



# GUIDE TO CLS 201US

## *EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO SUCCEED IN THE UNIVERSITY SEMINAR*

### **GRADED COURSE ACTIVITIES**

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## THIS GUIDE TO CLS 101 GIVES YOU:

- A description of each activity and assignment
- An explanation of how you will be evaluated for each activity, and
- Suggestions for success

## ENGAGED CLASS PARTICIPATION

Engaged class participation encompasses *attendance, listening, speaking in seminar discussion, and preparing for class*. Your participation grade in the course is based on all of these.

**Attendance.** Attendance is required at seminar classes and conferences. If you must miss class, are ill, or have a family emergency, let your instructor know as soon as possible.

**Listening.** One of the most effective ways of learning is to listen. Active learning and participation in discussion requires active listening and respect for others' opinions and arguments. Concentrate on what is being said during class discussion before responding. Let others finish their statements before offering your thoughts and questions. Sometimes, thinking about what you want to say next while someone else is speaking prevents you from hearing what others have to say. Try not to dominate discussion. Do encourage quiet classmates to speak up. Keep an open mind and consider views that challenge your own opinions. *Asking a classmate a follow-up question to help them develop their ideas is often the most valuable contribution to class discussion. It definitely shows that you were listening.*

**Speaking in Seminar Discussion.** The seminar works best if everyone participates in class discussion. That way, all perspectives are heard and shared, and everyone contributes and gains from the discussion. Some members of the class will be more comfortable than others speaking during class discussions. As the group gets to know each other, speaking will become easier for all. It is important that no one dominate the discussion. Everyone should practice listening and asking questions. It is equally important that those who might prefer to keep quiet make the extra effort to express their ideas. The seminar may need to discuss strategies to include everyone in the discussion. Do not hesitate to discuss your concerns about speaking in class with your instructor. You should know that the quality of participation in discussion is important. Someone who simply talks a lot, for example, will not do as well as someone who is prepared and thoughtful.

### ***Why do we grade participation?***

Think of your seminar as a learning community in which each member's views and contributions are valued. Not everyone will agree on interpretations of texts or even on what the important questions are. But everyone can learn to approach questions from multiple perspectives and to welcome new ideas. Remember, your instructor is a member of the learning community. They are teaching outside their areas of expertise, and like you, they are exploring new ground. They will not have the "right" answers to your questions, but they will help you explore questions and evaluate evidence. Everyone, faculty and students alike, is responsible for the success of the seminar.

It is essential for the success of the seminar that all perspectives are respected. People in the seminar will surely bring differing perspectives to the discussion and will likely disagree. If disagreements are articulated respectfully, and interruption is kept to a minimum, there is less chance that disagreements will be perceived as conflict and more chance that everyone will feel comfortable speaking in class.

**Preparing for class.** To be prepared for the seminar discussions, you need to do the reading *before* the class discussion. As you read, write in your book:

- Focus on identifying the author's major points and arguments. Finding and marking main points as you read is an invaluable study skill for this and other classes.
- Mark passages that catch your interest, surprise you, or make you angry, and then write notes in the margins so you can remember your responses. These can be starting points for your reading responses, essays, speeches and class discussion. Always come to class prepared to share a quote from the reading that has influenced your thinking or would serve as a starting point for class discussion.
- Comment in the margins about connections you see between what you're reading and other books we've read. You may find the topic for your final paper this way.
- Most important, write down the questions you have while you are reading. You can write your questions right in the book. Keeping track of your questions will make you a better reader and give you ideas for papers, presentations, and class discussion.

### Frank and Ernest



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## **WEEKLY ESSAYS**

During the semester, you will write weekly essays, which will become a written record of your understanding of and responses to the course texts. The essays may become the basis for your mid-term and final papers and your presentations.

**Assignment.** Write a weekly essay and keep all your essays together in a folder. Your instructor may tell you which option (or variation) is assigned. If not, each week choose one of the options below for your weekly essay.

Option 1: Write five questions raised by the current reading. Then choose the best (most interesting) question and respond to it in your essay. Reference the course text as you develop your response.

Option 2: Make three claims related to the current reading. Then choose the best one and support it. Refer to the text as you support your claim.

Option 3: Select a passage from the current reading that you think captures one of the author's main points or is especially meaningful to you.

- Briefly summarize the passage, restating the main ideas in the passage in your own words and interpreting the passage as you think the author would interpret it. (Be sure to give the page number.)
- Then give your reaction to the passage, telling what the passage means to you.
- Tip: Your summary and your reaction should be separate, not mixed together.

### **What is a "claim"?**

A claim *is*

- A statement reasonable, ethical people could legitimately disagree with.
- A position you are willing to support with evidence.

A claim *is not*

- A statement of fact. (The statement "Helena is the capital of Montana" is not a claim.)
- A statement of opinion without reasons and evidence. To make a claim, you must say why you think your idea is valid.

Essays will be collected (and returned) each week. Your essay must be typed. It must be at least one full page (double spaced) but it can be longer. Keep returned essays in a folder since you may be asked to revise some of them and use them in planning papers and speeches. Your instructor may specify one of the above essay assignments or may establish alternative assignments.

**Important Note.** *You may discuss your ideas with others, but the writing must be your own. Do not write your papers with anyone else. Your papers should be as individual as you are.*

## **MID-TERM AND FINAL PAPERS**

**Mid-term Paper.** For the mid-term paper, present and support a position (claim), drawing on at least two of the course texts. A claim is a statement about which other intelligent, ethical people could disagree. You should draw on your weekly essays, notes and class discussions to develop a claim of interest and explain why you believe your claim is valid. You must use the text you have selected to support your claim.

Be sure to consider arguments opposed to your claim and address them in your paper. Since a claim, by definition, is a statement about which people might disagree, you need to think about opposing arguments and about how you would respond to them.

Your paper should be 4-5 pages, double-spaced, typed. Hand in two copies. Put your name, date, course and section number on the first page. Don't forget to give your paper a title.

**Final Paper.** For the final paper (5-6 pages, double spaced), present and support a position, drawing on at least two of our course readings. The goal is for you to develop an interesting position, make connections between some of our readings, and argue your case with solid reasons and evidence from the texts.

### **Criteria for Evaluating the Mid-term and Final Papers:**

- Has a strong claim
- Supports the claim with reasoning and evidence from the text
- Suggests a solid understanding of the text being discussed
- Fairly considers opposing views and explains conclusions in light of opposing views
- Shows writer/speaker commitment (interest, engagement, care)
- Uses a clear, straight-forward style to communicate
- Cites sources
- Has few errors of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and meets the length requirement

### **Choosing a Topic and Presenting a Claim:**

You may choose a topic that involves your own strong feelings and opinions, or a topic that motivates or interests you. Look through past essays and notes for potential questions you can explore. Think about issues that have been discussed in class. Do any stand out in your mind as worthy of further investigation?

Your goal is to persuade your audience to see that your position has merit, even if they disagree.

One favorite strategy for effective intellectual argument is to take a question that seems to be answered by conventional wisdom ("everyone" agrees) and show that the question is by no means settled. This is essentially what Socrates did to the people who were thought to be wise.

**Suggestions for Writing the Mid-term and Final Papers.** Your paper should make a claim, and the goal of your writing should be to persuade your audience to open their minds and see that your claim has merit, even if they disagree. It is best to imagine an interested but skeptical audience, like the people in your seminar. They want to hear what you think, but they really want to know why you think it.

In order to persuade, you must have an arguable claim. That is, sane humans could legitimately disagree with you. A factual statement (something everyone agrees on) would not be a good choice for the focus of your paper. There's no point trying to persuade people if they already agree with you.

**Strategies for developing your argument.**

*Some people think . . . , but I think . . .* One favorite strategy is to examine a question that seems to be answered by conventional wisdom and show that the question is by no means settled. The form of the argument is something like "Many people think that fill in the blank , but I would argue that make a contradictory claim."

*Opposing views.* Another strategy is to begin with your own genuine response to a text or to questions raised in class. Think about issues that have been discussed in class. Do any stand out in your mind as worthy of further investigation? Take the time to really examine your opinion. Think of as many arguments as you can supporting your response, and more importantly, think of as many arguments as you can to refute your idea. Trying to refute your own conclusion is hard, but it's an effective way to test it and see if you really can defend your idea through a reasoned argument. See if you can get your classmates to help in this enterprise. If you can find someone who really disagrees with you, that person can help you clarify and articulate your own ideas. Keep an open mind and be prepared—you may find that you have to change your mind!

*Freewriting.* Many writers and thinkers find that freewriting is an excellent way to get going on any writing or speaking assignment. For many people, writing helps them think in new ways. Many people say, "I don't know what I think until I write it down." Writing can be a way of discovering what you think. To freewrite, simply start writing down all your ideas about your question or topic. Don't worry about spelling or organization. Just try to get as many ideas down as you can. Go off on tangents. Sometimes they turn out to be your best ideas. Then reread what you've written. Decide what the central or most interesting idea is. What question are you trying to answer? And what is your claim? Once you find your claim, you can think through what arguments you need to make to explain and support it.

**The Writing Center**

has tutors who will go over your draft with you and help you develop, organize, revise and learn to edit it.

The Writing Center is located in Wilson 1-108 and in Reneé Library. Call 994-5315 for an appointment.

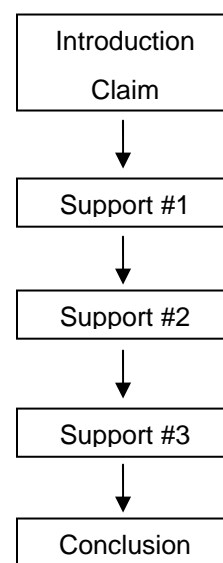
The Writing Center also has computers for you to use for writing papers.

**Strategies for organizing your argument.** Sometimes it is hard to know how to organize your ideas. The suggested form below is a simple way to organize a paper that makes a claim and supports it.

*Introduction.* Give an introduction to your claim. There are many strategies for introductions but the purpose is to get your audience interested in what you say and to give them the background they need to understand your claim. The audience needs to know why they should listen to you and you need to show why your topic is interesting or important. Sometimes this can be done by stating the conventional or opposing view: “Many people think . . . but a more reasonable view is . . .” Or “On first reading I thought . . . but now I see . . .” The introduction can be a summary of part of a text or a short quotation from the text followed by an interesting question. Or it could show how and why you became interested in your question. Usually the introduction concludes with a statement of your claim.

*Body.* The body of the paper, the longest part, should support your claim with reason and evidence. Often a summary, combined with interpretation of the text, is used as support. The body should answer the question “Why do you believe your claim is valid or a good answer to the question you asked?” It should be directed toward helping your audience agree with you, or at least helping them consider what you have to say. Think of an open-minded but skeptical audience. They will want good reasons, and they will ask themselves why they should agree with you, not in a hostile way, but in the spirit of critical thinking.

*Conclusion.* Every paper has an ending. You’ve already stated your claim and given your argument in the body, and in a short paper, there’s usually no need to summarize, but you can say why your argument is important or satisfying. You can restate your claim in a new way. You can define new and unanswered questions for further thinking. You can refer back to your introduction, commenting on it in the light of your argument. Or, you can end with your best supporting argument and not have a conclusion separate from the body.



**Strategies for revising your argument.** Write a draft of your paper and plan to revise it. Revision works best if you leave some time between drafting and revising. Then you can reread the draft critically and try to imagine what questions your audience will have. You can often strengthen your draft considerably by revising. As you reread your draft for revision, imagine an audience that will be asking, “I wonder why she thinks that?” If you ask yourself that question, you may get additional ways to develop your ideas and support your claim.

One of the most powerful tools for revising is *reading your draft out loud*. If you have never done this as part of the revision process, you will be amazed at how well this works. Don’t forget to proofread your paper and correct spelling and other errors.

### **Special Suggestions for the Final Paper**

- Think about what parts of the readings and course discussions have been particularly interesting, exciting, important, or challenging for you. What made you think of issues you had not considered before or made you consider them in a new way? Were there issues, discussions, or points raised that you felt strongly about, either agreeing or disagreeing? Have you been rethinking your opinions about certain issues? Rereading your essays may be inspirational here.
- As you develop your topic, challenge yourself to consider contrasting points of view. You may want to choose a topic that lets you rethink one of your own strongly held opinions or positions. In order to support your claim effectively, you need to take opposing views and arguments into consideration. Responding to the opposition helps you explore the complexities of many of the issues discussed in class and helps you show strong thinking in support of your own position. A strongly supported claim that does not consider opposing arguments and other points of view is not as convincing as one that is more thoroughly examined.
- As you develop and evaluate topics, think about how the different texts might shed light on your topic. Think about connections you see between the texts. Do several of them address the issue you are interested in? The central issues of the course -- how do we construct knowledge, how do we construct personal identity, and how do we function as members of a community -- are likely too broad for the focusing question in your paper, but they do connect the texts and can be used as tools for coming up with ideas.
- Once you zero in on a topic, develop a focusing issue question and a claim (that is your short answer to the question). This pair -- the central question and the claim answer -- are powerful tools for organizing your thinking and your paper. For many, this focus does not become evident until they have done some writing. Many writers freewrite everything they can think of about a topic, not worrying about focus or organization. Once they do this freewriting, they look for a central focus; then they can write in a more organized way.
- Reread the relevant portions of the texts. Think about them again. You will get more out of a second reading with focusing questions in mind. This is an excellent way to prepare for the final.
- Don't forget to reread, revise, and proofread your paper.

**Note on Citation.** People have ownership rights to their discoveries, ideas and words. They own them in the same sense that you own your stereo or car. You can use intellectual property that belongs to another, but only under strict ethical and legal guidelines. Most important for students writing college papers is giving proper credit to the owners of discoveries, ideas and writings. This is done through citation - - citing the source of a quotation, a summary or an idea. Citation gives credit where credit is due.

The goals in this course are to learn basic principles of citation, particularly when to cite, and to learn how to connect quotations, summaries, and paraphrases to your argument. In other classes knowing how to cite, using a particular style of citation correctly, may be very important. Since there are different formats for citation, always be sure you check with the instructor so that you know what format is required.

**You should cite the source of**

- direct quotations.
- summarized material, unless the material summarized is common knowledge.
- paraphrased material. A paraphrase is stating in your own words what another author has said. An illegal paraphrase (plugging synonyms into someone else's sentences) is considered plagiarism even if you cite the source.

**Example Using a Quotation:**

In his first statement to the jury, Socrates says, "I do not know what impression my accusers have made upon you, Athenians. But I do know that they nearly made me forget who I was, so persuasive were they" (Plato, *Apology*, pg. 21). In these very first words of defense, Socrates attempts to reveal the manipulative oratorical skills of his accusers.

**Example Using a Summary:**

In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates' first words to the jury state that he doesn't know how his accusers have affected the jury, but that from his point of view, they have created a false impression of who he is (pg. 21). In this opening statement, Socrates is trying to reveal the manipulative oratorical skills of his accusers.

**Example Using a Paraphrase:**

In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates says that although he doesn't know how the jury was affected by his accusers, they were so persuasive, they almost made him forget who he was (pg. 21). By making this statement, he attempts to reveal the manipulative oratorical skills of his accusers.

**Warning!** Failure to cite sources, that is, using someone's intellectual property unethically, is equivalent to theft of personal property. Using someone's ideas or words and claiming them as your own is plagiarism and can result in severe penalties such as a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in a course, and/or suspension from school.

Do not underestimate the seriousness of plagiarism or the consequences of academic dishonesty. See the Conduct Guidelines ([http://www2.montana.edu/policy/student\\_conduct/](http://www2.montana.edu/policy/student_conduct/)) for more information about MSU policies regarding plagiarism.

In the aforementioned summary and paraphrase examples, the work cited and the author are given in the introductory sentence. The page number is given in parentheses immediately after the quoted, summarized, or paraphrased material. If you do not mention the work you are citing in your text, as in the quotation example above, give the author's last name and page number in parentheses right after the cited material.

In a speech, there is usually no need to give your audience the page number, but you should tell them what the source is. You can use the words "quote" and "unquote" or "I quote from . . ." or "Plato writes and I quote . . ." to signal your audience that you are quoting directly.

### **Incorporating Other Authors' Ideas and Words in Your Own Work:**

These are rules of thumb. They work well most of the time, but use your judgment before following a rule mechanically.

- Introduce a reference to another thinker's work. Let the audience know why you are including this quote and where it comes from.
- Comment on the material you quote. Interpret it and connect it to your argument. Your audience may not interpret the quote the same way you do and they may not make the connection you want them to make. In other words, show how the quote supports your point. The same goes for a summary. Since you are making an argument, be sure to say how the summarized material relates to your point.
- Do not use quotations to speak for you. This is usually just plain bad style. Some student papers look like a collection of quotations with very little writing in between. What is important is your argument and how you use references to support your thinking. That means you have to spell out what you mean in your own words.

### **Why do we have writing and speaking assignments?**

These assignments will help you develop your writing and speaking skills and so help you succeed in all your courses. They aim to improve your ability to think and communicate effectively. The assignments focus on

- writing and speaking in order to learn,
- supporting your ideas with evidence and giving reasons for your conclusions,
- listening to arguments opposed to your own and understanding perspectives different from yours, and
- making your case effectively so that people consider your ideas, even if they disagree.

At the end of the semester, you should be a more confident and powerful writer, thinker, and speaker.

## **ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

During the semester, you will give a series of short presentations. These presentations focus on supporting a claim (or as it's sometimes called, "making a case", "making an argument", or "defending a position.") You will prepare for these presentations, but will not memorize or perform a set speech. Rather you will talk about your ideas and make your case as a continuation of your conversation with your seminar. There will often be time for your audience to ask questions. During the semester, you will gain skill and confidence speaking in class and thinking and speaking "on your feet," the most common type of oral presentation required in classes and professional situations.

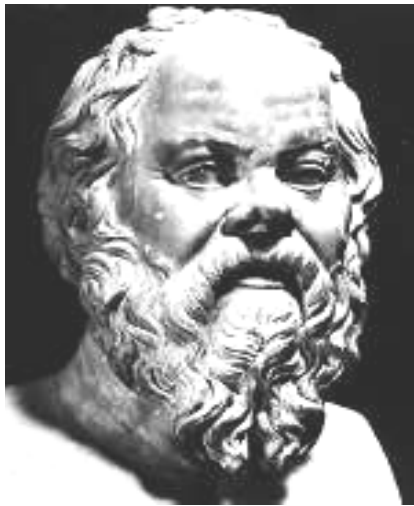
### **Assignments:**

1. Presentation on Socrates or Galileo
2. Mid-Term and Final Presentation
3. Additional Practice

**Presentation on Socrates or Galileo.** Early in the semester, you will make a short presentation in answer to a question about Socrates' trial and his decision not to escape his death sentence or Galileo's defense of the independence of science from religious authority. The purposes of the short presentation are to give each member of the seminar a chance to present their thinking about the *Apology*, *Crito* or "Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina," to practice using evidence from the text to support a claim, and to practice giving and receiving feedback on an oral presentation. The presentation should be two to three minutes long with an additional minute for questions from the audience.

### **Criteria for Evaluating the Presentation on Socrates or Galileo:**

- Has a strong claim
- Supports the claim with evidence from the text
- Fairly considers opposing views
- Shows speaker commitment (interest, engagement, care)
- Uses a clear, straight-forward style to communicate (speaks in a clear, audible voice, looks at the audience, keeps the audience's interest, and meets the time requirement)



**Mid-term and Final Presentations.** You will make a short presentation about your mid-term and final papers in answer to the question:

- “Why did you choose this topic?” and/or
- “What new ideas came to you while writing the paper?” and/or
- “Explain opposing views you considered in writing your paper.”

You should address your remarks specifically to the members of your seminar. You may comment on issues that have been raised in seminar discussions. Your instructor may allow you to use a note card or outline, but do not write out your presentation and do not read a written text. Your presentation should be a continuation of your conversation in the seminar. Seminar members may ask you questions about the ideas you present. The presentations should be two to three minutes long with an additional minute for questions from the audience.

**Criteria for Evaluating the Mid-Term and Final Presentations:**

- Suggests a thoughtful answer to the question(s) under discussion
- Shows speaker commitment (interest, engagement, care)
- Uses a clear, straight-forward style to communicate (speaks in a clear, audible voice, looks at the audience, keeps the audience’s interest, and meets the time requirement)

**SUGGESTIONS FOR ORAL PRESENTATIONS:**

What questions or concerns might your audience have about your claim? How can you respond? What is your purpose in giving the presentation? In other words, what do you want your audience to think or do as a result of your presentation? How can you help them see your point of view?

- Speak from notes or note cards; don’t read a paper.
- Don’t keep your head in your notes. Look up at the audience, make eye contact and talk to specific people. Your audience will be more engaged (and more sympathetic) if you look at and talk to them directly.
- Be well-prepared but do not memorize or read your presentation. You want to be thinking and engaged with your material while you deliver the speech. Use key-word notes or short phrases and try not to rely on them extensively.
- Practice your presentation at least *ten* times out loud before your in-class presentation.
- Practice stillness and body control: Plant your feet firmly. When you do *choose* to move or gesture, do so intentionally, to emphasize or highlight a specific point. Preparation is the most effective cure for nervousness and the surest path to confidence.
- Use conversational language and speak with enthusiasm.
- Project and enunciate. Open your mouth and speak up clearly with confidence. Don’t trail off or get softer at the end of sentences. A simple exercise for practicing enunciation: Put a pencil between your teeth toward the back of your mouth and try to speak so that your words are clear and intelligible. (Take the pencil out of your mouth before you give your speech in class.)
- Divide your audience into three sections; left, center, right. Center is your ‘power position.’ You want to begin and end your speech here. Throughout your presentation, make sure you alternate directing your comments toward each of the three sections.
- While you give the presentation, tune in to your audience. Are they listening? Are they interested? Experienced speakers are very good at this and can modify their presentation in response to how they read the audience.

- Contributed by CLS 101 Staff, Greg Owens and Lila Michael

**Additional Presentations.** As assigned by your instructor and at least once during the semester, you will make presentations on the following:

- Complete the statement “The most interesting thing I’ve read in today’s assigned reading is \_\_\_\_\_” and explain why you found it interesting.
- Select a passage from the reading that you think is most important to the author’s point and come to class prepared to read the passage aloud and explain why you made that choice.
- Select a passage from the reading that was most important to you and come to class prepared to read that passage aloud and explain why you made that choice.
- Make a claim about the reading and support it with evidence from the text.

### **SEMESTER PROJECT**

Students will receive the assignment for the semester project during the eighth week of semester. The goal of this project is for students to investigate at least one course theme and present it in a ‘non-traditional’ format. Successful projects will treat their subject matter thoroughly and at a level that is appropriate for college students.

### **FINAL DISCUSSION**

The final examination in this course is a 20 minute discussion with your instructor. It will be scheduled during finals week.

You may be asked to give a 1-2 minute introduction to the discussion, for example, by summarizing what you think you’ve accomplished or demonstrated in your final paper. You are likely to be asked follow-up questions about points in your paper. You may also be asked to explain how the course readings relate to your topic, or to respond to arguments opposed to your own.

The goal of the final discussion is to give your instructor a more complete understanding of your interpretations of the course readings, and of your ability to articulate your positions. Although a discussion of this kind is often called a “defense”, it is really a conversation about your ideas.

### **QUESTIONS??**

Talk to your instructor or contact the CLS 101US Assistant Director (Wilson Hall 2-205, 994-7805).