

Discussion & Reflection Preparation

**CPSC 383: Explorations in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning
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Jonathan Hudson, Ph.D
Associate Professor (Teaching)
Department of Computer Science
University of Calgary

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Requirements

For this course, you will be asked to write three reflections based on in-class discussions.

- Dates are **Sept. 6, Oct. 24, and Nov. 28**
- Reflections are due one week after the discussions

The discussions and reflections are worth 7+9+9% of your final grade.

Pre-reading

To prepare for the discussions, you will have to do some pre-reading from a list of options on D2L.

For this part, you just need to read your chosen articles and submit an annotated copy of the articles.

- Make sure these are your thoughts

This is due on the discussion date at 11:59 before class.

Discussion

For your in-class group discussions, you will be divided into groups of 5-6 students based on what material you chose for the prereading.

One of the most important skills you will learn from university is how to have good, constructive discussions. This is not the same as talking casually with your peers, and it requires some practice and preparation.

Discussion guidelines

- Come prepared with 2-3 key thoughts or questions from the pre-reading
 - Be prepared to answer the question “what stood out to you?”
- Start by writing everyone’s name down
- Recommend no open computers (unless you are using it only as a notebook)
- Open vs closed statements
- Don’t just summarize
- Try to help everyone get a chance to talk
- **Take notes** (on paper) for when you write up your reflection later

Reflection

Finally, you will be asked to write a reflection based on what you learned in the discussion and your thoughts afterwards.

These written reflections are due in the same D2L dropbox as your pre-reading, one week after the initial discussion.

The word limit on these is two pages, so you will have to be picky about what you choose to include.

- Better to pick fewer ideas and explore more deeply

Reflection

The point of a reflection is to help you think deeply and personally about a topic. You will need to make **judgements** about what is important/relevant to you.

It is not just an account of facts or what happened. It must include your own thoughts, ideas, how you felt about things, and how you might use this material in the future.

- Think carefully about what you can add to the discussion/reflection that is unique to your experience, not just generic surface-level opinions

Reflection

Be specific with your points! The purpose of the reflection is to help you think clearly about the material.

- What did you learn? What did your classmates contribute? Were there any interesting points? How did you feel about it?
- How did your opinion change after first reading the article, or after the discussion? (or why didn't it change?)
- What points stood out to you personally from the article and why? What will you remember or use in the future?

Reflective models

For your reflections, I recommend considering the **Schön Reflective Model**, which distinguishes between thoughts during and after the discussion.

What this means is that you need to consider your thoughts before, during, and after the discussion separately. You should be able to write about what you thought/felt at each of these stages and how they were different or the same.

Schon model

During the action (the learning event)

- What is the learning activity? How are you engaging with it?
- What did you do in the learning activity?
- You may want to take some notes as you go.

After the action

- How did you think the learning went? What is staying with you?
- Are there things you liked/thought were successful?
- Are there things you didn't like/thought could improve?
- What would you do differently next time?

Writing is hard

- Small steps are better than no steps
- Start early so you have time to reflect
- Keep a mind map or a scratch pad to work through ideas

“Writing is hard work and bad for the health.”

- E.B. White

In our class discussion about whether dogs are better than cats, opinions were divided. Some argued that dogs are more loyal, trainable, and provide a stronger sense of companionship, making them the superior pet. Others pointed out that cats are independent, low-maintenance, and still offer affection, which suits different lifestyles. A key point raised was how personality and preferences play a role in determining which pet is “better.” Personally, I found that the debate highlighted how both pets offer unique qualities, and ultimately, it comes down to what an individual values in a companion animal.

Being a cat owner myself, I went into the discussion pretty confident about my opinion that cats are the superior pet. I thought nobody could disagree with this claim after seeing my pictures of Floofy wearing her little sweater. Most of my classmates seemed to find this a persuasive argument, even though I know it is not a strictly logical one.

However, Claudia came prepared with an argument in favour of dogs. She pointed out that dogs are more useful to humans in that they can be trained to perform useful work, such as by helping blind people to get around or by sniffing out illegal drugs. While I see her point, I still think that being fluffy and cute is the best quality in a pet, so I am still mostly in favour of cats.

Maybe more cat photos will help Claudia come around. I'll try again next week.

Extra resources

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qol67VeE3ds&t=157s>
- <https://purdueglobalwriting.center/reflective-writing/>
- <https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/how-do-i-write-reflectively>

Next...multi-agent systems

Jonathan Hudson, Ph.D.
jwhudson@ucalgary.ca
<https://cspages.ucalgary.ca/~jwhudson/>



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