

Why I give my students a ‘tragedy of the commons’ extra credit challenge

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The Washington Post:

Imagine you’re a student and your teacher poses this challenge to the entire class:

You can each earn some extra credit on your term paper. You get to choose whether you want 2 points added to your grade, or 6 points. But there’s a catch: if more than 10% of the class selects 6 points, then no one gets any points. All selections are anonymous, and the course grades are not curved.

I pose this exact challenge to students each semester in my social psychology course at the University of Maryland. This summer, one of my students happened to tweet about it, and his reaction went viral. This puzzle has resonated with millions of people around the globe—in the past week I’ve gotten responses from people in Poland, Spain, Italy, Croatia, New Zealand, and Paraguay, to name a few.

Read the whole story: [The Washington Post](#)