

* Use body language (e.g. eye contact, orienting one’s body towards the speaker, nodding) to show interest in what different speakers are saying
* Ask a question or make a comment that shows you are interested in what another person has said. E.g. ‘What (name) said is really interesting. I hadn’t thought of the problem that way before’
* Ask a question or make a comment that encourages another person to elaborate on or clarify something they have already said. E.g. ‘(Name): Could you just clarify what you meant by X?’ ‘That sounds like a helpful suggestion, (name). Could you tell me more about what you had in mind?’
* Contribute a thought that builds on or springs from what someone else has said. E.g. ‘As (name) mentioned a few minutes ago…’ ‘Referring back to (name)’s point...’
* Offer a challenge to what someone has said. E.g. ‘But I wonder whether that is always true (name). I am not sure it applies to a situation where….’
* Offer a response to a challenge on behalf of someone else. E.g. ‘(Name) raised the worry that (name)’s view would not apply in certain situations. But I think it would because….’
* Make a comment that at least partly paraphrases a point someone has already made. E.g. ‘I wanted to pick up on what (name) said about X. She said that it raises the issue of Y. I also think it brings up the issue of Z’
* Find a way to connect what someone else has said to your own life. E.g. ‘What (name) said is something I have often thought in situations like…’
* Make a summary observation that takes into account several people’s contributions and that touches on a recurring theme in the discussion. E.g. ‘What I am hearing is that we are all concerned with X and the way it creates a difficulty for Y’, ‘I notice that we keep coming back to the topic of X. (Name) mentioned it in the context of Y and (Name) brought it up when they talked about Z’
* Ask to pause or rewind the discussion to give yourself or others time to think or to recap points that went by quickly. E.g. ‘I think some of us missed that point. Would you mind repeating it?’, ‘I think we
* need to slow down the conversation a little. Shall we take a few moments to gather our thoughts?’
* Bring in a resource (a reading, web link, video) that is not covered on the syllabus but adds new information or perspectives to our learning. E.g. ‘Last night I was thinking about argument X and then stumbled across this article which talks about it in a different way’
* Find a way to express appreciation for the enlightenment you have gained from the discussion. Try to be specific about what it was that helped you understand something better. E.g. ‘(Name)’s comment really helped me to see why X is related to Y’
* Remember: Using people’s names in class is important. Practically, it helps the group keep track of who said what. But it is also a matter of courtesy and helps to create a supportive and trusting discussion environment.