Syllabus
COM 730: Theories of Communication

Course Description and Objectives

Scholars from many disciplines are interested in the interpretation of human symbolic action and are engaged in exploring processes that we would label “rhetorical.” This course is designed to provide graduate students a broad overview of the terrain of rhetorical theory, with an emphasis on the ways that it is practiced in the communication discipline. The course begins by exploring the ancient foundations of rhetorical theory then proceeds to examine how these foundational concepts have been extended and challenged in contemporary scholarship.

Course Goals and Objectives
By successfully completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

• Demonstrate an understanding of the development of rhetorical theory within the field of communication studies more broadly
• Identify and describe the major concepts, tensions and developments in the field of rhetorical theory
• Critically evaluate, compare and synthesize the major concepts and theories in the field of rhetorical theory
• Explain and recognize self-reflexivity, multiple perspectives and the ethical dimensions of communication in rhetorical contexts
• Critically analyze and evaluate published research articles
• Successfully conduct graduate-level research in rhetorical studies

By achieving these course goals, you also will work towards achieving several Learning Objectives for your MA in Communication Studies.

Required Course Materials:

• WebCampus as indicated on the syllabus/by instructor. Make sure to download, print, and bring these to class.

Other Resources
I also strongly recommend that you familiarize yourself with the following resources, which are all available through Lied Library:

Course Assignments
Students who wish to earn a passing grade in this course will complete all of the following assignments.

The Adopt-a-Scholar Program
During the semester, you will adopt a twentieth- or twenty-first-century scholar. You will read as much of his or her work as you can. You will compare and contrast the scholar’s work with that of the primary readings. You will research and distribute information about the scholar to the class. You will become our class expert on this intellectual figure.

You do not have to like your adopted scholar, but it is wise to choose someone whom you find provocative and someone who works in an area compatible with your own. A list of candidates for the Adopt-a-Scholar Program appears on page 13 of this syllabus. You will select the scholar in consultation with the instructor, according to the procedure outlined on page 13.

The Adopt-a-Scholar Program includes five assignments; four are written, and one is oral. You will submit the written assignments to me on paper, and I will return them to you with comments. You will also distribute the written assignments to the entire class, on paper or by e-mail, as you prefer. All written assignments should be formatted according to the 16th edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.

• Intellectual Biography (50 points)
  Due October 1.
  The subjectivity of any scholar is important to his or her theoretical endeavors. To provide the class with a fuller understanding of your scholar, you will submit a five- to seven-page biographical sketch. The sketch should include any information that you believe illuminates the scholar’s intellectual work: education, ethnicity, geographic situations, political affiliations, and so on. If possible, include a chronology of the scholar’s professional life, but you do not need to provide a bibliography of the scholar’s work or describe the work in any detail. You will want to consult biographies, magazine or journal interviews, book jackets, newspaper columns (check Lexis-Nexis), published personal reflections, and “Who’s Who”-type publications.

• Two Review/Response Papers (100 points each).
  The first is due October 22; the second, November 19.
  Twice during the term you will submit a nine- to twelve-page review of a major book written by your scholar. (If your scholar’s major work appears in a medium other than the book—say, in journal articles—see me for ways to select suitable material.) This review will contain four elements:
1. A list of key terms from the work, with your definitions (these definitions, written in complete sentences, may include quotations from the scholar’s work, but they should primarily be your own explanations);
2. A paragraph that abstracts the book’s thesis and primary purpose;
3. A short summary of the work (not more than one page); and
4. A sustained critical response, in which you engage the work on its own terms. In this section, which should comprise more than half of the paper, you will respond to the work. Although you should address issues in this section that pertain to your own intellectual concerns, some possible topics include the following: the strengths of the theory, the utility of the theory for scholars of rhetoric, potential applications of the theory, weaknesses or lacunae in the theory, or comparisons of the theory with other class readings.

- **Annotated Bibliography (50 points)**
  **Due December 3.**
  You will distribute to the class your scholar’s bibliography (if you acquire some of this material from secondary sources, such as published lists or Web sites, provide those citations in a “Sources” list at the head of the bibliography). Use Chicago style citation. Wherever possible, include a sentence or two of annotation. At the same time, do not try to annotate everything, and if your scholar is especially prolific, annotate selectively.

- **Class Presentation (50 points)**
  Once during the semester, you will conduct a short lecture/presentation (15-20 min.) on one of your scholar’s most important contributions. You might choose to focus on a theoretical concept, a critical method, or a particular critique. Your lecture/presentation should (a) explain the contribution, (b) explain the contribution’s relevance for rhetorical scholars, (c) provoke and respond to questions from classmates. Dates for these presentations will be determined during the second week of class.

- **Final Position Paper (75 points).**
  **Due by e-mail on December 9; due on paper on December 10.**
  For your final paper, you are asked to imagine that in November 2014 the National Communication Association will sponsor a day-long seminar entitled “What Does Rhetorical Theory Do? And What is the Key Question that Rhetorical Theory Should Be Asking?” Participants will be competitively selected, based on submitted position papers. The call for position papers will be distributed in class and posted to WebCampus. Based on your experiences in our class, you will prepare a 1500-word position paper, imagining that that you are applying to participate in the seminar. Send your position paper by e-mail to the whole class no later than noon on Tuesday, December 9. We will discuss the position papers during the final exam period, on Wednesday, December 10, 6:00–8:00 P.M. (bring a paper copy of your position paper for me at that time). You must be present for the discussion in order to receive credit for this assignment.

- **Seminar Participation and Leadership (75 points)**
  Evaluation of class participation, which is necessarily subjective, is based not merely on the frequency of your contributions, but on the quality of what you say. Quality is a
function of various abilities: the ability to exhibit careful preparation of assigned readings, to articulate original insights, to support ideas, to analyze what others say, to see implications beyond the immediate context, to defend a position when questioned, to encourage the participation of others, and to advance the discussion.

In addition to regular participation in class, each student will also be responsible for formulating discussion questions about the readings for each class session. Each student will prepare at least three discussion questions, which I will use to help guide our conversation in class. Two of these questions should focus on specific readings, and the third should synthesize readings or themes of the day. Questions should be sent by email to the whole class no later than 4:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before the assigned session. Some tips about working through the assigned readings and formulating good discussion questions can be found in the last pages of this syllabus.

Grading

Students will earn grades based on their performance in the items outlined above. Grades are assigned according to the following procedure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adopt-A-Scholar Intellectual Biography</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adopt-A-Scholar Review/Response Papers (2)</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adopt-A-Scholar Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adopt-A-Scholar Presentation</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position Paper</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar Participation and Leadership</td>
<td>75</td>
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<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>500</strong></td>
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Final course grades will be assigned by letter. These letter grades reflect the instructor’s assessment of the student’s work: “A” denotes superior work in all areas; “B” denotes above-average work; “C” denotes satisfactory work; “D” denotes unsatisfactory completion of the minimal requirements; and “F” denotes unacceptable performance, little learning, and/or failure to complete requirements. Final grades, to be submitted to the University, will be calculated using the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Earned</th>
<th>Letter Grades</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>465-500</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>450-464</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>440-449</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>415-439</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<td>400-414</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<td>390-399</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>365-389</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<td>350-364</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>300-349</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-299</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you have concerns about your performance on a particular assignment, I encourage you to schedule an appointment to meet with me so we can discuss your concerns. For each writing assignment, I will do my best to provide a thorough explanation of the grade you received, as well as comments to help you improve your work in the future. Be sure to review these comments thoughtfully and save them in case you should want to discuss your progress at any point in the quarter.

**Policies and Procedures**

**Attendance**
This course is a seminar. This means that students produce the classroom experience and the instructor facilitates discussion. The success of this course depends on the participation and mutual respect of all students. Thus, students are expected to attend all class meetings, arriving on time, displaying full engagement in any discussions or activities that take place, completing daily assignments, listening actively and attentively to your instructor and your peers, and remaining until class has been dismissed.

Attendance of this graduate seminar is mandatory. Students seeking to be excused from class must provide me with a satisfactory written explanation and documentation to verify that explanation, as far in advance as is reasonably possible. Excused absences include those owing to significant injury, contagious and/or debilitating personal illness, serious family emergencies, required attendance at university-sponsored events, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, and major religious observances. In addition to negatively affecting the seminar environment, your absences will negatively affect your participation grade. **Students who miss more than four (4) classes, for any reason, will receive an F in the course, regardless of assignment grades.** Students have the responsibility to consult either the course website or a fellow student in order to obtain information about or documents from the meeting missed. After you have taken advantage of these resources, you may contact me if you have further questions.

Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: [http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531](http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531).

**Academic Integrity**
Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV’s function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is the very serious academic version of not giving credit where credit is due. In order to give proper credit, you must provide truthful, complete, and
accurate citations for any ideas or pieces of information that are not your own. As a rule of thumb, no more than 25% of your presentation or paper should come from external sources. If you fail to cite sources, borrow extensively from one source, use another student’s paper, or otherwise violate the guidelines for academic honesty, you will jeopardize both your integrity and your grade. **As a minimum consequence of academic misconduct, it is the policy of the Department of Communication Studies that you will fail this course.** Furthermore, such cases will be directed to the appropriate administrative authority for disciplinary action.

In order to prevent violations, all students must familiarize themselves with the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: [https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct](https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct). The University also requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: [http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright/](http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright/). Please speak with me prior to the due date of an assignment if you have questions or concerns about how to maintain academic integrity.

**Disabilities**

I am available to discuss appropriate accommodations that students may require owing to a disability. Students should speak with me during the first two weeks of the term, in order to facilitate such accommodations. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) determines accommodations that are “reasonable” in promoting the equal access of a student reporting a disability to the general UNLV learning experience. In so doing, the DRC also balances instructor and departmental interests in maintaining curricular standards so as to best achieve a fair evaluation standard amongst students being assisted. In order for the DRC to be effective it must be considered in the dialogue between the faculty and the student who is requesting accommodations. For this reason faculty should only provide students course adjustment after having received an “Academic Accommodation Plan.” If faculty members have any questions regarding the DRC, they should call a DRC counselor.

UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC-A), Room 143, phone (702) 895-0866, fax (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: [http://drc.unlv.edu/](http://drc.unlv.edu/).

**Paper submissions**

Unless otherwise specified by the instructor, all assignments should be submitted on paper, double-spaced, using twelve-point Times New Roman font, with one-inch left and right margins. Other formatting should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Papers should be stapled in the upper left-hand corner. Please do not use cover pages, report covers, folders, or binders. With the exceptions of absences or specific instruction from me, **do not email your assignments.** Papers that do not conform to basic standards of grammar, spelling, mechanics, and citation for graduate level work will be returned, unread, to the student for revisions. Such papers will be subject to
the late penalty outlined below. Therefore, proofread all writing carefully (and, as necessary, repeatedly).

**Late Written Work**
Written work is to be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class on the date that it is due. If you have an excused absence on a day that written work is due, I expect the assignment to be emailed to me as an attachment by the beginning of that day’s class. **Late written work will be assessed a penalty of one full letter grade for each calendar day that it is late.** No assignments will be accepted more than one week past the due date.

**Incompletes**
The grade of “I” is reserved for students who experience extraordinary, catastrophic events beyond their control. It is given only in the most extreme circumstances. The grade of “I” – Incomplete – can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed all course work up to the withdrawal date of that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student’s control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. A student who receives an “I” is responsible for making up whatever work was lacking at the end of the semester. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the “I” grade. If you experience an unforeseen catastrophe during the term, please speak to me as soon as possible. The request for an “I” grade must be submitted in writing, and I must receive it no later than December 5. The request must specify the reason the “I” grade is sought, and it must outline a plan for completing all missed work no later than February 28, 2015.

**Electronic Devices**
Because the ability to concentrate is one that an educated person should possess, we will practice that skill during class time. No electronic communication devices will be turned on during class except those used by the instructor to project class-related material. Only laptops and tablets may be used for note-taking and other instructor-approved class activities.

**Emergencies**
For emergencies, dial 911. For other urgent issues, contact UNLV Police Services at 702-895-3668 or dial 3-1-1 from any on-campus phone. Please familiarize yourself with the emergency procedures outlined by UNLV Risk Management and Safety: [http://rms.unlv.edu/](http://rms.unlv.edu/)

**Tutoring and Coaching**
The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Students may learn more about tutoring services by calling (702) 895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at: [http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/](http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/).

**UNLV Writing Center**
One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students
at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 895-3908. The student’s Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/

Rebelmail
Please be in the habit of checking your Rebelmail account. By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students’ Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV’s official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students’ e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu.

UNLV Libraries
Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the subject librarian is Susie Skarl. UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students’ access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at https://www.library.unlv.edu/.

Transparency in Learning and Teaching
The University encourages application of the transparency method of constructing assignments for student success. Please see these two links for further information: https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning and https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency

Changes to Syllabus
Although I anticipate following this syllabus closely, circumstances do occur under which I may be obliged to modify some aspect of this document. If and when I do so, all students will be notified—through the course website, email, and in class—well in advance of the implementation of any such changes.

Final Notes on Policy
I expect that all students will attend class, turn in assignments on time, adhere to the policies outlined in this syllabus, and relate to other class participants in an ethical manner. I expect students to take responsibility for their own learning and accept responsibility for their own actions. In turn, I promise to conduct the class fairly and honestly. If you have concerns or questions about any aspect of the course, I encourage you to speak with me.
Class Schedule

All readings should be prepared for the class meeting under which they are listed on the course schedule. If possible, texts should be read in the order in which they are listed. Readings not found in CRT are available on WebCampus. Please print out and bring to class any WebCampus readings listed for that day.

August 27: What is Rhetoric?


September 3: Sophistry


September 10: Platonism


September 17: Aristotelianism


September 24: Isocrateanism/Ciceronianism


October 1: Theorizing Rhetoric in the Contemporary Period

Intellectual Biography DUE

• Hariman, “Status, Marginality, and Rhetorical Theory.” CRT 35-51.

October 8: Redefining Rhetoric

• Poulakos, “Toward a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric.” CRT 25-34.
• Leff, “The Habitation of Rhetoric.” CRT 52-64.
• McGee, “Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture.” CRT 65-78.
• Farrell, “Practicing the Arts of Rhetoric: Tradition and Invention.” CRT 79-100.
• Sutton, “The Taming of Polos/Polis: Rhetoric as an Achievement Without Woman.” CRT 101-126.

October 15: Rhetoric and Epistemology
• Farrell, “Knowledge, Consensus, and Rhetorical Theory.” CRT 140-52.
• Cherwitz and Hikins, “Rhetorical Perspectivism.” CRT 176-93.

October 22: Rhetorical Situations and Contexts
First Book Review DUE

• Biesecker, “Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from with the Thematic of Differâncë.” CRT 232-46.

October 29: Envisioning the Audience

• McGee, “In Search of ‘the People’: A Rhetorical Alternative.” CRT 341-56.

November 5: Theorizing Rhetoric in the Public Sphere


November 12: Rhetoric, Reason, and Public Morality
• Frentz, “Rhetorical Conversation, Time, and Moral Action.” CRT 288-305.

November 19: The Role of Discourse in Social Change
Second Book Review DUE

• Charland, “Rehabilitating Rhetoric: Confronting Blindspots in Discourse and Social Theory.” CRT 464-474.

November 26: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving holiday

December 3: Identity, Subjectivity and Agency
Annotated Bibliography DUE


December 10
Final Exam period, 6:00-8:00 p.m. See the schedule at: http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars.

Adopt-a-Scholar Program

One of the scholars listed below will become your adoptee! (No two students in the class will adopt the same scholar.) Send me, by e-mail (sara.vanderhaagen@unlv.edu), your top three choices, ranked in order of preference. I will accept preferences between noon on September 2 and noon on September 3, and I will make the assignments in class on September 3.

Eligible Candidates

Gloria Anzaldúa—postcolonial theorist; *mestiza* rhetoric, radical women of color, identity
Hannah Arendt—political scientist, philosopher; humanism
Molefi Kete Asante—intercultural communication; rhetoric and race; Afrocentricism; identity
James Arnt Aune—rhetoric of economics; Marxism
Lauren Berlant—citizenship and public sphere theory, affect, queer theory
Kenneth Burke—literary theorist; dramatism, New Criticism, symbolic action
Judith Butler—philosopher, feminist theorist; post-structuralism, deconstruction, performativity
Frantz Fanon—psychologist, social theorist; postcolonialism, social revolution, race theory
John Fiske—cultural analyst; popular culture, semiotics
Michel Foucault—philosopher; power, knowledge, discourse, post-structuralism
Eugene Garver—philosopher, rhetorician; neoclassical rhetoric, prudence, ethics
Alan Gross—rhetorician; rhetoric of science, hermeneutics, neoclassical rhetoric
Stuart Hall—cultural theorist, sociologist; British cultural studies, race, representation, hegemony
bell hooks—literary critic; black feminism, anti-patriarchy, popular culture
Michael J. Hyde—rhetorical theorist; hermeneutics, controversy, ethics
Walter Jost—rhetorical theorist; hermeneutics, religious inquiry
Stephen Mailloux—literary theorist; rhetorical theory, pragmatism, power, anti-theory
Chaim Perelman—rhetorician; justice, law, argument, new rhetoric
I. A. Richards—literary theorist, critic; symbolism, meaning, composition
Ferdinand de Saussure—linguistic theorist; structural linguistics, signs
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak—feminist literary theorist, cultural critic; subaltern, postcolonialism
Stephen Toulmin—argumentation theorist; reason, ethics, informal argument
Michael Warner—literary critic, social theorist; early American literature, public sphere, queer theory
Richard Weaver—rhetorician; ethics, sermonic language, new conservatism
Hayden White—historian, philosopher; discourse, metahistory, hermeneutics
Additional resources

Preparation for class sessions may be guided by consideration of the following questions about the readings:

1. What are the authors’ theses or central inferences?

2. What central concepts, important theories, or major thinkers inform the argument?

3. What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of the essay’s argument?

4. What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of the authors’ writing styles?

5. How do these works of scholarship reflect the purposes of theory, as laid out in other readings or class discussions?

Tips for Generating Good Discussion Questions

The first and best method for developing good questions for our class discussions is to reflect on which ideas, terms, or arguments from the readings piqued your interest. Do you strongly agree or disagree with the author’s claims? Is the central argument clear? If not, how might you suggest making it clearer? Does the reading bring to mind a particular example that you’d like to discuss? And so on. The best questions invite participants to apply, synthesize, analyze, and evaluate, rather than just report information.

When generating your discussion questions, you can choose from a variety of question types, each of which serves a distinct purpose:

- **Exploratory questions** probe basic facts and knowledge.
- **Challenge questions** examine assumptions, conclusions, and interpretations.
- **Relational questions** ask for a comparison of themes, ideas, or issues.
- **Diagnostic questions** probe motives or causes.
- **Action questions** call for a conclusion or action.
- **Cause-and-effect questions** ask for causal relationships between ideas, actions, or events.
- **Extension questions** expand the discussion.
- **Hypothetical questions** pose a change in the facts or issues.
- **Priority questions** seek to identify the most important issue.
- **Summary questions** elicit syntheses.