

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**

**MBA PROGRAM**

**NEW PRODUCT AND SERVICE INNOVATION MANAGEMENT**

(draft dated 1/6/2022; subject to updates till 1/18/2022)

Course Number:	MKTG 5230
Pre-requisite:	MKTG 5115
Term:	Spring 2022
Instruction Mode:	Distance Learning (includes both <b>Synchronous</b> & <b>Asynchronous</b> online sessions)
Course starts on:	January 18
<b>Synchronous online sessions:</b>	<b>Jan 21 (6:00pm to 9:00pm) &amp; Jan 28 (6:00pm to 9:00pm)</b>
<b>Asynchronous online sessions:</b>	<b>Jan 22 (10:00am to 4:00pm) &amp; Jan 29 (10:00am to 4:00pm)</b>
Course ends on:	March 11
Instructor:	Dr. Girish Punj Professor of Marketing
E-mail:	<a href="mailto:Girish.Punj@uconn.edu">Girish.Punj@uconn.edu</a>
Office Hours:	By Appointment (using Cisco WebEx)

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

This course provides a framework and analytical tools for managing innovation based on best practices and research evidence. Students will learn how to enhance opportunities for innovation, how to identify ideas to pursue, how to integrate marketing and R&D in new product/service development, how to forecast sales, how to accelerate the new product process from design to commercialization, and how to make product investment decisions in both mature and emerging technologies under conditions of uncertainty. This course is directed at students preparing for positions in product management, product development and innovation, and consulting.

**INSTRUCTION MODE:**

HuskyCT (i.e., Blackboard) and Cisco WebEx will serve as the two online platforms for course delivery and instruction. I kindly request you to familiarize yourself with the various functionalities of Husky CT (e.g., Grade Center, Discussion Boards) and Cisco WebEx, if you are not already familiar with them. There are several resources available through UConn eCampus (<https://kb.ecampus.uconn.edu/>) that you can use to understand the various features of these two online platforms.

I will be available for consultation throughout the course by email. Please contact me only ***at my @uconn.edu email address*** (and not through HuskyCT Mail). I will respond to all emails within 1-2 business days and request you to extend me the same courtesy, when I send you an important

individual email or course-related announcement. As per university privacy guidelines, please contact me **only through your @uconn.edu email address**, as I will be unable to respond to communications sent to me from private (e.g., @gmail) or corporate email addresses due to security reasons.

The typical learning pattern will involve (1) thoroughly reviewing course materials posted on Husky CT, (2) working on course assignments that require a comprehensive understanding of the course materials, (3) submitting course assignments by the indicated deadlines, (4) reflecting on the course materials via thoughtful contributions to the discussion boards on Husky CT,

Time Commitment: The course carries the same standards and work expectations as a regular 14-week semester course, ***even though the content is being delivered over the course of seven weeks***. In accordance with university policy regarding credit hours, students should expect to spend a minimum of 9 hours per week for seven weeks on tasks related to this 3-credit course. If you are unable to make this time commitment between January 18 and March 11, 2022, you should re-consider your enrollment in the course.

You may view the university policy regarding credit hours at the following link:

<https://policy.uconn.edu/2012/08/22/credit-hour/>

## **REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS (ACADEMIC PRICE of \$47.20)**

A required **Course Pack** comprising of the following materials is to be purchased from **Harvard Business Publishing** for electronic delivery, through the web link shown below. ***An individual purchase of the course pack is required to receive a grade in the course.***

Harvard Manage Mentor  
**Harvard Manage Mentor: Innovation and Creativity**  
Harvard Business Publishing

Harvard Manage Mentor  
**Harvard Manage Mentor: Innovation Implementation**  
Harvard Business Publishing  
Core Curriculum

**Strategy Reading: Technology Strategy**  
Pai-Ling Yin

Simulation  
**Strategic Innovation Simulation: Back Bay Battery**  
Clayton M. Christensen, Willy Shih  
Case  
**TikTok and Kuaishou**

Guoli Chen; Zhigang Liu; Jianggan Li; Xinhe Zhuang

Register and purchase the required **Course Pack** using the following web link:

<https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/898644>

If you have not previously purchased materials from Harvard Business Publishing, you will need to register on their website before you can make the purchase listed above. ***Please complete your purchase by 11:00pm on January 18, 2022.***

### **REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS (NO COST):**

In addition to the required Course Pack for Harvard Business Publishing (described in the previous section), there are several no-cost course materials that will also be used in the course. These are available on our HuskyCT (i.e., Blackboard website) in the form of PPT and PDF files.

#### **Class Lectures (PPT files)**

New Product Development Fundamentals—Part1  
New Product Development Fundamentals—Part2  
Generating and Evaluating New Product Ideas  
Managing Creativity  
Defining Markets and Identifying Customer Needs  
Concept Selection and Testing  
Product Design and Positioning  
Product Design Product Development Economics and Managing Projects

#### **Useful Innovation Theory Related Articles (PDF's)**

New Research Busts Popular Myths About Innovation  
How to Measure How Well a Company Does on Innovation  
Corporate America's Most Underrated Innovation Strategy: 3M's 15% Rule  
CIO's Sound Off on Tech Buzzwords That Need to Go

#### **Useful Innovation Applications Related Articles (PDF's)**

Smart Device Push Brings IT and R&D Teams Together  
For Self-Driving Cars, the Hot New Technology Is Radar  
Are Videogames the Future of Remote Work?  
The People in This Medical Research Are Fake. The Innovations Are Real

### **OTHER COURSE MATERIALS:**

Listed below are some recommended textbooks that will significantly add to your learning experience in the course. Please consider purchasing or renting them from your preferred online bookstore, particularly if your current day job (or future career path) involves new product development and innovation. *High-achievers please take careful note of this not-to-be missed career advancement opportunity.*

Karl T. Ulrich and Steven D. Eppinger (2017)  
***Product Design and Development (5<sup>th</sup> edition)***  
McGraw-Hill Irwin

Paul Trott (2017)  
***Innovation Management and New Product Development (6<sup>th</sup> edition)***  
Prentice-Hall

Robert G. Cooper (2017)  
***Winning at New Products: Creating Value Through Innovation (5<sup>th</sup> edition)***  
Basic Books

A Wall Street Journal website that contains content particularly relevant to the course can be accessed at <http://on.wsj.com/innovationseries>

To keep up-to-date on future developments relating to innovation, I would encourage you subscribe to the Wall Street Journal (WSJ). As a UConn business student, you have free access to all WSJ digital products and can activate your subscription at the following web link:

<https://confluence.uconn.edu/busnit/how-to/activating-wall-street-journal-subscription>

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

Your final grade in the course will be based on the following course assignments, which are briefly described below. There is more ***information*** provided on each of assignments toward the end of the syllabus. ***Please make sure that you review these additional details before you start work on the assignments.***

Harvard Manage Mentor  
**Harvard Manage Mentor: Innovation and Creativity**  
Harvard Business Publishing

Each student will complete the online assignment **Harvard Manage Mentor: Innovation and Creativity** that is included in the Course Pack that you have purchased from Harvard Business Publishing. The online assignment is intended to expose you to the latest in business thinking from innovation management experts with interactive tools intended to help you develop the skills employers seek. ***This online assignment has to be completed during the asynchronous class session scheduled for January 22 (between 10:00am and 4:00pm.) There will be no***

*opportunity to make-up for the grade assigned to this in-class assignment if you do not complete it between the indicated times.*

Deliverable: No written report required. The grade for this course assignment will be based on the test score you received on the quiz that is part of the online assignment itself. You may take the quiz only once. Only your test score on the first attempt will be recorded.

Harvard Manage Mentor

**Harvard Manage Mentor: Innovation Implementation**

Harvard Business Publishing

Each student will complete the online assignment **Harvard Manage Mentor: Innovation Implementation** that is included in the Course Pack that you have purchased from Harvard Business Publishing. The online assignment is intended to expose you to the latest in business thinking from innovation management experts with interactive tools intended to help you develop the skills employers seek. *This online assignment has to be completed during the asynchronous class session scheduled for January 29 (between 10:00am and 4:00pm.) There will be no opportunity to make-up for the grade assigned to this in-class assignment if you do not complete it between the indicated times.*

Deliverable: No written report required. The grade for this course assignment will be based on the test score you received on the quiz that is part of the online assignment itself. You may take the quiz only once. Only your test score on the first attempt will be recorded.

**Strategic Innovation Simulation: Back Bay Battery**

Each student will play the web-based **Strategic Innovation Simulation: Back Bay Battery** that is included in the Course Pack that you have purchased from Harvard Business Publishing. The simulation is intended to provide you a real-world learning experience on how to make new product decisions and manage innovations under conditions of uncertainty.

The start and end dates during which the simulation will be available for play are listed in the “Schedule of Activities” section of the course outline. There will be no opportunity to play the simulation outside the indicated dates.

Deliverable: No written report required. The grade for this assignment will be based on two key financial metrics (see page 11 of the syllabus for details) that will be automatically recorded by the simulation itself as you play it. The web-based simulation must be completed *by 11:00pm on February 8, 2022.*

**Case: TikTok and Kuaishou**

Each student will analyze a comprehensive case that is included in the Course Pack that you have purchased from Harvard Business Publishing. The case assignment is intended to give you an

opportunity to apply the concepts, theories, and applications learned in the course to innovation challenges (or opportunities) being faced by a company.

Deliverable: A 6-8 page written report (double-spaced using a 12-point font) is required and must be uploaded to HuskyCT (Grade Center) as a *single* WORD or PDF file **by 11:00pm on February 18, 2022.**

### **New Product and Innovation Strategy Analysis of a Product Category**

Each student will research, analyze, and report on the new product and innovation strategies used by companies in a product (or service) category chosen from a list of product categories pre-specified by the instructor. Your analysis should include a synthesis or consolidation of the new product and innovation management related actions and decisions made by the top 2-3 companies in the chosen product category, supported by insights and knowledge acquired in this course.

Deliverable: A 6-8 page written report (double-spaced using a 12-point font) uploaded to HuskyCT (Grade Center) as a *single* WORD or PDF file **by 11:00pm on February 28, 2022.**

**Discussion Board Participation:** Due to the Distance Learning instructional mode of course delivery, you are required to actively engage and participate in the discussion forums on HuskyCT. There are two discussion boards for making your contributions, each for a different set of course materials.

**Useful Innovation Theory Related Articles:** use this forum for online discussions relating to the various readings that are included in the folder titled “**Useful Innovation Theory Related Articles**” on Husky CT.

**Useful Innovation Applications Related Articles:** use this forum for online discussions relating to the various readings that are included in the folders titled “**Useful Innovation Applications Related Articles**” on Husky CT.

Deliverable: Informative and thoughtful posts on the discussion boards **from January 22 to February 8. Please complete your discussion board contributions by 11:00pm on February 8, 2022**

### **EVALUATION AND GRADE DETERMINATION:**

The evaluation system is designed to encourage advance reading of all assigned material, regular attendance in class, active participation in class discussions, and the timely completion of all course assignments (described in the previous section).

The course assignments will be weighted as follows in determining your course grade:

Harvard Manage Mentor: Innovation and Creativity	6 percent
Harvard Manage Mentor: Innovation Implementation	9 percent
Strategic Innovation Simulation: Back Bay Battery	25 percent
Case: TikTok and Kuaishou	25 percent
New Product and Innovation Strategy Analysis of a Product Category	20 percent
Discussion Board Participation	15 percent

Letter grades (e.g., A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, etc.) will initially be assigned to individual grade components. Prior to final grade computation, the letter grades for all the individual components will be converted to numerical scores (A=93+, A- = 90-92, B+ =87-89, B=83-86, B- =80-82, C+ =77-79, C=73-76) so that they can be summed (i.e., added together) using the weighting scheme listed above, because no mathematical operations can be performed on alphabetical symbols.

Next, a frequency distribution of the overall numerical scores for the class will be computed and students will be given an overall class rank. The course grade (i.e., final letter grade) will then be based on the individual student's class rank, numerical score, and the statistical properties (i.e., mean, min, max, standard deviation) of the distribution of numerical scores for the class.

Interpretation of Grading Scale (as per UConn Graduate Catalog):

The letter "A" represents work of distinction.

The letter "B" represents work of good quality, as is expected of any successful graduate student.

The letter "C" represents work below the standard expected of graduate students.

## **SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES & ASSIGNMENTS:**

### **Activities for January 21 & 22**

#### **Review the following Class Lectures (PPT's) on HuskyCT**

New Product Development Fundamentals—Part1

New Product Development Fundamentals—Part2

Generating and Evaluating New Product Ideas

Managing Creativity

**Start and Complete the Harvard Manage Mentor: Innovation and Creativity online assignment (including the quiz at the end of it). You may take the quiz only once, even if you are offered the opportunity to take it a second time**

**Read 2-3 articles from the Useful Innovation Theory Related Articles (PDF's) folder on HuskyCT**

New Research Busts Popular Myths About Innovation  
How to Measure How Well a Company Does on Innovation  
Corporate America's Most Underrated Innovation Strategy: 3M's 15% Rule  
CIO's Sound Off on Tech Buzzwords That Need to Go

**Contribute to 2-3 discussion threads of your choice on the Discussion Board: Useful Innovation Theory Related Articles (PDF's) on HuskyCT**

**Activities for January 28 & 29**

**Review the following Class Lectures (PPT's) on HuskyCT**

Defining Markets and Identifying Customer Needs  
Concept Selection and Testing  
Product Design and Positioning  
Product Design Product Development Economics and Managing Projects

**Start and Complete the Harvard Manage Mentor: Innovation Implementation online assignment (including the quiz at the end of it). You may take the quiz only once, even if you are offered the opportunity to take it a second time**

**Read 2-3 articles from the Useful Innovation Applications Related Articles (PDF's) folder on HuskyCT**

Smart Device Push Brings IT and R&D Teams Together  
For Self-Driving Cars, the Hot New Technology Is Radar  
Are Videogames the Future of Remote Work?  
The People in This Medical Research Are Fake. The Innovations Are Real

**Contribute to 2-3 discussion threads of your choice on the Discussion Board: Useful Innovation Applications Related Articles (PDF's) on HuskyCT**

**Activities for January 30 to February 8**

**Start and Complete a *minimum of ten runs* of the Strategic Innovation Simulation: Back Bay Battery assignment by 11:00pm on February 8**

**Contribute to an additional 1-2 discussion threads of your choice on the Discussion Board: Useful Innovation Theory Related Articles (PDF's) by 11:00pm on February 8**

**Contribute to an additional 1-2 discussion threads of your choice on the Discussion Board: Useful Innovation Applications Related Articles (PDF's) by 11:00pm on February 8**

**Activities for February 9 to February 18**



**Read and Comprehend Technology Strategy article (by Pai-Ling Yin) that is included in the Course Pak**

**Start and Complete Work on the Case: TikTok and Kuaishou assignment by 11:00pm on February 18**

**Activities for February 19 to February 28**

**Read and Comprehend Technology Strategy article (by Pai-Ling Yin) that is included in the Course Pak**

**Start and Complete Work on the New Product and Innovation Strategy Analysis of a Product Category assignment by 11:00pm on February 28**

**COURSE POLICIES:**

**Professional Integrity:** Students in this course are expected to abide by the highest standards of ethics and personal integrity, and to adhere to all university policies regarding academic honesty. Academic misconduct can result in a failing grade for the course. A student who knowingly assists another student in committing an act of academic misconduct shall be equally accountable for the violation.

Issues of academic misconduct are covered in The Student Code, Part IV: Student Conduct Policies and in Appendix A. (see <http://community.uconn.edu/the-student-code/>) and on the UConn Policy & Procedures website (see <https://policy.uconn.edu/2014/04/11/policy-on-scholarly-integrity-in-graduate-education-and-research/>)

**Student Authentication:** The University of Connecticut is required to verify the identity of students who participate in distance learning or online courses and to establish that students who register in these courses are the same students who participate in and complete the course activities and assessments to receive academic credit.

Verification and authentication of student identity in this course will include (1) the use of HuskyCT as the primary repository and access point for course content, assessment, and activities, (2) student use of their NetID and password to securely access course content/assignments, and (3) confirmation of student identity via official UConn photo in StudentAdmin.

**Course Communications:** Important course announcements will be sent to your official @uconn.edu e-mail address only. You are expected to comply with the instructions in these announcements in a timely manner (i.e., in 1-2 business days).

## STRATEGIC INNOVATION SIMULATION: BACK BAY BATTERY

### Assignment:

The purpose of the simulation is to apply innovation and product development concepts to a real-world scenario that involves making R&D allocation decisions for two different technologies in five different market segments over ten simulated years. One of these technologies is a “sustaining” technology while the other is a “disruptive” technology.

This online simulation enables you to assume the role of a president at Back Bay Battery Company, which faces the dilemma of balancing a portfolio of investment strategies across products in the rechargeable battery category. You must manage R&D investment tradeoffs between sustaining investment in the unit's existing battery business versus investing in a new, potentially disruptive battery technology. You must also decide which market opportunities to pursue, each of which offers differing short- and long-term payoff prospects. You manage the investment portfolios over ten simulated years. During this period, you will have to address a number of challenges including timing and level of investment across both mature and new businesses, choices regarding market opportunities and inherent product performance characteristics, requirements to meet constraining financial objectives and constant trade-offs between investment options.

### Timeline:

The Strategic Innovation Simulation: Back Bay Battery will open for play on Jan 29 (11:00pm). A **minimum of ten runs** of the simulation are required and must be completed between Jan 29 (11:00pm) and Feb 8 (11:00pm). You may make up to a *maximum of twenty runs* during the same period. ***Each run of the simulation consists of ten simulated years and requires investment decisions to be made during each of those years.*** In other words, if you play only the **minimum of ten runs**, you still must make decisions over **100 simulated years** (10 runs x 10 simulated years in each run = 100 simulated years spread across 10 runs). ***Each run is independent of the run that precedes it or follows it.***

### Helpful Hints:

The best way to approach investments in both the disruptive (SC: supercapacitor) and sustaining (AGM: absorbed glass mat) technology is to seek to balance the twin goals of maintaining a healthy level of cumulative profit (so that funds are available to the company to invest in the disruptive technology), while also attempting to grow the disruptive technology (because that is where the future profit for the company is going to come from). If you focus too much in the first goal, you will do poorly on the second, and vice-versa. Hence, the objective is to pay attention to both goals and use a thoughtful approach to how the investments in the two technologies are to be made over the course of the simulation period.

Best opportunities for new products are not visible early on. New applications can appear unattractive, but often represent the best long-term opportunities. Timing and level of R&D spending is difficult to gauge. Assessing emerging market opportunities is also difficult using standard approaches. Balancing dual requirements for simultaneously investing in core business and innovation is challenging, but critical to success.

**Deliverable:**

No written report required. The grade for this assignment will be based on two key financial metrics that will be automatically recorded by the simulation itself as you play it. These measures represent a successful transition from the sustaining technology (AGM) to the disruptive technology (SC), which is the goal of the simulation.

***Deadline: The simulation will close for play on February 8 (11:00pm), 2022 at which point no additional play will be possible.***

**Grading Criteria:** Your performance will be evaluated based on two key financial measures that represent a successful transition from the sustaining technology (AGM) to the disruptive technology (SC). These two measures are (1) cumulative level of profit, and (2) profit growth rate for the disruptive technology (SC). These measures are available to you for each of the simulation runs you make. Your best performance across all your runs (minimum=10 runs; maximum=20 runs) will be used to determine your grade for this assignment.

## **TIKTOK and KUAISHOU: A Tale of Two Short-Video Sharing Apps from China to the Globe**

### **Assignment:**

Short videos are the new trend in entertainment and social networking. TikTok is the undisputed leader of short video-sharing apps. Less than four years after it launched in China, TikTok shot to global prominence. In 2020-21, despite a challenging geopolitical context, it maintained strong growth momentum to become the world's most-downloaded, best-rated, highest-earning app. Kuaishou is TikTok's strongest domestic competitor. Like TikTok, it began to expand overseas in mid-2017. As the two companies go head-to-head in China and globally, their products and strategies are converging. The case compares their respective strategic positions, operations, and development. It reveals the success story behind TikTok's exponential growth and expansion, the emergence of the short-video industry, the parent company ByteDance, and its current and future challenges. The purpose of the case assignment is to provide you an opportunity to bring together the concepts, theories, and applications learned in the course.

### **Helpful Hints:**

No additional research on TikTok or Kuaishou is expected. Base your analysis solely on the information provided in the case (including its 15 exhibits). Use evidence-based arguments that apply the concepts and theories learnt in the course to the data and the facts mentioned in the case. Do not base your analysis on a Google search of the companies depicted in the case and/or your personal experience with TikTok.

### **Deliverable:**

A 6-8 page written report (double-spaced using a 12-point font) in the form of a *narrative* that describes your analysis. Create section and sub-section headings as appropriate to structure your report and to facilitate writing.

***Deadline: Please submit your written report on HuskyCT (Grade Center) by 11:00pm on February 18, 2022.***

### **Grading Criteria:**

Demonstrated ability to apply concepts and theories learned in the course to provide specific (and unambiguous) answers to the four questions listed below, supported by logical arguments based on the data (and facts) provided in the **TikTok and Kuaishou** case and specific concepts from the **Technology Strategy** article that is part of the Course Pack.

- (1) What is the underlying economic logic of video-sharing apps? How is value created and captured by a platform business?
- (2) What are TikTok's competitive advantages in relation to Kuaishou?

- (3) How rapidly should TikTok scale its monetization model outside of China?
- (4) How should TikTok respond to geopolitical risks?

[Negative points for reports that hedge (i.e., dodge) providing specific answers to the above four questions; use loosely formed and speculative arguments; base analysis on personal experience or a Google search; do not maintain a logical flow through the various sections and sub-sections of the narrative; and are poorly written]

## NEW PRODUCT AND INNOVATION STRATEGY ANALYSIS OF A PRODUCT (or SERVICE) CATEGORY

**Assignment:** To research, analyze, and report on the new product and innovation strategies used by the **top 2-3 companies** in a product (or service) category chosen from the list of product categories below. The analysis must go beyond the mere reporting of new product introductions or innovations in the category. Instead, it should include a synthesis or consolidation of the innovation related actions and decisions of firms, supported by insights and knowledge acquired in this course.

Factory Automation & Industrial Robots  
3-D Printing  
Autonomous & Self-driving Vehicles  
Personal Digital Assistants & Wearables  
Home Automation & Smart Appliances  
Virtual & Augmented Reality

### Helpful Hints:

Use **business reference sources** from the UConn Library Databases titled **Business Source Complete**, **ABI/Inform Complete**, and **Factiva** for your research. They can be accessed through the following link:

<https://guides.lib.uconn.edu/az.php?s=116317>

**Deliverable:** A 6-8 page written report (double-spaced using a 12-point font) in the form of a *narrative* that describes your analysis. Create section and sub-section headings as appropriate to structure your report and to facilitate writing.

***Deadline: Please submit your written report on HuskyCT (Grade Center) by 11:00pm on February 28, 2022***

### Grading Criteria:

Demonstrated ability to apply concepts and theories learned in the course to analyze the new product and innovation strategies used by the **top 2-3 companies** in the selected product (or service category). Be sure to include specific concepts from the **Technology Strategy** article that is part of the Course Pack in your analysis.

[Negative points for reports that use loosely formed speculative arguments; base analysis on personal experience or a Google search rather than **business reference sources**; do not maintain a logical flow through the various sections and sub-sections of the narrative and are poorly written]

## DISCUSSION BOARDS

The intention of the online discussions is to encourage informative and thoughtful exchanges about course-related topics that increase your knowledge of those topics. The *optimal length* for a thoughtful and informative post is between 50-100 words. When responding to others' posts, *do not* merely state your agreement or disagreement with somebody else's post. Instead, justify and support your opinion with concepts and theories being learned in the course. Draw on facts, examples, and other forms of evidence to further the discussion. ***The instructor reserves the right to delete posts that do not conform to the above guidelines and/or merely contribute to discussion board "clutter."***

There are two discussion boards for making your contributions, each for a different set of course materials.

**Discussion Board (Useful Innovation Theory Related Articles):** use this forum for online discussions relating to the various readings that are included in the folder titled "Useful Innovation Theory Related Articles" on Husky CT.

**Discussion Board (Useful Innovation Applications Related Articles):** use this forum for online discussions relating to the various readings that are included in the folders titled "Useful Innovation Applications Related Articles" on Husky CT.

***Deadline: Please complete your discussion board contributions by 11:00pm on February 8, 2022***

### Grading Criteria for Discussion Boards:

	Below Expectations (B to B+)	Approaches Expectations (A-)	Meets Expectations (A)
Quality of Contribution	Posts are marginal responses that merely express opinions (e.g., "I agree") and add little to the discussion.	Posts attempt to add meaningfully to the discussion but are overly general or include some irrelevant/off-topic information.	High-quality posts that add meaningfully to the discussion by adding new ideas or perspectives, thereby furthering the conversation.
Evidence of Understanding of Course Material	Posts reflect a poor understanding of assigned readings and make no connections to related course concepts and theories.	Posts only reflect a basic understanding of assigned readings and make marginal connections to related course concepts and theories.	Posts reflect a detailed understanding of assigned readings and make strong connections to related course concepts and theories.