Guidelines for Evaluating Participation in Smaller Classes

Quality of Participation: In smaller lectures and especially in seminar-format classes and discussion sections of 25 or fewer students, all students should try to speak up often, and I will also try to call on students. But quality of contribution counts more than quantity. Quality contributions reflect your familiarity with the readings and your effort to ask good critical questions about them, such as: What are the main questions the author tries to answer? What is the author's main argument? What specific arguments, assumptions, or evidence are used in support? What is left out? Good participation also means that you listen to others and try to engage seriously but respectfully with what others say.

When you Miss Class: There is no practical way to "make up" for missing class: lecture and discussion cannot be entirely repeated for individual students. Nor is it fair or practical to ask if "anything important was covered," or "what were the key points covered," or if you can do any extra assignments. Instead, it is your responsibility to: 1) let me or the TA know by email about your absence, preferably before class; 2) get notes from a classmate; and 3) keep up with the assigned readings. After you have taken these steps, you are also welcome, as always, to meet with me or the TA to ask any specific questions you may have about the material.

Assessment of Participation in Seminar-Format Classes and in Discussion Sections (12-25 students). For seminar-format classes and in classes that include separate, small discussion sections (which is exceptional for my classes), participation may count for **between 15 and 20%** of the course grade, and in these cases a point system will be used.

Rubric for Assessing Participation in Smaller Classes: While even in smaller classes the assessment of participation remains an inherently subjective matter, the greater weight assigned to participation requires a point system, as per UW- Madison School of Letters and Sciences policy. The rubric below, which I have adapted from one offered by the UW-Madison *Writing Across the Curriculum* website, presents the system used in these cases.

Outstanding Contributor (A level) (19-20/20 points, or 14-15/15 points): Contributions in class reflect exceptional preparation. Ideas offered are always substantive, provide one or more major insights as well as direction for the class. Challenges are well substantiated and persuasively presented. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished markedly.

Very Good Contributor (AB level) (18/20 points, or 13.5/15 points): Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive, provide good insights and sometimes direction for the class. Challenges are well substantiated and often

persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would
be diminished.

Good Contributor (B level) (17/20 points or 12.5-13/15 points): Contributions in class reflect
satisfactory preparation. Ideas offered are sometimes substantive, provide generally useful
insights but seldom offer a new direction for discussion. Challenges are sometimes presented, fairly well
substantiated, and are sometimes persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the
quality of discussion would be diminished somewhat.

Contribution Needs Improvement (BC level) (16/20 points, or 12/15 points):
Contributions in class show attention to readings, lecture, and other course materials,
but are either very few or reflect the need for more careful attention to course materials.

Contribution Weak (C level) (14-15/20 points, or 11-11.5/15 points): Contributions are
either extremely few, reflect a weak grasp of course materials, or in some cases may
actually be unproductive because of a lack of connection with class topics.

Contribution Unsatisfactory (D or F levels) (10-13 points, or 7.5 – 10/15 points):
Contributions are either none or are highly uninformed or disruptive to the class.