Plan ahead.

- Know that it’s hard for everyone.
- Organize your thoughts on the readings in advance, and come in with three questions or comments already prepared. You probably won’t use all three, but at least one should come up during the discussion.
- Know that it’s okay to ask your professor or TA for guidance. This does not mean asking for the lesson plan in advance, but asking what the discussion leader thinks is the most important part of the readings is not only okay, it’s often encouraged! (In fact, this could be a great question to bring into office hours.)

Be present.

- Listen to the conversation. Most of class participation is listening and understanding what others are saying.
- If you have an idea while a classmate is speaking, write it down quickly, then keep listening. Making notes for yourself and relying on those when you speak is absolutely fine – but don’t let them distract you from the conversation at hand.

Be real.

- Know that not every contribution has to be worthy of a five-page essay. Don’t say things just for the sake of saying them, but if you have a good idea that isn’t fully developed, it’s perfectly okay to talk it out with your classmates. In fact, that’s what discussion is for!
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions. If you’re confused, odds are good that someone else is, too, so think of asking as public service.
- Don’t be afraid to disagree. Don’t be disagreeable, but recognize that the most productive discussions are those in which different perspectives are brought in and debated.
- Know that it’s okay to gently shift the topic if you have an idea that you think is worth sharing. (If it’s more than a small shift, try a disclaimer: “This comment is actually going to go in a bit of a different direction – are we ready to shift gears?”)