Odysseys2sense is an anonymous web forum in which your power and influence are determined by how thought-provoking, accurate, and civil other players rate your contributions.

What's an Odyssey?

The Odyssey is an epic Greek story about Odysseus, a mythic hero known for his rationality and inquiring mind as well as for his patience, courage, and prowess.

Your Odyssey involves multiple **challenges**. To meet a challenge successfully requires you to think critically, ask questions, take risks, and demonstrate patience and expertise.

How do you gain power and influence?

Each discussion of a challenge looks like contributions to an online forum, plus reports on your power. You gain a bit of power merely by contributing to the discussion. You gain much more power if the other players rate your **contributions** highly. In turn, your power affects how much influence your ratings have on the scores of other players.

What are contributions?

Contributions are comments.
All contributions are anonymous.
Each contribution has a unique ID #.
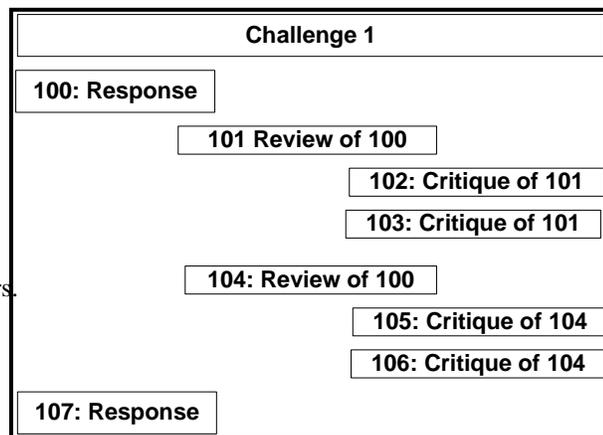You can make three kinds of contributions:

* **Response** to the challenge.
* **Review** the responses of others.
* **Critique** reviews and critiques of others.

See the example under Challenge 1.
Responses are limited to one per challenge.
Reviews and **critiques** are not limited.
Reviews and **critiques** include ratings.

Challenge 1
100: Response
101 Review of 100
102: Critique of 101
103: Critique of 101
104: Review of 100
105: Critique of 104
106: Critique of 104
107: Response

How are contributions rated?

Ratings depend on whether or not the contribution is a **response**.

Responses are rated on a simple four-point scale:

* 1 point: doesn't answer the given question, solve the problem, or make a clear claim
* 2 points: answers the question, solves the problem, makes a clear claim
* 3 points: same as above, but also explains the solution or defends the claim well
* 4 points: same as with 3 points, but also goes an extra step: gives a second approach, poses good extension questions, etc.

Every rating of a **response** involves a score between 1 and 4 inclusive. Only you (and the Odyssey administrator) can see the overall score for a given response. That overall score is determined from the ratings that others give your response.

Reviews and critiques are rated between -2 and + 2 on three different scales using the F-T-C criteria:

* F: Is it factual or accurate?
* T: Is it thought-provoking or helpful?
* C: Is it civil?

If contributions are anonymous, what motivation is there to be civil?

Uncivil contributions get low ratings from the other players and eventually are not displayed. Their authors lose power and influence. Players may also give low ratings to contributions that cite the author's personal experience or cite individual cases instead of general facts to support claims.

How do rating, score and power differ?

Here's the simplified version:

- Rating: an evaluation given by another player (via sliders) for a particular contribution.
- Score: an overall evaluation of a contribution based on all the ratings given by other players weighted by their power.
- Power: a summary of the scores on all your contributions plus points for the total number of entries (responses, reviews and critiques) that you made.

It's actually somewhat more complex:

- Suppose you make an entry, and player A comes along and rates your entry very low. But then suppose other players give very low ratings to player A's criticism of your entry. In that case player A's negative influence over your score diminishes and your score increases.

How does Odyssey Work?

1) It's a sequence of challenges.
2) You **respond** to each challenge without knowing how others have responded.
3) Before your response is recorded, you **review** and rate responses by a few others.
4) After your response and reviews are recorded, you can respond and critique without restriction.
5) You can critique all reviews based on your evaluation of their accuracy, helpfulness, and civility.
6) You earn power depending on how highly the other participants rate your contributions.
7) The higher your power, the more weight your ratings carry.
8) All contributions are anonymous.
9) Contributions that get low ratings on civility disappear.
10) Compare your power to the "Best Player Power" for this Odyssey. See how close you are.

What else does one need to know to participate in Odyssey?

1) Post your response to every challenge. Failing to do so is the quickest way to lower your power. To post your response to a challenge, select the challenge and select the "Compose a Response" button located immediately below the challenge.

2) Post the required reviews of other people's responses immediately after you submit your response. This is required by the system before your response is actually entered into the system. If you fail to review the responses of others, the system actually discards your response so you have to redo it. To enter your reviews, select the "Compose Review of 9999" button below the associated response.

3) Post your response early. This improves the chances that others will comment on your response.

4) Return to Odyssey periodically to critique the comments of others. Definitely review comments on your postings. Defend yourself if necessary; acknowledging a mistake if appropriate. In all cases, more critiques tend to increase your power a bit.

5) Know how to use the "Compose Response" and "Compose Review" buttons readily seen in the "Collapse All" mode and the "Compose Critique" button seen only in the "Expand All" mode.

6) Know how to use the three command buttons (located in the right column, below REFRESH):
   - Preferences (responses with fewest reviews first, chronological order, my contributions first).
   - Expand All (to see and make responses, reviews *and critiques* connected with a given challenge)
   - Collapse All (to see and make *just* the responses and reviews for a given challenge
   Use "My contributions first" to see what others are saying about you.

How do you get to Odyssey?

To play, go to Odysseys2sense.com or to http://ljcopes.com/Odysseys/V6.2/splash.php
Sign up and Log in. Select "Schield: Augsburg Statistical Literacy Fall 2010"

SAMPLE ODYSSEY CHALLENGE:
You're shopping for a house. You find one you like, but you're concerned about the neighborhood, which appears pretty run-down. Your real estate agent tries to assure you that property values in that neighborhood average $540,000.   From what you know about averages, what do you think of this claim?

> **Response 1 to challenge:** Our textbook says that house prices are a classic example of how average [means] can be misleading, because they're so affected by outliers. For example, a very expensive house somewhere in the neighborhood might bring up the mean even if it's surrounded by low-valued houses. It says that the median is a more accurate statistic for measuring averages in this situation. I'm wondering why the median isn't affected by outliers so much. And what a rule is for deciding when to use the mean and when to use the median.

> > **Review of response 1:** Rating 4 (1: default; 2: acceptable; 3: explains; 4: connects or asks extension question)   I like this response. It answers the question well, elaborates on the answer, and asks some good questions. One place it might have gone further was in talking about property values. The property being valued might include not just houses but schools and other expensive buildings in a neighborhood of run-down houses.

> **Response 2 to challenge:** Your agent is a liar. Fire him or her.

> > **Review of response 2:** Rating 1   You haven't really critiqued the claim, as requested.

> > > **Critique of review:** Rating (A: 2; H: -2; C:0) (Rated from -2 to +2 on Accuracy, Helpfulness, and Civility) I agree with the rating of 1, but don't find this review helpful. Can you be more specific about what a critique would consist of?

> > **Review of response 2.** Rating 1.3. Could it be that the agent is telling the truth? A multi-million dollar house on the edge of the 'hood might bring up the average.

> > > **Critique of review.** Rating A -2, H -2, C 2   This is pretty stupid. There aren't multi-million dollar houses on the edge of 'hoods.

> > > > **Critique of critique:** Rating A -2, C -2, H -2. I disagree with your rating, because there could be such a house. I don't find your critique helpful, and I don't think it's civil to call something "stupid." I suspect you could be more helpful if you thought about how outliers affect means.

> > > **Critique of review:** Rating A 2, H 2, C 2. I think it's an interesting idea. We saw in class that an outlier might change the average dramatically, if "average" means "mean." So maybe you as a buyer should ask about the median house value in the neighborhood.

Process of play:
- Enter a response to the challenge; after you press *Continue*, you cannot change it.
- Before your response will be saved, you must review other responses. Use the rating criteria for responses and offer comments that in turn will be rated on accuracy, helpfulness, and civility.
- After you press *Save all*, you can see the entire conversation about this challenge. You can review other responses and can critique others' reviews and critiques.
- Your power for game (Odyssey) depends on how other players rate your contributions.
- Ratings are weighted according to the contributor's power.
- Your goal is to make responses that other players, especially those who themselves have played successfully, will rate as well-explained and having good connections or extension questions, and to make reviews and critiques that other players will rate as accurate and helpful and civil.
- Odysseys can be set up for lots of purposes—by media, politicians, pollsters, writers, and educators. For example, an author can set up one or more Odysseys to accompany a book. The desire to gain power in challenges can motivate studying the book carefully.
- Unlike in other forums, all contributions appear anonymously. Each response has a score, based on the weighted ratings given in the conversation induced by that response, but the score is visible only to the author of the response and to the Odyssey administrator.
- The Odyssey administrator may control access to the Odyssey, and may require that players give their real names—say if a course grade depends on scores and power earned in a course Odyssey.