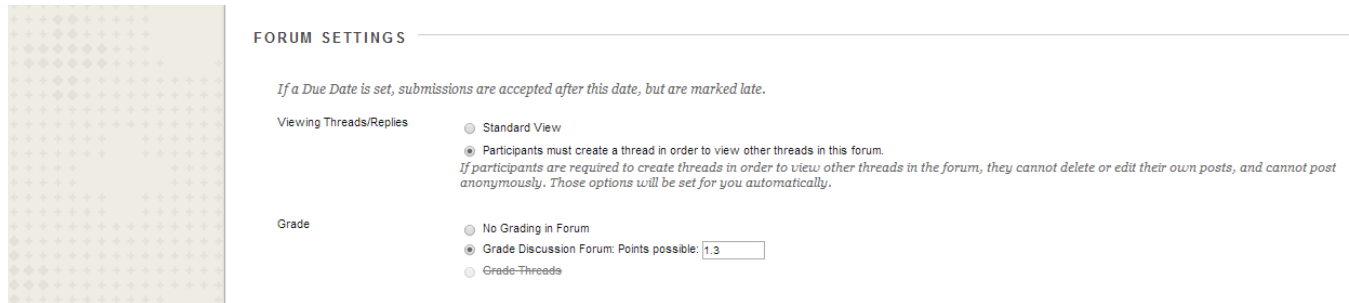


Role Change:

- ❖ In an in-person lecture class, I am the professor, the medium through which lecture and discussion intertwine and are inextricably linked in time, space and medium
- ❖ In an in-person class, I am a facilitator of self-directed learning; lecture and discussion occur separately in time, space and medium
 - It's a very different, and at times, uncomfortable role change

❖ Which best practices am I using here?

- 1. Requiring discussion regularly. The research shows different things on exactly how often, but I think 7 is a good high end benchmark. This comes out to every week and a half when you don't include the weeks with midterm and paper due.
- 2. Providing a specific point breakdown for original post and response post. Making them worth points is probably the most important of these.
- 3. Providing guidelines on what constitutes a good and bad post.
 - Improvement alert: Might want to include examples of a good and bad post directly in the assignment or syllabus.
 - Improvement alert: Might want to use Blackboard rubrics for grading the original posts.
- 4. Providing best practices and etiquette guidelines in the syllabus so they are aware of appropriate online behavior.
 - Improvement alert: I provide links and discuss them in person at orientation or in the intro video. You might want to include them directly in your syllabus.
- 5. Providing specific, narrow but open-ended questions for the students to answer, instead of content-based questions like "what is the correct answer?".
- 6. Having a firm deadline for when all posts are due. I am serious in that I do not give points for any posts created after the deadline.
 - Problematizing alert 1: I used to have them due by midnight and allow them to read posts before they posted their own original posts. For some students, this was fine. For students who weren't putting in the work, it had the effect of allowing them to "copy" the content of prior posts and get credit. This meant that I had a ton of similar threads (sometimes with incorrect information) and unstimulating discussions.
 - Solution alert 1: I set it so no student can see any posts before they create their own original post (see below for screenshot of this setting). They are not able to delete or edit their post once created (which I warn them about) so I tell them not to create a decoy post just to get access to other posts. I also tell them if they make a mistake and want me to edit their post to email me and I will do so. This setting forces them to at least create their own original post.
 - Problematizing alert 2: Solution 1 above meant that students were waiting longer and longer to post. So discussions were being pushed off to 5pm and later to really get started. For students with busy schedules, this can affect their ability to post response posts.
 - Solution alert 2: I am trying out a 9pm deadline this semester. I think this will move up the discussion flurry to earlier in the evening when other students and I can participate more fully.



- 7. Check in frequently. Over-participation seems to kill the discussion according to the research, but leaving them to their own devices kills the discussion too.
 - Sometimes, misinformation gets started on one post and can spread to others.
 - Also, since I am dealing with contentious events, rude, difficult, insensitive, or even religiously (racially, ethnically, gender, or class) discriminatory comments can be made. I tell my students that I will edit or delete any posts that make an unsafe learning environment, which includes discriminatory comments. I follow through on that.
 - Improvement alert: I'm still figuring out how to best participate and contribute.
- 8. Don't always answer questions or correct misinformation. Sometimes, ask questions to see if other students answer. This can be hard, but once you accept it, you start to really grasp the notion of professor versus facilitator.
- 9. Grade harshly, especially in the beginning. Do not give full points for a bad answer. Give full points for a good answer and partial credit (or even none) for a bad answer. Give no points for missing posts. I will often ease up on how harshly I grade as the semester goes on and I start seeing improvement to keep up morale.
- 10. Provide feedback, both good and bad. I grade each post and post the grades in the Blackboard Grade Center. I create a Blackboard announcement with extensive general feedback on the discussion, the original posts and the response posts. I reinforce what I expect, I name the posters who had good posts (both original and response posts), and I include the text of a good original post (with name included) and a good response post (with name included from this semester). I try to vary whose good posts I call out to distribute praise and goodwill more evenly. I also include a bad original and response post from prior semesters, with name redacted. I include text to describe how and why each post was good or bad. I also have this discussion sent out as an email.
 - Improvement alert: using Blackboard Rubric to grade the original discussion posts.
- 11. Make everything well-organized, including your readings, lectures, exams, quizzes, discussion rules and grading.
 - I have had many comments by students that they appreciate how well-organized the course is.
- 12. Be there for them. I am pretty quick on email, but if I have to pick which email to respond to first, I generally answer my online students first. They only have me through the online modality so I think they get me first on email.
- ❖ **Which best practices am I considering employing?**
 - 1. Blackboard rubric to grade them and give feedback.

- 2. Trying new open-ended questions.
- 3. Mixing in a synchronous discussion through Blackboard Collaborate. I'm still working out how to require this. However, I think it would work best for units in which they need a lot of support. For example, we have a unit on the Rwandan genocide in which they read first-person narratives of survivors discussing the violence. They need more support this week than in others. My plan is to make this week a synchronous discussion. You could also consider doing a synchronous introduction session.
- 4. An introduction thread so I can get to know them a bit better, especially in my fully online courses.
- 5. They tend to procrastinate on starting their discussion posts. I have moved up the deadline for this reason. However, I am considering offering extra credit to the first poster on each unit's forum. I am also considering using the new Blackboard badges to reward students who are responsive to these types of rewards.

***From my syllabus:

Course Requirements

Grades will be determined accordingly:

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| Discussions | 14% |
| Quizzes | 14% |
| Term paper | 30% |
| Midterm Exam | 21% |
| Final Exam | <u>21%</u> |
| | 100% |

1 point possible extra credit (grade exercise)

Discussion: For each unit, you will be required to participate in Blackboard discussions. You must create one post yourself, and you must respond to 3 other posts. If you miss the deadline for posting on the discussion board, you will not be allowed to make it up. **There will be no make-up discussion posts (neither original posts nor response posts) in this class. No credit will be given for late work.**

Your post: You must provide your answers to the following questions; include all of the answers in the same post. **A good post will fully answer each question with at least 3 sentences. Label each answer with the number of each question it answers.** These sentences should be properly written, with proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. You will lose half of the points available if your post is not written with proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. You should proofread all of your posts.

1. What is the key point of the article?
2. What was the most interesting thing about this article?
3. What is the most surprising thing about this article? This should be something different than the answer to question 2.

| | | | | |
|--------|--|---|---|--|
| | Did not initiate a post or only answered 1 question in a post that was initiated | Initiated a post which only answered 2 of 3 questions | Student answered all 3 questions, but not substantial or well-considered additions to the conversation. | Good work. Information is accurate and it is a good contribution to the discussion. All 3 questions were answered. Good grammar. |
| Points | 0 | .5 | 1 | 1.3 |

Some resources for you: <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~acareywe/discussion.html>

Blackboard etiquette:

https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:gO5SgwIQhCoJ:johnsonplace.wikispaces.com/file/view/etiquette.pps+Blackboard+discussion+board+etiquette&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEEsG9kRhDx5d3tlbnxyaiqiALB-HEzB91JSwnODzglpX5o3yXACapB08bEkGCq8KMrI73YJswsxayK UKfCkFtQ_zAlh5g8ee74BZ6p9XU5jdhtWUWrQsWAh_ePqrrZUfUfIQID&sig=AHIEtbRHbjEFmc8PqiHc0d1LGEvo7FPKvg

(You may have to sign in to Google Docs to access this link. Please let me know if you have issues.)

Best practices in discussion posting: <http://www.udel.edu/janet/MARC2006/rubric.html>

http://www.ic.sunysb.edu/Class/che326ff/discussion_board/etiquette.pdf

Please note that I will be monitoring the posts for participation, grading and to make sure things stay respectful and proper. I will participate in posts as well though I likely will not respond to every post.

Responding to other posts: For every unit, you must also respond to 3 other posts. A good response will provide your answer and analysis of the poster's answer to one question. This means that you will read the original post by another student, analyze the answers given, respond with your answer to one of the questions and analyze the differences and similarities in answers. **Your answer and the analysis of the original poster's answer should EACH be at least 3 sentences.** These sentences should be properly written, with proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. You will lose half of the points available if your post is not written with proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. You should proofread all of your posts. **You will not receive credit for responses posted on your own created post.**

| | | | |
|--------|-------------------------|---|---|
| | Completed 0-2 responses | Student completed all 3 responses but not substantial or well-considered additions to the conversation. | Good work. Information is accurate and it is a good contribution to the discussion. All 3 responses were completed. Good grammar. |
| Points | 0 | 0.5 | 0.7 |

Some resources for you: <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~acareywe/discussion.html>

Blackboard etiquette:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:gO5SgwIQhCoJ:johnsonplace.wikispaces.com/file/view/etiquette.pps+Blackboard+discussion+board+etiquette&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESg9kRhDx5d3tlbznxyaiqiALB-HEzbB91JSwnODzglpX5o3yXACapB08bEkGCq8KMrI73YJswsxayK UKfCkFtQ zAlh5g8ee74BZ6p9XU5jdhtWUWrQsWAh ePqrrZUfUfIQID&sig=AHIEtbRHbjEFmc8PqiHc0d1LGEvo7FPKvg>

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