

# DISCUSSION BOARD POSTS

A discussion board post substitutes for in-class discussion. On average, posts range between 250-400 words and respond to a prompt that reflects on the course reading or study materials for the week.

**\*Pro Tip:** Compose your post in a Word document rather than the Canvas text box, so you can save a copy of your work and avoid the stress of possible Canvas glitches.

Note: **ALWAYS** consult your course syllabus or email your professor for specific guidelines in discussion posts. Each professor likely has his or her own requirements for word count, formatting, and tone.

## HOW TO WRITE A DISCUSSION BOARD POST

1. **Read and understand the materials for the week-** You'll need to understand what the prompt discusses. You cannot answer a question well about something you haven't read.
2. **Answer the prompt simply** – Directly answer the question that the prompt asks. If your prompt asks more than one question, make sure you cover every point! This gives you a starting place for your ideas and helps you form a thesis statement.
3. **Form your thesis** – Decide your main claim and the reasons for that idea. See our two handouts on “Thesis Statements” for more help. For discussion posts, **your thesis can be your first or second sentence.**
4. **Support your thesis** - Use source material combined with your commentary to support your points adequately. Use quotations as needed, but keep them short. See our “Guide to Paraphrasing Correctly” for help with paraphrasing.
5. **Format Your Post** - Most posts will introduce and conclude with a sentence or two instead of a formal introduction or conclusion paragraph. Additionally, you will most likely **not** need a header or a cover page, but **you should still use proper citations!**

## APPLICATION EXAMPLE #1

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EXAMPLE PROMPT: Please read pages 1-61 (end at the section break on p. 61) of *Home* by Marilyn Robinson. In 250-300 words, please answer the following questions: What does "home" mean to Robert Boughton and his children? With whom do they feel most at home?

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1. **Read and understand** pages 1-61 in *Home* by Marilyn Robinson.
2. **The prompt asks** students to answer two main questions based on the reading. Answer the two prompt questions in the opening sentences.  
For instance, the first sentence could answer the first question: "For Robert Boughton and his children, "home" means reconnection."
3. Next, **include your thesis** for the entire post. This could be your second sentence.  
Main claim of the post: "Jack and Glory both need to reconnect with their father and with their childhood in order to feel at home."
4. **Provide supporting ideas** for your thesis from the reading.  
Supporting quotation that shows Glory's need to reconnect: Robinson writes, "Did she choose to be there, in that house, in Gilead? No, she certainly did not. Her father needed looking after, and she had to be somewhere, like every other human being on earth" (37).
5. You would **format this post** with MLA citations since it's for an English program. Follow the style guide (APA, MLA, or Turabian) used by your school or major.  
In addition, you could organize your post by using a pattern of assertion, evidence, and commentary throughout the rest of the post. Your direct responses or assertions would be your topic sentences. This method allows students to meet all prompt requirements and keep their posts organized.

## APPLICATION EXAMPLE #2

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EXAMPLE PROMPT: Read J. Gresham Machen's "Christianity and Culture." In 250-300 words, please answer the following questions: To what extent does Machen believe that Christians need to be involved in cultural and political controversies? What dangers does he perceive?

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1. **Read and understand** J. Gresham Machen's "Christianity and Culture."
2. **The prompt asks** students to answer two main questions based on the reading. Answer the two prompt questions in the opening sentences.

For instance, the first two sentences could answer the first question: "J. Gresham Machen's 'Christianity and Culture' offers a thoughtful framework for thinking about Christian cultural engagement in the modern world. Noting that Christ gave the church the mandate to live in the world, Machen suggests that cultural engagement should be an important part of each Christian's life."

3. Next, **include your thesis** for the entire post. Depending on how many sentences you write in response to step two, this could be your second or third sentence.

Main claim of the post: "Machen maintains that while Christians need to be engaged in cultural battles for the purpose of renewing civilization, they need to be wary of their temptation to let the culture influence their foundational religious convictions. Religion should inform the culture, but not vice versa."

4. **Provide supporting ideas** for your thesis from the reading.

Supporting quotation: Machen insists that "[m]odern culture is a mighty force. It is either subservient to the gospel or else it is the deadliest enemy of the gospel" (Machen, 1913, 13). He utterly rejects the notion that Christians could opt out of cultural engagement without their negligence negatively impacting the church.

5. You would **format this post** with Turabian citations since it's for a Government program. Follow the style guide (APA, MLA, or Turabian) used by your school or major.

"Nevertheless, Machen also recognizes that Christians should not be so overzealous about cultural engagement that they give it priority over biblical truth and theological doctrine. To do such a thing, he notes, is tantamount to making Christianity 'a human product' and a 'mere part of human culture' (Machen, 1913, 3). Machen believes that, ultimately, Christianity 'must pervade not merely all nations, but also all of human thought' (Machen, 1913, 6). For Machen, confining the gospel to the church and leaving the powerful culture-shapers of politics, universities, and the arts to unbelievers would represent a fundamental denial of Christ's call to his church to possess a living faith."