Discussions

You are receiving a grade for your contributions to discussions. This is uncomfortable for some of you as you are naturally quiet, but you need to work on contributing to the discussion.

Here are some pointers to help you receive full credit:

a. If you just sit and listen to the discussion, you have not shown you understood. In a graduate class, you must do more than be able to understand the article. You need to demonstrate your understanding. In part, that happens in the discussion.

b. Work to make yourself heard. If you were getting .1 points for each word you spoke, how would you score? While more words is not always better, you can't get a grade without any. It is important that you be heard.

c. I realize that when I control the discussion, you are at a disadvantage. I ask you about some obscure part of the article that you didn't understand. Of course, it would be wonderful if you understand everything perfectly. However, if you control the discussion you will be less likely to be asked about parts you hadn't thought about. Come to class prepared to direct the discussion. What was interesting? Were the results valid? What assumptions did they make? Think of topics that will encourage discussion. Think of follow up questions. Which is going to prompt more discussion:
   • How many agents were in each test?
   • When they are computing change in load, they don't appear to be looking at whether an agent can handle more. Is this valid? How much time would it take to make a better decision? Does this violate the concept of only using local information?

d. I hope you will feel free to ask if you don't understand something. It is a group effort. We will understand things better as a group than we do individually. However, it is best if you can take us a bit further. Instead of saying, "I don't understand the notation" say, "Normally they use delta to mean ... but in this context, it doesn't seem to fit."