



Nazarene Theological Seminary

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CHS660 – History of Christian Doctrine 1 Online Fall Semester 2010

Essential Information

Please refer to the following resources for information essential for the successful completion of courses and degree programs at Nazarene Theological Seminary. Links to these resources are available at

http://support.nts.edu/index.php/Essential_Information. Additional technical support information can be found at <http://support.nts.edu>.

- NTS Mission Statement & Purpose and Master of Divinity Objectives
- Tips for online learning success
- NTS library services
- NTS bookstore procedures
- Online technical requirements and Moodle support information
- NTS Student Handbook including statements on quality of work, plagiarism, and academic probation
- *A Handbook for Inclusive Language*

Instructor Information

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Catalog Description

A study of the development of Christian doctrine from the Early Church up to the end of the medieval period, according to what the Church has believed, taught and confessed. The Church's Faith (dogma) will be examined particularly through the Creeds of Christendom.

Course Narrative & Rationale

This course will examine the grammar of the Church's *Faith* by listening to what the "Church has believed, taught and confessed on the basis of the Word of God." (Pelikan) In other words, what the Church believes, teaches and confesses is always, and in all ways, dependent upon the Word who is the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; i.e., the One who was, who is, and who will always be, the Speaker of the One Word who was in the beginning with God, and was God, and who became flesh 'for us and our salvation.'

Now, the Good News of the Gospel is that the One who Spoke the Word and became human so that we might become divine (theosis) is now embodied in a *tradition* ("the living faith of the dead") that is the 'one,' 'holy,' 'catholic' and 'apostolic' Church. The Church is the new epiphany of the Triune God. God has chosen the Church that is the very Body of Christ to bear witness to the Gospel and the irruption of God's Kingdom on earth as in heaven. And so, at Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, God "*gathered*" up the whole people of God into the very economy (*oikonomia*) of God's grace, or household of God, to share in the *koinonia* of God's mission. By the same gathering breath of the Spirit, God "*sends*" us back into the world to be a "sacrament of God's new and unending life for the world." (Schmemmann)

The Church's heritage is the Story of the family who lives in God's house. So essentially, to learn of the Church's Faith, Tradition and Story, is to come to "know" through the "grammar of her Faith," (Lindbeck) her Doctrine(s) that the *Name of God* is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that the Name of God is the *Nature of God*—God is Love. (Wesley) This kind of knowledge comes wrapped in the Gospel who is Christ, and by way of the Holy Spirit pouring Triune love into our hearts. This kind of love is a contagion that cannot be kept secret!

To listen to the Church's heritage is to listen to our family and hear God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit call us to share in God's Story. This is a call to partake of the very nature of God by participating in God's mission to rectify the whole creation back into God's glory. Let us then, in the study of this course, pay careful attention to "how" God has Spoken God's very Name, and gathered us into God's very Nature, into the very fellowship of God's triune life by giving us God's Holy Love and then breathing us back out into the fellowship of God's mission. This, I believe, is what it means to listen to what the Church "believes, teaches and confesses on the basis of the Word of God."

We are, however, stubbornly indifferent to the fact that those who do not listen, learn, understand and even embrace their past, their inclusion into God's Story, are doomed to have it haunt them at a level below their conscious and responsible levels of involvement with the present and the future. Hence, as Goethe once said: "What you have as heritage, take now as task, for thus you shall make it your own."

Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course you will have (R = Course requirement directed toward achieving objective):

1. Demonstrated a theological method for thinking with the dogma of the Church's Faith. (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5)
2. Demonstrated a working knowledge and ability to exegete—"correct & fulfill"—one's ecclesial Tradition with the doctrines of the Christian Faith. (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5)
3. Demonstrated a basic grasp of the necessary synergy between Doctrine -- "grammar of faith"-- and 'Participation in God.' In other words, there is a necessary interplay between the 'law of prayer'—*Lex Orandi*—and the 'law of faith/belief'—*Lex Credendi*. Our Creeds—confessions of faith have come to us in this way. (R1, R2)
4. Demonstrated an understanding that the nature of Doctrine is akin to the nature of the Gospel and the Salvation that comes to us in Word made Flesh. Essentially, to see Doctrine and Salvation as inseparable is analogously expressed in the soteriologic of 1 John where to "know" God is to "love" God. (R1, R2, R3, R4)
5. Demonstrated an understanding that the Church's vision of the Triune God is central to the Dogma & Doctrine(s) of the "one," "holy," "catholic," and "apostolic" Church. (R1, R2)

Required Texts & Course Materials

- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Volume 1: The Emergence of the Christian Tradition (100-600). Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Volume 2: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700). Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Volume 3: The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300). Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Course Outline

The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)
Total Pages: 357

Unit 1: (Week 1): Tradition & History: "Correction & Fulfillment"

- Vol. 1:1-10.

Unit 2: (Week 2): Praeparatio Evangelica

- Vol. 1:11-67.

Unit 2: (Week 2): Outside the Mainstream

- Vol. 1:68-120.

Unit 3: (Week 3): The Faith of the Church Catholic

- Vol. 1:121-171.

Unit 4: (Week 4): The Mystery of the Trinity—Nicea (325)

- Vol. 1:172-225.

Unit 5: (Week 5): The Person of the God-Man—Chalcedon (451)

- Vol. 1:226-277.

(Week 6) Reading & Research Week

Unit 6: (Week 7): Nature & Grace

- Vol. 1:278-331.

Unit 6: (Week 7): The Orthodox Consensus

- Vol. 1:332-357.

The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)
Total Pages: 298

Unit 6: (Week 7): The Authority of the Fathers

- Vol. 2:1-36.

Unit 7: ***(Week 8) Doctrinal Debates***

Unit 8: (Week 9): Union & Division in Christ

- Vol. 2:32-90.

Unit 8: (Week 9): Images of the Invisible

- Vol. 2:91-145.

(Week 9) Doctrinal Debate Position Papers Due

Unit 9: (Week 10): The Challenge of the Latin Church

- Vol. 2:146-198.

Unit 9: (Week 12): The Vindication of Trinitarian Monotheism

- Vol. 2:199-251.

Unit 10: (Week 11): The Last Flowering of Byzantine Orthodoxy

- Vol. 2:252-298.

The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1700)—Western Christendom

Total Pages: 307

Unit 10: (Week 11): The Integrity of the Catholic Tradition

- Vol. 3:1-49.

Unit 11: (Week 12): Beyond the Augustinian Synthesis

- Vol. 3:50-105.

Unit 11: (Week 12): The Plan of Salvation

- Vol. 3:106-157.

Unit 12: (Week 13): The Communication of Grace

- Vol. 3:158-214.

Unit 12: (Week 13): The One True Faith

- Vol. 3:215-267.

Unit 13: (Week 14): Summa Theologica

- Vol. 3:268-307.

Total Pages of Reading: 962

- ***Research Group Papers Due***

Course Assignments & Requirements

1. There will be one **Comprehensive Final Take Home Exam (Outcomes 1-5)** that is critically reflective and synthetic in nature. As this Exam attempts to answer the specific questions that make up this exam, every synthetic response to these questions should not only be written to properly cover necessary content, but they should also be carefully written to demonstrate the ***Outcomes*** that have been designed to govern this course. This will be given at the end of the semester. The content of this exam will cover all the class readings, lectures and online discussion. This exam will be posted and available one week prior to the close of the class. This exam will comprise 1/4th of your final grade. ***This Final Take Home Exam is due on Monday, 11:59PM CT of Finals Week.***
2. **General Discussion Forum (Outcomes 1-5)** Class participation is crucial in an online environment. To assist in this process, each week you will be required to prepare for, and participate in, the **General Discussion Forum** as outlined in the various ***Units*** of the ***Course Calendar***. This is where the professor will post weekly

questions and give occasional bridge lectures and a synopsis of key themes, doctrines, persons, issues, etc, as it is covered in the designated textbook readings. All students will be required to post summary responses and comments to my questions on the weekly readings (normally 50-75 words) as well as responses (normally 50 + words) to their classmates. Online postings and responses are required at least three times a week, including concluding summaries that summarize class reflections. The quality of these discussions will provide much of the basis for in class discussion as well. As you progress in your reading and understanding, your posts should also work toward implementing and reflecting on the **Outcomes** that have been designed to govern the course. For the way I will assess the quality of your postings see the **Posting Rubric** at the end of the syllabus. All discussion and regular class assignments need to be posted as instructed by the deadline, normally 11:59 PM Central Time (CT), for full credit. Late posting results in a 20% deduction daily (which begins one minute after the deadline) unless you have a good rationale submitted *in advance* of the late post. No postings will be graded after the assigned week. Due to the progressive nature of online learning, required postings must be completed the week assigned for any credit to be given. The totality of your postings in this **General Discussion Forum** will constitute 1/4th of your final grade.

3. **Doctrinal Debates.** (*Outcomes 1-2,4*) There will be two to three Debates (depending on class size) that will be showcased in Moodle to the entire class on Week 8 of the Course Outline. This means that these **Doctrinal Debate Groups** must be set up in Moodle no later than the 2nd week of the class, as **Debate Forums** for the necessary collaboration and research to be done in preparation of the **Doctrinal Debate** that will be presented and argued on Week 8. Each **Doctrinal Debate Group** will consist of two sides with 4 in each side/group. Thus, each **Doctrinal Debate Group** will be no larger than 8 students. On Week 8 the online class will listen to the **Doctrinal Debate Group's** presentation of arguments with points and counter points pertaining to the Doctrine that is being debated. Once the class has read/listened to the arguments of the Debate, the class will post questions, comments and critical reflections surrounding the theme of the Doctrinal Debate. The next online class period of Week 8 will begin with the next **Doctrinal Debate Group** where the same procedure will follow. After reflecting on the class comments and discussion, this weeks window of time will allow for any tweaked changes you want to make and implement into your refined and finished 5 page researched **Doctrinal Debate Position Paper** that is fully documented in Turabian style. As you work through the issues pertaining to your Doctrinal Debate, you should also consider what it means to 'correct and fulfill' the Tradition of the Church, and what theological method are you using that follows the 'Dogma' of the Church's Faith, and make sure that it is in step with the

Gospel. Also, depending on the Doctrinal theme and the set of arguments that you will employ, you should think about the remainder of the *Course Outcomes* and ask yourselves, "How, why, and in what ways do these Course Objectives inform and shape this debate?" The same evaluation criteria that will be used for the *Research Group Paper* (next assignment) will be used for the final *Doctrinal Debate Position Papers*. ***The Doctrinal Debate Position Paper will be due on Friday, 11:59PM CT of Week 9.*** This assignment will comprise 1/4th of your final grade.

Here is a random sampling of classical debate topics from which you may choose and develop the Doctrinal themes inherent in these topics: (***No two groups will debate the same topic***)

- The Council of Nicea: Arius vs. Athanasius
Is Jesus "like" (homoision) God the Father? Or Is Jesus the "same" (homousion) as God the Father.
- The Council of Chalcedon: Alexandria vs. Antioch; Logos Flesh vs. Logos Human Christologies. Is Jesus truly divine or truly human? Or both? Why?
- The Donatist Controversy: Why was it a Pandora's box? Should the lapsed be saved? What does this say about the "authority" and efficacy of the Church?
- Montanism: Revelation vs. Church Tradition.
- Cyprian: "Outside the Church there is no Salvation."
- Moral Responsibility and/or Inevitability of Sin: Pelagius vs. Augustine.
- Gnosticism: Irenaeus vs. Marcion and the Valentinians.
- Aquinas on Faith & Reason: The Fragile Synthesis
- Iconoclastic Controversy: Idols or Icons?
- Apologists: Origen vs. Celsus.
- The Great Schism: East vs. West
- Anselm vs. Aquinas on the arguments for the existence of God. What do the ontological and cosmological arguments say about the Church's use of power?
- The dissolution of the Medieval Synthesis: Nominalism & Realism.
- Conciliarism vs. the Magisterium: Is the Church powerful because it is the Church? Or is the Church powerful because power wells up from the base of the triangle to the top? Why did Conciliarism fail?
- Christianity and the Roman Empire: As a Roman emperor, justify your persecution of the Christians.
- Anselm & Abelard on the Atonement.

- Marcion vs. the Church on the formation of the Canon. What are the criteria used by the Church to "form" the Canon and refute Marcion?
- Defense of Augustine's City of God.
- Defend the legacy of the 12th century Renaissance in one of the following: Anselm, Abelard, and Lombard.
- Select a Person and/or Issue and debate the difference(s) between Orthodoxy and Heresy.

4. **A Research Group Paper - RGP - (Outcomes 1-2,4)** on one of the following doctrines: 1) Trinity (Nicea 325); 2) Incarnation (Chalcedon 451); 3) Divine Grace & Human Freedom—Augustine & Pelagius (Synod of Orange 529); 4) The Filioque Controversy; 5) Iconoclastic Controversy; 6) The Communion of Saints; 7) Mary as Theotokos; 8) Hypostatic Union; 9) Augustinianism vs. Thomism in Medieval Church; 10) Ecclesiology.

This research will be carried out in groups of no less than 4 and no more than 6 research participants. Each **Research Group** will be assigned to a **MOODLE Discussion Forum**. It is imperative that these **Research Group Forums** (along with chosen topics) are set up within the 2nd and 3rd week of the class. Each **Research Group** should plan to participate in the **MOODLE** threaded discussion no less than 3 times a week. I will periodically drop into the threaded discussion. I may or may not offer response(s) to the ongoing dialogue. Part of your final grade will be determined by your responsible involvement that will be "documented" in the Moodle with each **Research Group**.

As you work through the issues pertaining to your Research Group Paper, you should also consider what it means to 'correct and fulfill' the Tradition of the Church, and what theological method you are using that is in sync with the 'Dogma of the Church's Faith. Is your theological method of exegeting the Church's Faith in step with the Gospel? Also, depending on the theme and the set of problems that you will seek to address, you should think about the remainder of the **Course Outcomes** and ask yourselves, "How, why, and in what ways do these Course Objectives inform and shape this **Research Group Paper**?"

The final product of each **Research Group** will consist of a 20 page typewritten research paper that is fully footnoted, with bibliography, table of contents, and in Turabian format. This is a collaboratively earned grade, unless the members of the group and the threaded MOODLE discussion reveals that full online discussion and collaborative research and writing was missing by individual students. If that is the case, then the student in question will be dropped from the **Research Group** and asked to complete a Research Paper of the same size on his/her own.

This research assignment is due on **Monday, at 11:59 PM CT of Week 14**. This **Research Group Paper** will constitute 1/4th of your final grade.

The **Research Group Paper** along with the **Doctrinal Debate Position Paper** will be assessed according to several basic categories including the following:

- a. **Introduction/Clarity of Thesis** (This criterion examines the student's ability to introduce the context, state the practical problem that generated this research, and provide a clear thesis of the essay as well as explain how the paper unfolds.)
- b. **Presentation** (This criterion evaluates writing style, clarity of prose, basic grammatical and spelling competence, sentence and paragraph flow, as well as headers for key sections of the paper.)
- c. **Description of Sources** (This criterion evaluates the student's ability to describe in her or his own language the position of the theologians cited.)
- d. **Comprehensiveness of Sources** (This criterion evaluates the student's breadth of sources used in composing essays.)
- e. **Critical Engagement with Sources** (This criterion examines whether a student's work has taken the step beyond mere description and critically engaged with the sources she or he has drawn upon by subjecting them to a critical theological analysis.)
- f. **Development of Position and a Coherent Theme** (This criterion determines not only if a student has critically assessed the sources and arguments present in an essay, but also if he or she has done this through the development of her or his own coherent position.)
- g. **Implementation** (This criterion examines how well the paper has 'actually' integrated and synthesized the rationale of the thesis and its accompanying implications with the 'way' they are to be embodied and lived out in the Church.)

Distribution of Student Learning Hours

	Hours
Online Participation in General Discussion Forum	42
Reading (3vols. of Pelikan—962 pages)	38.48
Research Group Paper (20 pages)	40
Doctrinal Debate Position Paper (5 pages)	10
Take Home Final Exam (5 pages)	5
TOTAL	135

Method for Submitting Assignments

All assignments will be uploaded for this course in Moodle: <https://moodle.nts.edu/login/index.php>. Please use the assignments section of Moodle unless otherwise directed. Each assignment is to be submitted through its corresponding link in the Learning Unit. Assignments are **NOT** to be submitted as hard copy, via e-mail. Students should keep electronic copies of all work done for the course just in case they (or the professor) accidentally delete an assignment from the Grade book.

Form and Style Expectations

All written work—the *Doctrinal Debate Paper* and the *Research Group Paper*—should be formatted (and will be evaluated) utilizing Turabian, Kate L. "*A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*," 7th edition, revised by Wayne C. Booth, et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Inclusive Language

NTS is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, NTS urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions, and in their writings. All written work presented to meet course requirements must use gender inclusive language.

Policy Regarding Late Work & Missed Exams

Late posts receive a 20% daily reduction the week of the assignment. Posting after the assigned week will not be graded. All research/project work is due 11:59 PM of the date assigned. Late work without a valid reason (illness or death in family) is reduced by 15% the first week and an additional 10% each week following. No coursework may be submitted after the last day of the regular semester.

Policy on Incomplete Work

Only under the rarest of circumstances will the professor approve an incomplete. Only '*Death in the family*' or the '*prolonged illness*' of the student will be considered as a

justifiable cause for petition. For the *most* part, all other requests will not be considered. And yet, if the rarest of unforeseeable circumstances do arise, and those circumstances are the abovementioned ('*death in the family*' and '*prolonged illness*'), then, and only then, *may* an incomplete be granted by the professor. And, if per chance the incomplete is to be granted for reasons other than '*death in the family*' and '*prolonged illness*,' it will be given with a letter grade penalty. For example, if the final grade earned in the class results in an A, and an incomplete was granted for other reasons besides '*death and prolonged illness*,' then the final grade to be submitted to the registrar will be a B.

Course Grading

A Word about Grading: Evaluation in this kind of course, by its very nature, involves an element of subjectivity. It involves someone who has expertise in the field making a judgment on the kind of work you produce. That is a part of what you are paying for in this class. The primary factors I take into account in assessing "good solid graduate work," the sort of work to which I assign a "B" are (1) ability to demonstrate a breadth and depth of understanding of the material engaged; (2) ability to engage this material **in a critical way**; (3) ability to exhibit how the material is related to a larger theological and ecclesial context. If you demonstrate a **consistent** ability to do these things in all your coursework, you can expect to receive a B. If you demonstrate consistent ability to do them **incisively and with excellence**, you can expect to receive an A. If you demonstrate an ability to do these things **often, but not consistently**, you can expect to receive a C. (Hence, I assume that a C means "average," or "satisfactory" work. It does **not** mean "bad" or "unsatisfactory.") If you **seldom** demonstrate an ability to do these things, you can expect to receive a D. The final grade will be computed using the following point scale.

Summary of Grading for Assignments:

General Discussion Forum will constitute 1/4th of your final grade.

Research Group Paper will constitute 1/4th of the final grade.

Final Essay Exam will constitute 1/4th of the final grade.

Doctrinal Debate will constitute 1/4th of the final grade.

Grade Scale:

A	100-90
B	89-80
C	79-70
D	69-60
F	59-0

In accordance with the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, NTS is committed to providing students with disabilities the opportunity to participate and benefit from its programs and activities, Accordingly NTS will make reasonable modifications to its programs and activities to accommodate otherwise qualified students with disabilities, unless such modifications would impose an undue burden on the operation of the particular program or activity or would fundamentally alter the nature or purpose of the program or activity. Students needing accommodations should contact the Office of the Registrar. They also should contact the instructor no later than the end of the first class session to discuss learning needs and adaptive strategies that have been beneficial for the student in the past.

Course Calendar

Date	Unit	Week	Assignment (All are due by no later than 11:59PM CT.)
Sept. 13-19	1	1	Unit 1: Tradition & History: "Correction & Fulfillment" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 1:1-10.
Sept. 20-26	2	2	Unit 2: Praeparatio Evangelica <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 1:11-67. Unit 2: Outside the Mainstream <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 1:68-120.
Sept. 27-Oct. 3	3	3	Unit 3: The Faith of the Church Catholic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 1:121-171.
Oct. 4-10	4	4	Unit 4: The Mystery of the Trinity—Nicea (325) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 1:172-225.
Oct. 11-17	5	5	Unit 5: The Person of the God-Man—Chalcedon (451) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 1:226-277.
Oct. 18-21		6	Reading and Research Week: No postings due but you should be doing your preparation for next week's postings.
Oct. 22-28	6	7	Unit 6: Nature & Grace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 1:278-331. Unit 6: The Orthodox Consensus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 1:332-357. Unit 6: The Authority of the Fathers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 2:1-36.

Oct 29-Nov. 4	7	8	Unit 7: <i>Doctrinal Debates</i>
Nov. 5-11	8	9	Unit 8: Union & Division in Christ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 2:32-90. Unit 8: Images of the Invisible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 2:91-145. <i>Doctrinal Debate Position Papers Due on Friday, 11:59PM CT</i>
Nov. 12-18	9	10	Unit 9: The Challenge of the Latin Church <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 2:146-198. Unit 9: The Vindication of Trinitarian Monotheism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 2:199-251.
Nov. 19-25	10	11	Unit 10: The Last Flowering of Byzantine Orthodoxy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 2:252-298. Unit 10: The Integrity of the Catholic Tradition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 3:1-49.
Nov. 26-Dec. 2	11	12	Unit 11: Beyond the Augustinian Synthesis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 3:50-105. Unit 11: The Plan of Salvation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 3:106-157.
Dec. 3-9	12	13	Unit 12: The Communication of Grace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 3:158-214. Unit 12: The One True Faith <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vol. 3:215-267.
Dec. 10-16	13	14	Unit 12: Summa Theologica <p style="text-align: center;">Vol. 3:268-307.</p> <i>Research Group Papers Due on Monday, 11:59PM CT</i>

Posting Rubric

	Poor	Below Average	Average	Great
Participation and Initiative Shown	Rarely participates in discussion; does not make an effort to participate; seems indifferent	Limited initiative, does not post minimum requirement; occasionally makes meaningful reflection on group's efforts; marginal effort to become involved with group	Posts minimum requirement; attempts to direct the discussion and to present relevant viewpoints for consideration by group	Demonstrates good self-initiative; posts frequently; attempts to direct the discussion and to present relevant viewpoints for consideration by group; interacts freely
Relevance of Posts	Posts responses which do not relate to the discussion content; makes short or irrelevant remarks	Occasionally posts off topic; most responses are short in length and offer no further insight into the topic	Frequently posts responses that are related to discussion content; prompts further discussion of topic	Consistently posts responses related to discussion topic; cites additional references related to topic to further discussion
Clarity of opinions/ideas; connection to topic	Does not express opinions or ideas clearly; evidences grammatical/spelling mistakes	Unclear connection to topic evidenced in minimal expression of opinions or ideas; occasional spelling/grammatical errors	Opinions and ideas are stated clearly; occasional lack of connection to topic; well-written and presented	Expresses opinions and ideas in a clear and concise manner with obvious connection to topic; well-planned

Posting Pointers

"Atta boy"/"Atta-girl" Posts: One thing that slows up the learning process and clogs the discussion forms are "atta-boy" or "atta-girl" reply posts. These posts usually affirm someone else's observations but do not advance the conversation. While the replies show affirmation, they can lend to a lot of additional posts that do not help class "conversation" around the subject at hand. They can also obscure your own more substantive posts and work against your overall grade. These replies definitely do not count toward your assigned class posts. If you want to affirm someone's observations you can always email them directly (just click on the name at the top of the forum) or, if part of a reply, be certain to offer a substantive question (say for clarification) or observation (that challenges, modifies, complements the post) in the same reply and make it obvious. For example, instead of simply saying, "I like what you said," you might say something like: "When you said X it brought to mind an important comment from Pelikan that supports your efforts. Pelikan says..."

Keeping within Limits: You should read everyone's initial posts but respond only to those that raise an issue that you want to reflect on. Otherwise, you'll burn yourself out trying to respond to everyone.

A Tip for Staying in the Conversation: You can subscribe to a thread, including your own, so you can be notified by email when someone replies. This helps keep track of when you get personal replies and/or alerts you when a new idea has been added to a particular thread.