Frameworks for Collaborative Online Discussions

Goals for constructing Frameworks:
1. To create a dialogic space for reflective interactions.
2. To create an authentic learning community in which participants actively build on each other’s ideas.

Framework 1: Exploring difference (or contradictions) within a dialogic space for reflection.¹
Students can construct personal and unique mental models by exploring differences through dialogue situated in specific contexts. Moreover, responding to new challenges through thought and reflection from different viewpoints fosters critique, insight and understanding.

Example responses to students’ posts:
“You’ve described how your thinking/position on X has changed. What influenced that change?”
“What assumptions are we making about X? How would our interpretation be different with an alternate set of assumptions?”
“What don’t we know about X, and how might that help us consider this issue another way?”

Framework 2: Constructing meaning through chained sequences of questioning and responding, and chained lines of thinking and enquiry².
Meaning-making arises through the exchange of ideas and the negotiation of new meanings in accordance with others’ perspectives³. By commenting, questioning and building on each other’s ideas, instructors and learners construct new knowledge.

Example responses to students’ posts:
“What additional evidence is there to support your thinking about X?”
“What assumptions are we making about X? How would our interpretation be different with an alternate set of assumptions?”
“What don’t we know about X, and how might that help us consider this issue another way?”
“What would happen if...?”

Framework 3: Clarifying meaning through connected series of commenting, questioning and reasoning.
Exchanging perspectives and interpretations allows students to construct knowledge through exploration and clarification of both understandings and misunderstandings.

Example responses to students’ posts:
“Your point about X is not clear to me. Can you articulate it another way?”
“Can you follow up with an example of X, to clarify your point?”
“How does your interpretation of X relate to ...?”
“How else might you interpret X?”

¹ Bakhtin (1981); Wegerif et al. (2010)
² Bakhtin (1986); Alexander (2008)
³ Rogoff (1990)