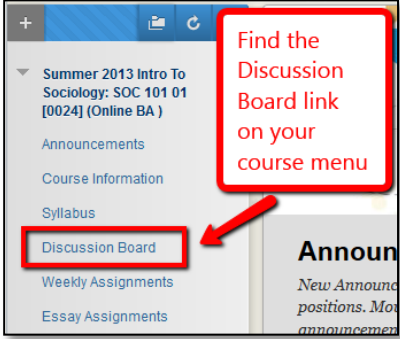
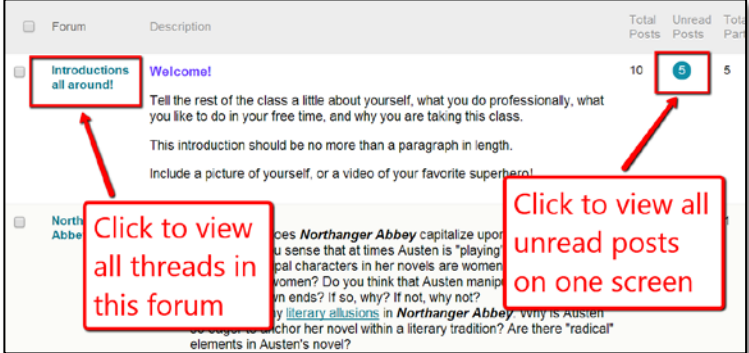


## Viewing and Navigating Discussion Forums

In **Creating and Using Discussion Forums**, we covered the steps involved in setting up a Discussion Forum and creating a link to the main Discussion Board area or individual forums from other content areas in your course. We also demonstrated how to view and respond to threads and posts. In this guide, we will examine some of the ways you can take advantage of Blackboard's features to organize threads in a discussion board and to view several posts on one page. More specifically, you will learn how to:

- View a discussion board using List View and Tree View
- Change the order in which threads appear in List View
- Expand and collapse threads in Tree View
- Mark individual posts as read or unread
- Flag certain posts for yourself that require further attention
- Assign tags to posts to group posts together for yourself and your students
- Use the collect feature to gather a selection of posts on one page to read in a continuous fashion online or to print to read offline

A review of Blackboard terminology: the main **Discussion Board** contains separate **forums**; each forum is made up of discussion **threads**; threads are composed of an original **post** and any subsequent **replies**.

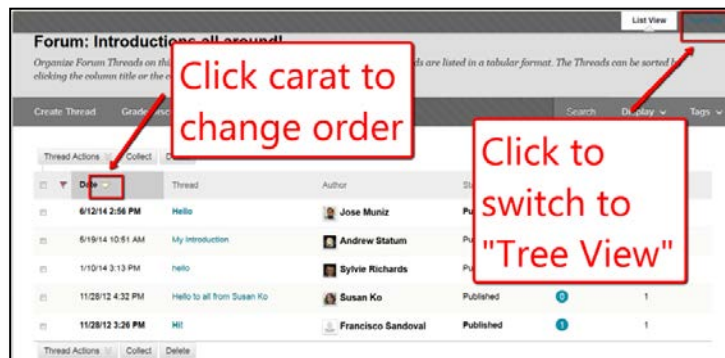
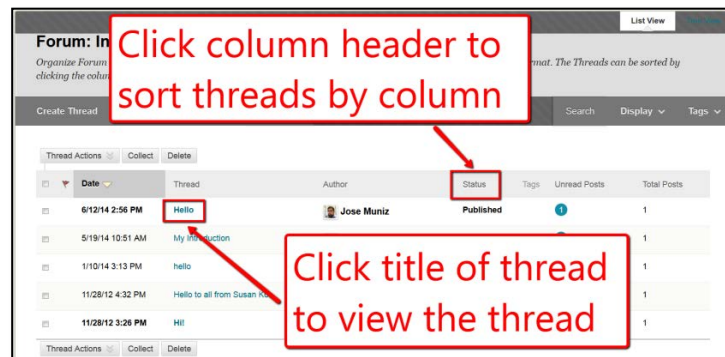
<p><u>Step 1</u></p> <p>To view the list of forums in your course, click on the "Discussion Board" link on the course menu.</p> <p>Note: This link might be titled differently; e.g. "Weekly Discussions" etc. If the course menu does not include a link to the discussion board, create one by clicking the + button on the upper left corner, click "Tool Link," and select "Discussion Board" from the drop-down menu. Enter a meaningful title, and make sure to select "Available to Users."</p>	
<p><u>Step 2</u></p> <p>After accessing the discussion board, choose which forum you wish to view. If you only want to read the <b>unread</b> posts in a forum, click on the white number in the blue dot under "Unread Posts" (see Steps 8-9).</p>	

### Step 3

When you click on the title of a forum, links to each thread within the forum appear by default in **List View**. In List View, you can sort the order in which threads appear by clicking the appropriate column header and the carat in that header. For example, to view the latest posts first, click on the "Date" header and click the carat to the right so that it faces down. If you want to view threads alphabetically by the last name of the person who made the original post, click on the "Author" header.

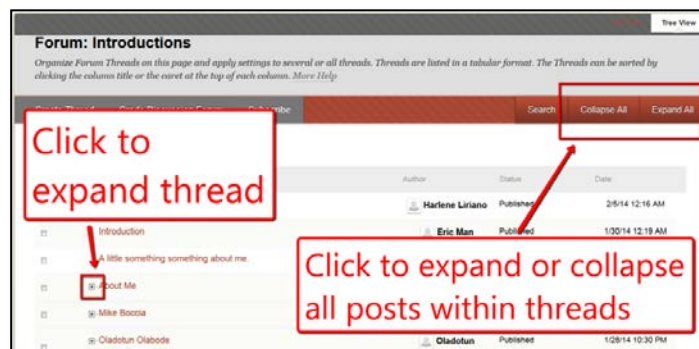
Note: You *cannot* see the threads along with replies displayed on the Forum level when in default **List View**. However, once you click on a thread you will see the replies in the order they were posted, with responses to replies as indented.

To see threads along with replies displayed from the Forum level, you can switch to **Tree View** by clicking the button in the upper right of the screen.



### Step 4

In Tree View, you will notice a plus (+) icon appearing to the left of all threads containing replies. Click that icon to view the replies to the thread's original post (see next step). If you want to view the title of every post within the forum, click the "Expand All" button in the upper right of the screen. You can also collapse all threads.



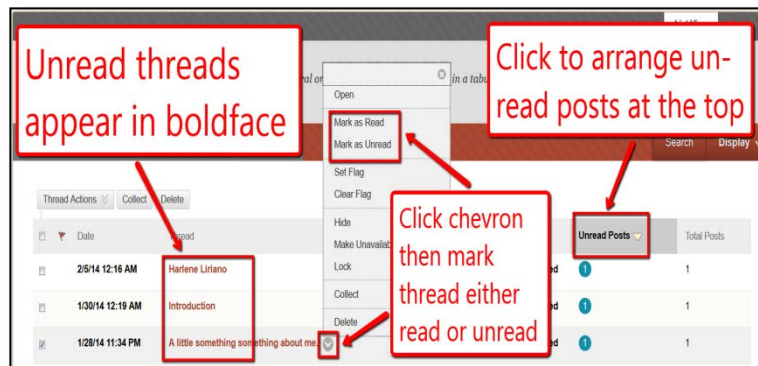
### Step 5

When you expand a thread in Tree View, the replies to the original post appear nested beneath the post. To collapse the thread so that only the original post appears, click the minus (-) icon to the left of the post's title. If any of those replies have replies, those can be expanded and collapsed as well. Let's take another look at List View. Switch back by clicking the button in the upper right corner of the screen.



### Step 6

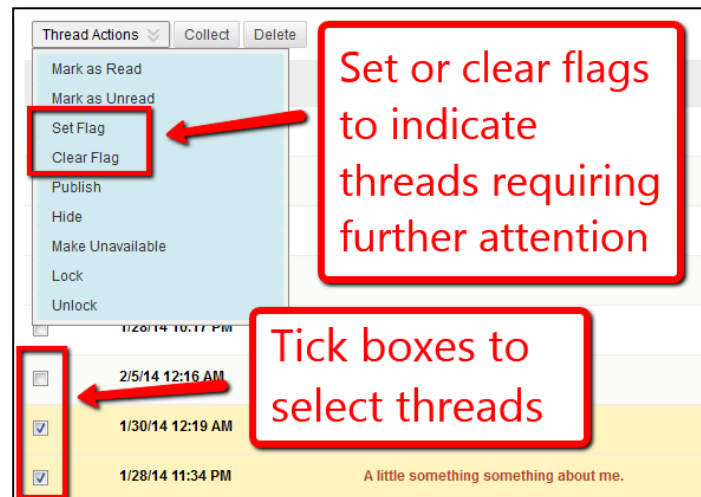
Notice that all threads containing unread posts appear in boldface. To rearrange the threads so that the unread posts appear at the top, click the "Unread Posts" header and switch the carat so that it faces down. When you view an unread post, Blackboard automatically marks it as read. However, if you do not have time to properly read a thread, you may want to mark it as unread. Do so by clicking the chevron to the right of the thread's title and selecting "Mark as Unread."



### Step 7

In addition to marking a thread as read or unread, you can set or clear a flag. You may use flags to indicate threads requiring further attention (students will not see these flags). Flag a thread by using the chevrons by that thread as in the previous step. Alternatively, flag multiple threads by selecting the boxes on the left side of the screen. Then, hover over "Thread Actions" and choose "Set Flag."

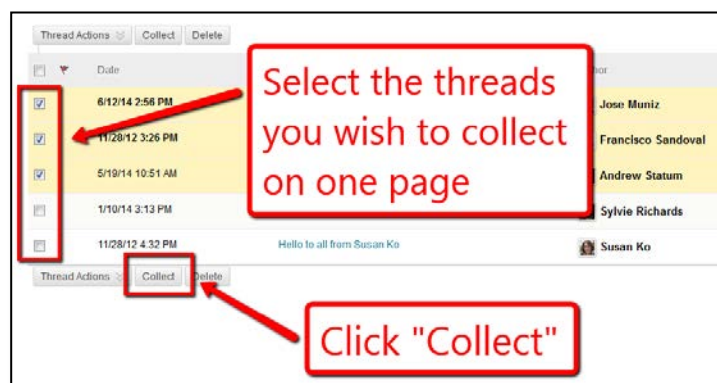
*N.B:* In Tree View (not pictured), there are no chevrons to the right of thread titles; however, you can mark posts as read or unread and manage flags by selecting the boxes to the left of each post and hovering over "Message Actions."



### Step 8

The default setting for threads allows us to view only one post at a time. To view several posts together on one screen, select those posts and click "Collect" (e.g. you could select all threads in a post and read them as a continuous conversation).

**Note:** If you click on the number beneath "Unread Posts" on the main Discussion Board page (see Step 2), Blackboard takes you to a Collection containing all posts marked unread.



### Step 9

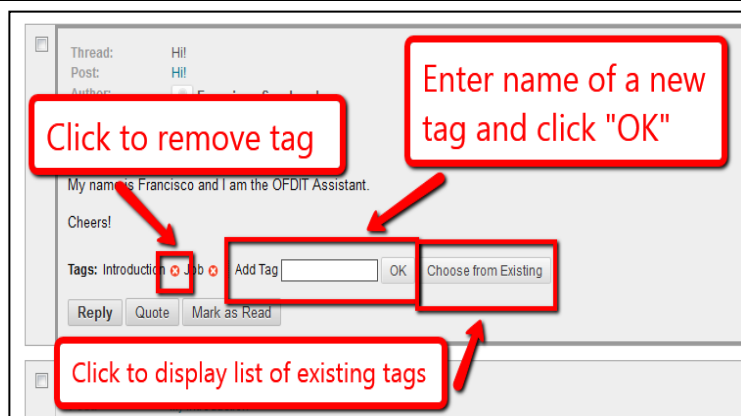
After you click "Collect" you will be taken to a screen titled "Collection." If you want to read these posts offline, click the "Print Preview" button at the top of the screen. Besides viewing multiple posts, another function of the Collection feature is tagging posts. Tag a single post by clicking the "Add" button under the text of the post. Tag multiple posts by selecting them, then typing a name in the "Tag Text" box at the top, and clicking "Add." By creating tags, you can make it easy for you and your students to access posts on the same subject.

*N.B.:* This feature is only enabled if the "Allow Post Tagging" is selected in the "Edit Forum" page for that forum. Also, only instructors can create tags to posts.



### Step 10

The image on the right shows a post with two different tags. Click the x icon to the right of a tag to remove that tag. To add an additional tag, type in a name in the "Add Tag" box and click "OK." You can display a list of existing tags by pressing "Choose from Existing."



### Step 11

You and your students will now see tags displayed under the "Tags" column in List View. Clicking on one of those tags opens a collection of all posts with that tag. If you only want to display title of threads with a certain tag, hover over the "Tags" button in the upper right and choose a tag.

*N.B.:* Tags are not displayed when using Tree View.

