Tweeting on High
Religion Prof Prothero tries to explain a faith in 140 characters

Providing a synopsis of each of eight major world religions in Twitter-speak takes creative condensation. On Stephen Prothero’s feed, an “Ahh!” at the end indicates that a religious philosophy includes a final payoff. The eightfold path in Buddhism becomes “Path=let go(d),” and his shorthand for atheism is “There is no uknowwho but Freud & Marx is his prophet,” because the words “delusional” and “oppressive” are too long.

The professor and chair of the religion department in the College of Arts & Sciences was already well-known before he took to tweeting last summer — his 2007 book, Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know — and Doesn’t, landed him appearances on The Daily Show and Oprah — but his effort to post on eight major world religions, plus atheism and other “faiths” (i.e., RedSox140), has attracted hundreds of followers. The core principles are distilled from Prothero’s upcoming book, The Great Religions, due out next year. And the goal? “Part of what I’m trying to do is to get people to understand that religion matters, that it’s a huge political and social force,” Prothero says. “And I’m interested in bringing the conversation in academia into the public square.”

Islam140: Allah told Gabriel told the prophet Muhammad (PBUH): Just 1 God, pray to Him 5x day, give alms, fast, hajj to Mecca. Submit! Ahh!

Buddhism140: Life=suffering. Clinging=the disease. Nirvana=the cure. Path=let go(d), be good/wise/mindful. Buddha=dried sh-t. Wake up! Ahh!

Hinduism140: Goal=escape life/death/rebirth. How? Know u r God or love Vishnu/Shiva/Goddess (u pick) or offer work&breath 2 God. Om Apu Ahh!

Judaism140: 1 God, 1 chosen people. Do the Law (all 613), tell the story (Egypt to Zion, exile to return), repair the world. 2010 in 97500!

Christianity140: Adam&Eve hungry so we=sinners. JC died&rose so we=saved. Is God3in1/Bible true/Kingdom coming/Pope Catholic? Believe/Love! Ahh!

Atheism140: Warning: religion=hazardous 2 ur health. There is no uknowwho but Freud & Marx is his prophet. Faith=D’oh. Be good w/o god(sic)!

Confucianism140: C says social harmony comes by self-cultivation. Heaven=silent, goodness speaks. So revere the old, do the rites. Be human!


Yoruba140: Ashe=power 2 make things happen. Gods have it. U2 So divine ur destiny. Connect w/ gods by sacrifice. Life=dance. U r the wise 1


BUDDHA TO BASEBALL
Here’s a look at Prothero’s Twitter-based course “Religion140: wiping out religious illiteracy 140 characters at a time.”

Sargent Camp Saved
Boston University’s Sargent Center for Outdoor Education, threatened with closure because of the University’s budget shortfall, will live on. As of September 2009, the wilderness retreat in Hancock, New Hampshire, will be operated by Nature’s Classroom, a nonprofit based in Charlton, Massachusetts, that offers residential environmental education programs for children in grades four through eight at thirteen locations in the Northeast.

“I’ve been an admiring competitor of the Sargent Center for years,” says John Santos, director of Nature’s Classroom. “I think BU will be putting us in charge of something they’ve been doing quite well.”

BU acquired the 700-acre property in 1932 for a Sargent College teacher training program. Since then, the center has served as an educational and retreat space for BU schools, colleges, and departments, as well as a research base for many BU faculty, particularly in natural sciences. Thomas Kunz, a College of Arts & Sciences professor of biology and director of the Center for Ecology and Conservation Biology, has been researching bats at the center for decades.

“I think this is a great solution to a difficult problem,” says Kunz, who will continue his bat research on the site.

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