

## Tech Tip – Discussions

This tech tip is not so much “tech” as pedagogical and it has to do with Discussions. If you have discussions built into your course, then accreditors want to see that you are participating “regularly” in the discussions with students. This is also part of the Online Education Initiative rubric.

What does “regularly” mean? In your syllabus, when you explain to students how you will communicate with them and how frequently this communication will occur, make sure to include your discussion participation. For example, you could tell students in your syllabus:

*“I will be looking in on every discussion during the semester and posting at least once a week.”*

Or

*“I will be monitoring discussions and will post responses every Wednesday and Friday.”*

Or

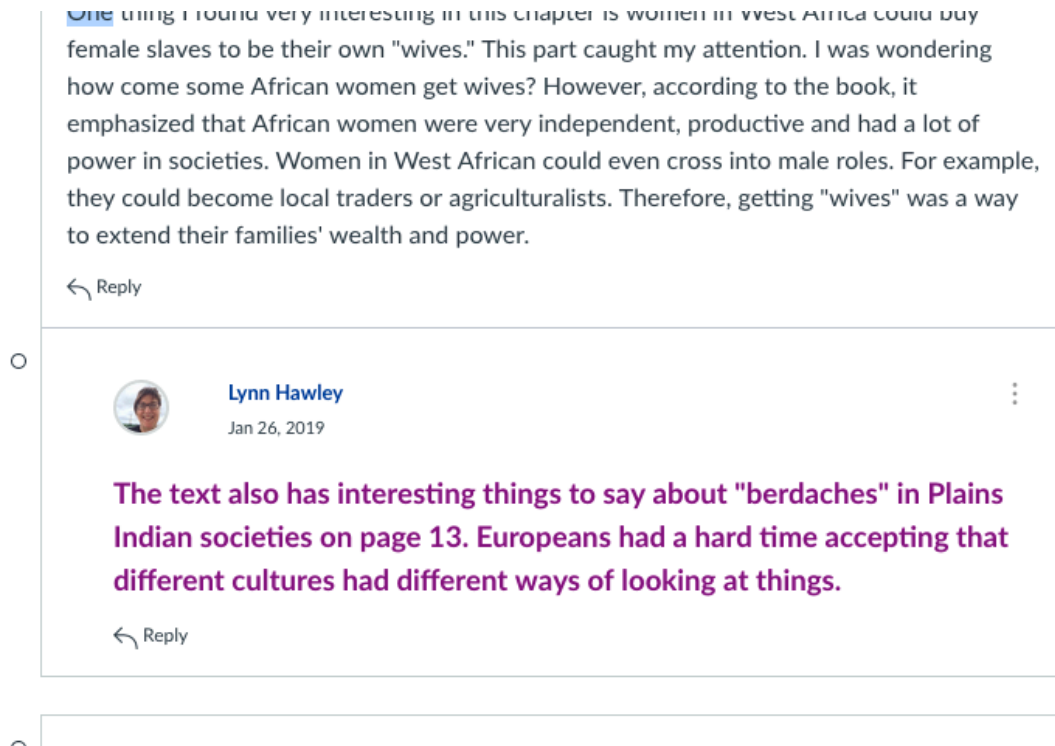
*“I post responses and questions in Discussions almost every day so be sure to check back into the Discussions during the week.”*

I tend to check into the discussions in my courses three times a week – right when the discussion opens so that students can see a response from me right away, sometime later in the week once more students have posted, and near the end of the Discussion to respond to some of the late posters.

However you do it, be consistent and stick to whatever you promised the students in the syllabus. Your responses to students should be substantive, responding specifically to what students posted, answering questions, providing additional information or re-directing the discussion if it’s gotten off track. This is one way to demonstrate “regular effective contact”.


## Discussion Tip

I want to acknowledge Deanna de Azevedo, who showed the Distance Education Committee some of her discussions at our last meeting. She uses a different font and color in her responses in Discussions so that students can clearly identify her contributions to the discussion. This is also helpful when you as the instructor return to a discussion where you have already posted some responses because it's easier to see where you left off the last time you were in the discussion. See example below:



One thing I found very interesting in this chapter is women in West Africa could buy female slaves to be their own "wives." This part caught my attention. I was wondering how come some African women get wives? However, according to the book, it emphasized that African women were very independent, productive and had a lot of power in societies. Women in West African could even cross into male roles. For example, they could become local traders or agriculturalists. Therefore, getting "wives" was a way to extend their families' wealth and power.

← Reply

 **Lynn Hawley**  
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**The text also has interesting things to say about "berdaches" in Plains Indian societies on page 13. Europeans had a hard time accepting that different cultures had different ways of looking at things.**

← Reply

I have made the response a different color and size so it is easily noticeable for both the students and myself. Keep in mind that there needs to be a lot of contrast between the background and the writing to meet accessibility standards. Bold is fine but not underlining.

## Question about Discussion Responses

A faculty member asked me if Canvas had the same function that exists in Etudes of blocking students from responding to a discussion topic. Many faculty members want students to participate in two stages in the discussions – post early in the week in response to the main discussion

topic and post later in the week in response to other students. This discussion set-up is easier to accomplish in Etudes since Canvas doesn't have a "block responses" function in Discussions.

One suggestion is to set the due date early in the week but the "accept" date later. For example, set the due date for Wednesday but the accept date for Saturday and let students know that any late posts will result in lower scores.