

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR EMAIL OBJECTIONS

## 1. WHY EMAIL OBJECTIONS?

The email objections are an important part of the course. They serve several purposes.

1. They give you an incentive to do the readings *before* class, so that during class you are able to follow the lecture more easily and to participate in the discussion more effectively.
2. They promote your critical thinking (by requiring you not just to *understand* the readings, but also to *object* to them).
3. They help you avoid falling behind in the course (since you have to send an email for *each* class).
4. They give a boost to your course grade: experience shows that most students do very well on the email objections.
5. They provide me with good objections to address in class.
6. They enable me to reward students who email good objections by praising these objections in class.
7. They enable me to involve shy students in discussions by asking them in class to elaborate on their emails.
8. They show me which parts of the readings give rise to misunderstandings and may thus require clarification in class.

## 2. HOW TO DO WELL ON THE EMAIL OBJECTIONS

- Attend class regularly: sometimes students who miss class email objections already addressed in class.
- Do the correct reading: it is surprising how often students email objections to the wrong reading.
- Do the *whole* reading: frequently students who do only part of the reading email objections addressed in another part.
- Object to a *specific passage* (give a *page number* and a quotation): objections to the reading "in general" are not enough.
- Object to a passage from *every* reading assigned for each class.
- Object to a position that the author of the reading *endorses*, not to a position that the author *reports* without endorsing.
- *Disagree* with the author: don't just comment on the reading or ask for clarification.
- *Support* your objection: give *reasons* why one should agree with you and not with the author.
- Formulate your objection *clearly, concisely* (at most 50 words/objection), and *respectfully* (don't ridicule the readings).
- Don't send the same objection again and again, even if the objection applies to more than one reading.
- Don't forget to include *your name* in the body of the email.
- Include the words "email objection" in the subject line of your email.
- Send the email to the correct address (mentioned in the Course Information handout).
- Send the email before the 3:00 a.m. deadline. (You may send it several days in advance if you wish, but it might not be read until the day on which it is due.)

## 3. HOW TO INTERPRET FEEDBACK ON THE EMAILS

- If your email is *satisfactory*, as a rule you will not get a reply to it. If your email is *unsatisfactory*, as a rule you will get a reply before class with a *number* (or numbers) explaining, according to the following table, why it is unsatisfactory. (In the table, "your objection" refers to the objection being evaluated; if your email contains multiple objections, the reply will contain at least one number after *every* objection that has a problem.)

Number	Reason why your email is unsatisfactory
0	Your email does not contain an objection (e.g., it just comments on the readings).
1	Your email contains an objection only to <i>some</i> (not to <i>all</i> ) assigned readings.
2	Your objection is on the wrong reading (look at the syllabus).
3	Your objection is not on a specific passage (or it is but you don't give a <i>page number</i> ).
4	Your objection is addressed in the reading or has already been addressed in the course.
5	Your objection is not supported by reasons: why should one agree with you and not with the author?
6	Your objection suggests confusion or a misunderstanding of the reading.
7	Your objection is formulated unclearly.
8	Your objection is formulated disrespectfully (e.g., it ridicules the reading).
9	Your objection is to a position that the author of the reading <i>reports</i> without <i>endorsing</i> .
10	Your objection exceeds the limit of 50 words.
11	You have already sent (essentially) the same objection in a previous email.
12	Your email was sent (to the correct address) after the 3:00 a.m. deadline.
13	Your email does not include your name or its subject line does not include the words "email objection".

- Resubmissions of (revised versions of) unsatisfactory emails are not accepted.
- Almost all of the above reasons should be self-explanatory. However, you will get more detailed feedback if you send an email requesting such feedback.
- The above may seem like a lot of requirements, but in my experience the great majority of students quickly learn how to send satisfactory emails and get scores corresponding to A or AB for email objections.