TRELIG 205: Introduction to Religious Studies
University of Washington Tacoma
Fall 2016

Meeting Times: MWF 8:00-9:20
Meeting Place: GWP 216

Instructor: Eric Bugyis, Ph.D.
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Office: GWP 304
Office Hours: I can be found in my office on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11:00am – 1:00pm. Other times can be arranged by email.

About this Course

Religions, like the individuals who practice them, would seem to be irreducibly singular, promising a way of life that is attractive precisely because it is unlike any other. Yet, often people speak about "religion" as if it could be encountered in the world as a single taxonomical category, like "animals," and this leads to the assumption that scholars of religion take it up in various forms—"Hinduism," "Buddhism," "Islam," or "Christianity"—like a zoologist might study mammals or reptiles. For the scholar of religion, though, it would be as unhelpful to say that one studies "Christianity" as it would for the zoologist to say that he or she studies "mammals." This is because even this more specific category is not nearly specific enough to capture the diversity of life forms that it is meant to contain. Instead, scholars of religion turn their attention to the specific tools and activities that those animals that we call "human" use to mediate their relationships to the world, each other, and themselves, and it is these relationships that, in turn, give one the building blocks for those personal and communal narratives that may begin to converge on certain networks of meaning, some of which might be identified as "religious" and, perhaps eventually, "religions."

This course is therefore designed to introduce you to the various "data" of religious studies—objects, places, texts, images, music, and rituals—that scholars take as the starting point for the study of what may (or may not) come to be identified as "a religion." We will begin by briefly considering the problems that arise in defining "religion," and we will come to find that such questions are more productively approached by actively engaging with potential "religious" persons, communities, or practices. Rather than attempting conjure some immutable, transcendent essence that can be applied to these data "from above" to, so to speak, "baptize" them, we will seek to build up an understanding of religion "from below," beginning with the most fundamental features of human experience—those things that we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. (Of course, this is not to say that such an essence may or may not *exist*, but only that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to *define* and *locate*.)

The remainder of the quarter will be given over to discussions of the various materials that persons, whether they describe themselves as religious or not, use to mediate their relationships to the world, each other, and themselves. These tools include the objects, places, texts, images, music, rituals, and cultural products that we all recognize as being part and parcel of the ways in which we try to make ourselves feel at home in a complex world that can often seem

inhospitable. In the end, this course will not only force us to listen to those religious "others," whose beliefs and practices might seem foreign and fantastical, but it will also ask us to risk being seen as "other" to ourselves and each other as we begin to share the stories that make us stranger to one another even as they make us more familiar to ourselves.

Learning Objectives

- This course is designed to give you the tools to read, write, think, and talk more clearly and critically about the objects, stories, rituals, questions, and identities that have shaped your own particular perspective on the world so as to better understand the perspectives of others, some of whom might be traditionally identified as "religious."

- It does this by inviting you to tell your own story and to listen to the stories of your fellow classmates, prompted and challenged by readings that have been chosen for their insight into the various tools that religious persons use to tell their own stories and those of their communities.

- Since most storytelling takes experience as its point of departure and ends in written self-expression, you will be asked to participate in various exercises intended to encourage critical reflection on those contexts that have given rise to your own personal narrative, and you will be asked share this narrative with the class.

- Though generous and critical engagement with these compositions, we will not only seek to become better writers, but we will also come to a deeper understanding of those experiences that we share as well as those that might be unique to our own biographies and communities.

- This will give us a greater appreciation of both the diversity and commonality present in the human experience as reflected in the course material and our fellow course participants.

- Beyond any specific skills, then, this course shares with the educational enterprise as a whole the aspiration to make all of us (myself included) into more attentive, thoughtful, and fully realized human beings.

Official Course Description and Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

Description: Beginning with the problem of defining "religion," this course introduces students to the various "data" of religious studies—including objects, places, texts, images, music, and rituals—that scholars of religion take as the starting point for their inquiry. It is recommended that students complete this course before taking TRELIG 305.

Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences SLOs

- Develop proficiency in skills such as writing and critical thinking that are needed for productive careers, and gain mastery of a broad curriculum in the humanities, social sciences and environmental science

- Achieve knowledge of the theories, concepts and methods of cross-cultural analysis

- Understand the complexity of relations between groups, societies, cultures and natural environments; the history of these relations and the forces of social change

- Gain a knowledge and appreciation of cultures other than their own while exploring the expression of cultural identity, thought and beliefs through literature and the other arts

Politics, Philosophy, and Economics SLOs

- Students will develop a more thorough knowledge of social institutions through focused engagement with both contemporary and enduring social issues.

- Students will strengthen their analytical skills.

- Students will develop their ability to write with style and precision.

- Students will develop their ethical and logical reasoning.

- Students will learn to synthesize and evaluate information through an application of knowledge and methods across different disciplines.

Learning Exercises

Participation (15%): Since the study of religion, as I have presented it above, involves listening to personal and communal narratives, it is absolutely essential that we commit to being present to one another in class at the designated meeting times. If you will be absent from class, please notify me in advance so that I can pass your regrets on to your colleagues. During class, I ask that you respect your classmates (myself included) in the way that you would your friends by not texting, surfing the web, or generally spacing out.

Reading Responses (20%): One class meeting per week, you will be asked to bring with you a 250 word (approx. one paragraph), response to the reading for that day. On the first day of class, I will assign you a day of the week to submit your response. The questions that should guide your reflection are: What part of your personal experience did this reading cause you think about differently? What part of the reading resonated with your own personal experience? What question or comment would you like to ask or offer the author and/or subject of the reading? Your response should include at least one specific citation to a passage in the reading.

Papers (25%): You will be asked to write two essays (5-7 pages, double-spaced with standard typeface, font size, and margins) each on one of the religious "tools" (i.e., object, place, text/book, image, music, ritual, taste, or popular culture) that we are studying. They will be due by email at noon on the Saturday after we have finished discussing the particular "tool" that you are choosing to write about. In these papers you are asked to discuss a specific "item" that has (however loosely defined) "religious" significance for you. *In the first part of the paper*, you should do a bit of research about the historical significance of the "tool." What has it meant to past communities and individuals? What were the circumstances of its creation? Was it originally meant to have a different purpose or significance than it currently has for you? *In the second part of the paper*, discuss how this "tool" came to have the significance that it has for you. When and how did you first learn about it? How does it help you interact with the world, yourself, and others? What present, past, and future relationships might it make possible and/or prevent? How does it contribute to your identity? What does it help you communicate about yourself to others? What does it help you understand about the world around you? What might it obscure or prevent you from seeing about the world around you?

Presentation (15%): You will be asked to work up one of your papers into a 5 minute presentation to be given to the class in the last week of the quarter.

Exam (25%): There will be a final exam at the end of the quarter covering the entirety of the course content.

Late Assignments: The only assignments that I will accept late are the papers, which will be accepted until the last day of class. Late papers will, however, only be eligible for a maximum grade of C. Resubmissions will be accepted until the last day of class for full credit. Late work is not eligible for resubmission.

Grading: The work for this course will be graded on the university's 4-point scale. I do not round up, and I do not change grades. However, I do want you to understand why you received the grade that you did, and I invite (indeed, I *encourage*) you to come see me anytime to discuss my feedback on any assignment. Also, there is an appeal process for final course grades at the university level, the details of which can be found at http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/uwt/current-students/changing-or-appealing-grades.

Extra Credit: Extra credit points are available throughout the semester by starting and/or contributing to Canvas discussion threads inspired by the course content. The details concerning how these points are awarded can be found on the last page of this syllabus.

University Academic Resources

The Teaching and Learning Center: The Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) offers free academic support for students at all levels. We offer one-on-one consultations and group workshops in writing, math, statistics, science, and Spanish. We also work with students on questions about English grammar & vocabulary, reading, and learning strategies. We are located in Snoqualmie 260 and online. Our schedules for appointments and drop-in visits are posted on our website at www.tacoma.uw.edu/tlc. For special needs or subject tutoring requests, please email uwtteach@uw.edu or call (253) 692-4417.

Library: The UW Tacoma Library provides resources and services to support finding resources for your assignments. We guide students through the research process, helping you learn how to develop effective strategies and find and evaluate appropriate resources. In addition to research and instructional support, we manage course reserves and print and digital collections and provide spaces for group and individual study. For assistance or more information, visit our service desks, located in SNO and TLB, or our website, www.tacoma.uw.edu/library/library.

Technology Support: Labs, software, equipment checkout and help with Canvas, Google, email, logins, etc. See: http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/information-technology/information-technology.

Academic Honesty: A major part of your experience at UW Tacoma will be reading, synthesizing, and using the knowledge and ideas of others. To plagiarize is to use the ideas—or unique phrasing of those ideas—without acknowledging that they originate from someone or someplace other than you. Attributing where you get your information builds your own authority to speak on that topic and provides valuable backing to the arguments you make. Attribution also distinguishes your ideas and words from those of others who came before you. At the University of Washington, plagiarism is a violation of the student conduct code, and the consequences can be serious. Though citing, quoting, and paraphrasing can be confusing at first, it is essential for your success at UWT that you familiarize yourself with these important conventions of academic writing. Additionally, plagiarism can be understood differently in various disciplines. For instance, the ways in which one summarizes others' ideas in texts, or attributes information from texts in one's own paper, are not the same in the sciences as they are in the humanities, or the social sciences. This means it is vital that you understand the specific expectations and guidelines for writing that will help you avoid plagiarizing in this class. If you have questions about what amounts to plagiarism, you are strongly encouraged to seek guidance from faculty and the Teaching and Learning Center as soon as possible. For more information see: http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/node/38211.

Academic Calendar: For important dates, including drop/add/withdrawal/registration deadlines please see: http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/uwt/enrollment-services/2014-15-academic-calendar.

Disability Support Services: The University of Washington Tacoma is committed to making physical facilities and instructional programs accessible to students with disabilities. Disability Support Services (DSS), located in MAT 354, functions as the focal point for coordination of services for students with disabilities. If you have a physical, emotional, or mental disability that "substantially limits one or more major life activities [including walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working]," and will require accommodation in this class, please contact DSS at 253-692-4508, email at dssuwt@uw.edu, uwtshaw@uw.edu or visit www.tacoma.uw.edu/dss for assistance.

University Safety and Health Resources

Escort Service: Safety escorts are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, there is no time limit. Call the main office line at 253-692-4416.

In case of a fire alarm: During an emergency evacuation, take your valuables ONLY if it is safe to do so. You could put yourself or someone else at risk by delaying your exit. Plan to return to class once the alarm has stopped. Do not return until you have received an all-clear from somebody "official," the web or email.

In case of an earthquake: DROP, COVER, and HOLD. Once the shaking stops, take your valuables and leave the building. Do not plan to return for the rest of the day. Do not return to the building until you have received an all-clear from somebody "official," the web or email.

Sign-up for UW Alert: www.washington.edu/safety/alert/.

Safe Campus: Preventing violence is a shared responsibility in which everyone at the UW plays apart. The SafeCampus website (www.washington.edu/safecampus/uwt/) provides information on counseling and safety resources, University policies, and violence reporting requirements help us maintain a safe personal, work and learning environment.

Inclement Weather: Always check the UWT Home Page. Official campus closures or delays will be announced there first. Course Announcements and Email regarding assignments and expectations during a closure will follow once the severity of the situation is known. Call 253-383-INFO or check the UW Tacoma homepage to determine whether campus operations have been suspended or delayed. If not, but driving conditions remain problematic, call the professor's office number. This number should provide information on whether a particular class will be held or not, and/or the status of pending assignments. If the first two numbers have been contacted and the student is still unable to determine whether a class(es) will be held, or the student has a part-time instructor who does not have an office phone or contact number, call the program office number for updated information.

Student Counseling Center: The Counseling Center offers short-term, problem-focused counseling to UW Tacoma students who may feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of college, work, family, and relationships. Counselors are available to help students cope with stresses and personal issues that may interfere with their ability to perform in school. The service is provided confidentially and without additional charge to currently enrolled undergraduate and graduate students. To schedule an appointment, please call 253-692-4522, email uwtshaw@uw.edu, or stop by the Student Counseling Center (SCC), located in MAT 354. Additional information can also be found by visiting www.tacoma.uw.edu/counseling.

Student Health Center: LBH 102; 1742 Market Street, Tacoma WA, 98402. Basic services at Student Health Services (SHS) are provided at no cost to currently enrolled UW Tacoma students. However, you may incur costs for services provided off campus, such as lab tests, and for some on-campus services, such as immunizations. The SHS staff will identify any services that you would have to pay for.
http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/studentaffairs/SHW/shs_healthservices_about.cfm.html.

Other Resources

The Pantry - to provide supplemental, nutritional, and culturally relevant food as well as hygiene items to all UWT students and their families. Location and information can be found by visiting:

www.tacoma.uw.edu/thepantry. Stop by during weekly drop-in hours (DOUGAN 104) Check website for hours.

Resources for low income and people experiencing homelessness: http://mdc-hope.org.

Shelter for Young Adults: Beacon Center - Shelter for young adults 18-24. Open daily 6:30pm – 6:30am. Doors close at 10 pm. Located at: Beacon Senior Center 415 South 13th Street Tacoma, WA. The shelter has 40 beds and serves young people ages 18-24. Please call 253-256-3087 for more information. http://www.communityyouthservices.org/piercecounty.shtml

Oasis Center: Oasis transforms the lives of queer youth by creating a safe place to learn, connect, and thrive. Oasis envisions a world in which queer youth are valued in the community as strong, creative leaders. Oasis is the only drop-in and support center dedicated to the needs of LGBTQ youth ages 14-24 in Pierce County. We are a youth-adult partnership in which youth and adults come together for shared teaching learning and action! Office Phone: 253-671-2838. Emergency Cell Phone: (253) 988-2108

Short-term Loan Program: The Office of Student Financial Aid has funds available for short-term loans to assist students with temporary cash flow problems. Additional information can also be found by visiting: www.tacoma.uw.edu/uwt/admissions/financial-aid/loans.

Schedule of Meetings and Readings

Please Note

- Some of the readings for this course will be made available electronically on Canvas. You are also asked to purchase the following, which should be available at the bookstore:

    1. S. Brent Plate, *A History of Religion in 5½ Objects: Bringing the Spiritual to Its Senses* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014).

    2. Diana L. Eck, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

    3. Timothy Beal, *The Rise and Fall of the Bible: The Unexpected History of an Accidental Book* (New York: Mariner Books, 2012).

    4. James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).

- Recommended Reference Text:

    - S. Brent Plate, ed., *Key Terms in Material Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

- The readings listed here are provisional and may be subject to change. I will announce any changes both in class and by email.

Week 1 | What is "Religion"?

- Guiding Questions: Do concepts have a history? What have been the dominant definitions of "religion" for both scholars and practitioners? Do practitioners see themselves in the definitions that scholars use for them? How does one decide what is included and excluded by a particular category, and who gets to do the deciding? Why does it matter whether we call something "religious" or not?

Wednesday, 9/28:	Introduction: What, in your experience, is "religion"? How might human experience itself be understood as "religious"? Kevin Schilbrack, "Do Religions Exist?" *Philosophy and the Study of Religions: A Manifesto* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), pp. 83-110.
Friday, 9/30:	Schilbrack, "What *Isn't* Religion?" *Philosophy and the Study of* Religions, pp. 113-147.

Week 2 | Objects

- Guiding Questions: Why are objects important for religious practice specifically and for human experience in general? How do religious practitioners differentiate between "sacred" and "profane" objects? What makes an object "sacred"? Do we make objects what they are, or do they make us who we are? What is the difference between "natural" and "cultural" objects both in human experience and in religion?

Monday, 10/3:	S. Brent Plate, "½," *The History of Religion in 5½ Objects: Bringing the Spiritual to Its Senses* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), pp. 1-22.
Wednesday, 10/5:	Plate, "Stones," *The History of Religion in 5½ Objects*, pp. 23-60.
Friday, 10/7:	Plate, "Incense," *The History of Religion in 5½ Objects*, pp. 61-98.

Week 3 | Objects, *continued*

Monday, 10/10:	Plate, "Drums," *The History of Religion in 5½ Objects*, pp. 99-136.
Wednesday, 10/12:	Plate, "Crosses," *The History of Religion in 5½ Objects*, pp. 137-174.
Friday, 10/14:	Plate, "Bread" and "Soul," *The History of Religion in 5½ Objects*, pp. 175-224.

** Objects papers due by email at noon on Saturday.

Week 4 | Places

- Guiding Questions: What makes place important for religious practice specifically and human experience in general? Who decides whether and how significant places must be preserved? Is tourism sacrilegious? To whom do historically or religiously sacred places belong? What is the difference between the "historical" and the "religious" or the "public" and the "sacred"? Why are "sacred" places so often sites of violence?

  Monday, 10/17: Jacob N. Kinnard, "Power Fallen from the Sky," *Places In Motion: The Fluid Identities of Temples, Images, and Pilgrims* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 27-55.

  Wednesday, 10/19: Kinnard, "The Drama of Viṣṇu and the Buddha at Bodhgayā" and "Bodhgayā, UNESCO, and the Ambiguities of Preservation," *Places In Motion*, pp. 80-144.

  Friday, 10/21: Kinnard, "Public Space or Sacred Place?" *Places In Motion*, pp. 169-186.

  ** Places papers due by email at noon on Saturday.

Week 5 | Texts and Books

- Guiding Questions: What is the difference between a "text" and a "book" for religious practitioners and for human experience in general? Do beliefs shape texts or do texts shape beliefs? Do books shape practices or do practices shape books? Do we read texts or do texts read us? What is the relationship between language, meaning, and the sacred for religious practitioners and for human experience in general? What does it mean for a text to be "inspired," and is religious inspiration any different from artistic, political, or ethical inspiration? Can you judge a religion by its texts?

  Monday, 10/24: Timothy Beal, *The Rise and Fall of the Bible: The Unexpected History of an Accidental Book* (New York: Mariner Books, 2012), pp.1-69.

  Wednesday, 10/26: Beal, *The Rise and Fall of the Bible*, pp. 70-145.

  Friday, 10/28: Beal, *The Rise and Fall of the Bible*, pp. 146-96.

  ** Texts/Books papers due by email at noon on Saturday.

Week 6 | Music

- Guiding Questions: Why is music such a ubiquitous feature of human experience? What is the difference between "sacred" and "secular" music? How does music relate to human language and the human body? How does music relate to memory and identity? What is the relationship between music and the "transcendent" in religion and in human

experience? Does music unite or divide peoples? Can music be translated? Is there a difference between hearing and listening to music, to one another, to the divine?

Tuesday, 10/31: James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), pp. ix-31.

Thursday, 11/2: Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues*, pp. 32-77.

Friday, 11/4: Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues*, pp. 78-130.

** Music papers due by email at noon on Saturday.

Week 7 | Images

- Guiding Questions: How do images represent realities both religious and human? How do realities, both religious and human, conform to our images of them? Is a picture really worth a thousand words? What is the relationship between texts and images? Is the sacredness of an image in the eye of the beholder? Do we look at images or do images look at us? What does it mean to "read" an image, and how does one do it? How do images shape our experience of others and ourselves? How do religious practitioners differentiate between an icon and an idol, and why does this difference produce so much anxiety and, occasionally, violence?

Monday, 11/7: Diana L. Eck, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 1-58.

Wednesday, 11/9: Eck, *Darsan*, pp. 59-92.

Friday, 11/11: No Class Meeting – Veterans Day.

** Images papers due by email at noon on Saturday.

Week 8 | Ritual

- Guiding Questions: How do rituals organize space and time both in religion and in human experience? How do rituals organize bodies? How do rituals make us think differently about each other and ourselves? What does a ritual look like? What is the difference between rituals and other kinds of human practice? Why are certain human experiences more apt to be ritualized—e.g., illness, death and dying, sporting and political events, dating and marriage? How are these "ordinary" rituals different from "religious" rituals? What is the relationship between "right belief" (orthodoxy) and "right practice" (orthopraxy)? What are the social and psychological functions of ritual?

Monday, 11/14: Tom F. Driver, "Part I: Ritual Pathways," *Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 3-75.

Wednesday, 11/16: Driver, "Part II: Modalities of Performance," *Liberating Rites*, pp. 79-128.

Friday, 11/18: Driver, "Part III: Ritual's Social Gifts," *Liberating Rites*, pp. 131-191.

** Ritual papers due by email at noon on Saturday.

Week 9 | Taste

- Guiding Questions: How does one judge religious performances? How is religious practice like performing on a stage? How is being human a performance, and might it be more appropriate to judge human practices using aesthetic categories, like taste, than moral or epistemological categories? Are we being more than metaphorical when we use words like "flavor" to talk about the nature of religious observance or "being fed" to talk about spiritual edification? Could a good religious ritual be more like a fine wine than a moral act? Could a religious leader be more like a good cook than a political authority or a moral exemplar? Could the scholar of religion be more like a restaurant or theatre critic than a social scientist? In what other contexts do we find judgments of taste more helpful than judgments of truth or morals in evaluating human thought and action?

Monday, 11/21: Susan L. Schwartz, *Rasa: Performing the Divine in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. ix-47.

Wednesday, 11/23: Schwartz, *Rasa*, pp. 47-98.

Friday, 11/25: No Class Meeting – Thanksgiving Holiday

** Taste papers due by email at noon on Saturday.

Week 10 | Popular Culture

- Guiding Questions: How is religion bought and sold in contemporary society, and does the commodification and marketing of religion undermine its significance? Is commerce itself a religious practice? Is money a religious object? How are cultural pursuits—political campaigns, professional sports, celebrity culture—like religious activities? How has technology changed the ways in which people are "religious" and/or "human"? Is "authenticity" a religious value? Does being "fake" make something less real or significant or valuable? How does one tell the difference between the "authentic" and the "fake" in religion and in human experience, and why does it matter? What role does popular culture play in shaping individual and group identities and making relationships possible?

Monday, 11/28: David Chidester, "Popular Religion" and "Global Religion" *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 30-51 and 131-149.

Wednesday, 11/30: Chidester, "Plastic Religion" and "Virtual Religion," *Authentic Fakes*, pp. 52-70 and 190-212.

Friday, 12/2: Chidester, "Sacrificial Religion" and "Monetary Religion," *Authentic Fakes*, pp. 91-130.

** Popular Culture papers due by email at noon on Saturday.

Week 11 | Presentations

Monday, 12/5:

Wednesday, 12/7:

Friday, 12/9:

Final Exam | Monday, December 12, 2016 at 8:00-10:05am in GWP 216.

Frequent Thinker Rewards Program

I know. In an ideal world, you would be thinking and talking about the questions that we are discussing in this course all of the time. In fact, you would find them so interesting that you couldn't *not* talk about them with everyone you met. You would be so overflowing with intellectual enthusiasm that you would not even be able to function in normal society. You would be shouting from the rooftops, standing on a soapbox on the street corner, handing out extra copies of the course readings to passers-by. It would get to the point that your friends and family would be avoiding you for fear that you would engage them in another discussion of the meaning of life as informed by the most recent thing you learned in class. You would alienate co-workers and bosses, eventually having to give up your job to embrace your newfound, true calling as a full-time intellectual, committed only to the pursuit of the enduring beauty of the written word, the fleeting sublimity of the perfectly-formed thought, and the intoxicating insights of late-night debates, fueled by spirits academic and otherwise. But the responsibilities of real life intrude.

In an effort to recognize those of you who are willing to forsake those lesser goods of worldly treasure and pleasure in order to seek the lasting benefits of a life lived in the continuous contemplation of Truth, I have created this "frequent thinker rewards program." Here's how it works:

Every week I will open up a discussion board on Canvas. Whenever you feel that you simply cannot contain yourself any longer, you can go to the discussion board and either start a new thread or respond to one that already exists. Extra credit points will be earned as follows:

Starting a Thread: If you start a discussion thread, and you receive at least three responses, you will earn 3 points. If you receive less than three responses, you will earn 1 point.

Responding to a Thread or Response: Every time you respond to a thread, you will earn 1 point.

The Bottom Line: For every point you earn, I will add .5 to your lowest daily writing assignment. I will also consider discussion board participation when I determine your class participation grade. So, if you do not participate very much in class, participating on the discussion boards will make up for it (but not *all* of it!).

Troll Policy: Since Internet trolls are one of the biggest threats to the quality of public discourse (if not *the* biggest), anyone who is detracting from a discussion thread by posting personal attacks, snarky quips, or anything that generally erodes the quality of the conversation, will be penalized by 1 point for every offending post.