

CMSC 304 – Fall 2013

PARTICIPATION MINI-ASSIGNMENT

Handed out Wed 9/04, due Mon 9/16. Counts towards participation grade.

Each of your essays should be roughly a half-page to a page in standard single-space format (like this document), though of course you are welcome to write more if you have more to say. Generally speaking, I prefer more to-the-point, well organized, thoughtful commentary rather than rambling, space-filling, repetitive commentary. As always, content is the most important factor, but correct style and grammar will also be part of the grade.

1. Writing Effectively

Read Dr. dJ's Handy Writing Guide thoroughly. Write a short but cogent commentary on this document, including the following:

- Identify and discuss at least three of Dr. dJ's writing rules and/or editing symbols that you didn't know about, or (for the writing rules) that you think you don't always follow. If you always follow these writing rules, identify the three writing rules that you have seen violated most frequently (in formal print media; in online sources; in peer writing that you've read...)
- Discuss whether you plan to follow these rules, and how you will "retrain" yourself if needed.
- What do you think you need to work on the most in your own writing?

2. Classroom Discussions

Read "It's Time to Raise My Hand," by Harvard Graduate School of Education student Susan Chang. Reflect on how this column relates to your own experiences in classroom-based discussion, both with respect to your own participation and that of other students. Write a short essay on your thoughts about discussion-based classes.

- What other classes (if any) have you taken that were largely discussion-based? Was your experience positive or negative? What did you like or dislike about these classes, and what aspects of the class do you think worked or didn't work?
- Would you characterize yourself as highly participatory, highly non-participatory, or somewhere in the middle? What challenges have you personally experienced in classroom discussions?
- Are you looking forward to the discussions in this class, dreading them, or somewhere in between? What are your greatest hopes and concerns, and are they primarily about your own participation, the participation of the other students, or the way that the discussions will be facilitated by the instructor?