Resource Guide

Building Discussion Boards in Canvas

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Contents:

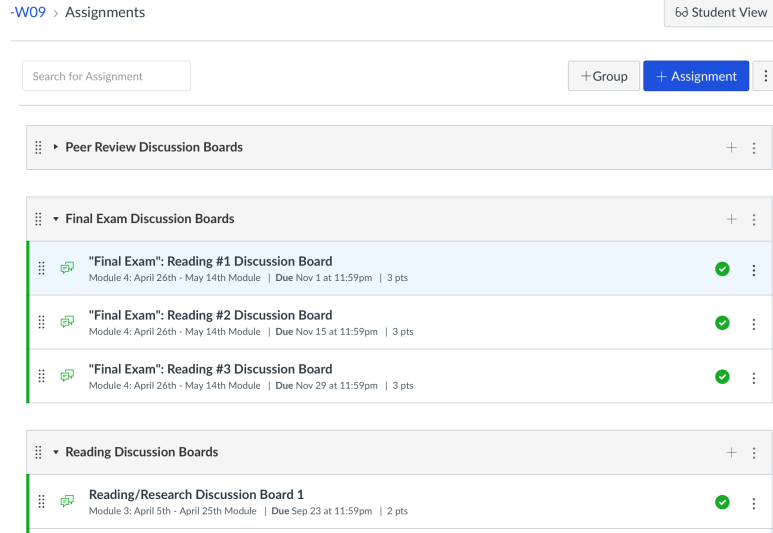Whether you are teaching in-person, online, or a hybrid course, Canvas Discussion Boards provide a space for asynchronous communication where students can discuss their readings and other course materials, individual research and process, or group planning. This is useful for creating not only online and out-of-class collaboration but can ensure more productive in-class time. For example, an instructor can create discussion boards that prompt reflections on course materials and work preceding an in-class discussion or workshop. Students could discuss a particular part of the reading or what they thought most important from a powerpoint, or about how they have previously approached a particular kind of assignment, their writing process, or lab process, before a workshop or lab. This can prepare students for using in-class time more productively, and for some students who struggle with speaking up in class, can provide a space to work through their thoughts methodically before entering a public space where they may be more anxious to interact on the spot.

1. Building Discussion Boards in Canvas

You can use discussion boards for various pedagogical purposes. For example, in the following image you will see how discussion boards can be used for multiple purposes and grouped in Canvas assignments for more informal peer reviews (although Canvas does also have a peer review system), reflecting on readings, or discussing personal research in preparation for a research project.
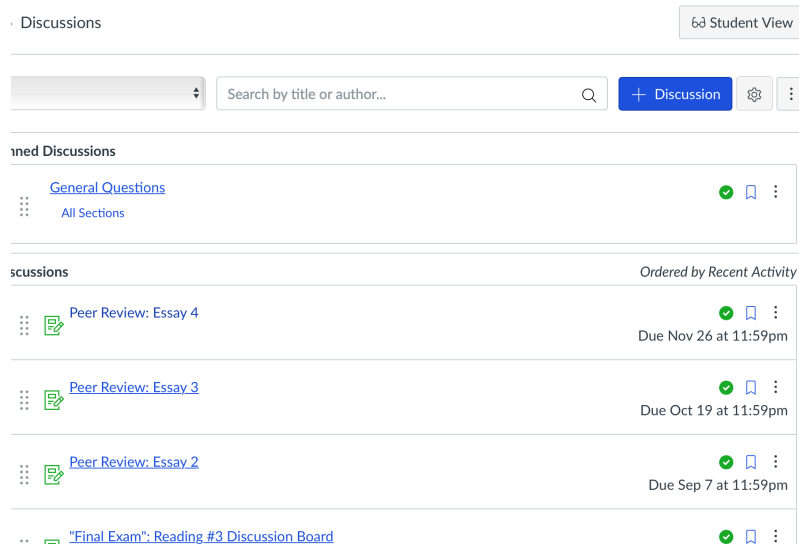
![Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching & Learning logo]

Image #1: Various Discussion Boards in Assignment Groups

Tip: Creating different kinds of discussion groups, such as project and assignment process and exam study groups, leads to more diverse ways of thinking about audience. This can encourage students to be more conscientious of audience and to have healthier approaches and mental attitudes toward receiving and providing insight and feedback within a working environment, allowing them to think and work beyond the student <--> instructor vacuum.

To create a discussion board, click on the "Discussions" link in the left hand menu of your Canvas course. Click then on the "+discussion" in the upper right-hand corner.

Image #2: Discussions Page

This will take you to the discussion board editing page where you can provide the title, instructions and prompt, other media, and the settings for the assignment, such as due dates, grading, and availability.

Image #3: Discussion Board Text Boxes

-W09 › Discussions › Create new

⊘ Not Published

Topic Title

Edit   View   Insert   Format   Tools   Table

12pt   Paragraph   B   I   U   A ˅   ✎ ˅   T² ˅   🔗 ˅   🖼 ˅   ▶ ˅   📄 ˅   🔌 ˅   ⋮

p   0 words   </> ↗ ⋮

Post to

Provide the title and prompt text and include any media you would like the students to consider for the discussion assignment. Following these text boxes are the assignment options. One great option is not allowing students to see posts until they have written their initial post, you can also set up a group discussion and availability.

Image #4: Options

No one is a perfect writer! No matter how long they have been writing, everyone must write drafts, and everyone must edit and revise. You are not a "bad" writer for needing drafts, for needing to edit and revise! Good writers have multiple drafts and edit and revise their work MULTIPLE times.

So read this article and then post answers to three discussion questions that are listed at the end of the article.

Post initial post by **Thursday, March 25th at 11:59pm**

Respond to at least one fellow student's post by **Sunday, March 28th at 11:59pm**

Do not simply post "oh yes, I agree" or something like that. You must give substantial responses and interact with the post for full

p   151 words   </> ↗ ⋮

Attachment   Choose File   1-Shitty First Drafts

Options

☐ Allow threaded replies
☑ Users must post before seeing replies
☐ Enable podcast feed
☑ Graded
☐ Allow liking

For further options click the "Graded" box to see where you can set: the points value, which discussion assignment group this discussion board belongs to (see image #1), the possibility of peer reviewed discussion boards, and who the discussion is assigned to, and due dates.

Image #5: Graded Options

Group Discussion

☐ This is a Group Discussion

Points Possible   2

Display Grade as   Points ⬍

Assignment Group   Reading DB ⬍

Peer Reviews

☐ Require Peer Reviews

Assign

Assign to

Everyone   ✕

Due

Aug 26 11:59pm   📅

Thu Aug 26, 2021 11:59pm

Image #6: Graded Options continued

Peer Reviews

☐ Require Peer Reviews

Assign

Assign to

Everyone   ✕

Due

Aug 26 11:59pm   📅

Thu Aug 26, 2021 11:59pm

Available from   **Until**

📅   Sep 5 11:59pm   📅

Sun Sep 5, 2021 11:59pm

＋ Add

Cancel   Save

Image #7 : Choosing an Assignment Group

Points Possible   2

Display Grade as

| |
| **Peer Review DB** |
| **Final Exam Discussion Boards** |
| **Journals** |
| **Final Exam** |
| ✓ **Reading DB** |
| **Assignments** |
| **Imported Assignments** |
| **[New Group]** |

Assignment Group

Peer Reviews

☐ Require Peer Reviews

Assign

Assign to

| Everyone   ✕ |

Due

Tip: The "assign to" option can be useful in multiple scenarios, one way is to use it for split classes of undergraduates and graduate students, another is to have students responsible for preparing different discussion points about course materials before coming together in-class.

When finished don't forget to click the "Save" button at the bottom of the screen! If you are ready for it to be available to students, click on the "Save & Publish" button. Don't worry, if you have set a different availability within the settings, it will not be available to students until that date you selected for availability, even if it is published.

2.Using Group Discussion Settings

The group assignment option in Canvas is useful and intuitive. If you want to be able to have small online or pre-class group discussions you can set canvas up to group the students in their own discussion boards and even can randomize a group leader or you can set the groups up individually yourself if you would prefer.

When you are setting up the discussion board options, if you click the box next to "This is a Group Discussion" it will provide a pop-up box with these options:

Image #8: The Groups Discussion Pop-Up

Note how you can create the group set name, provide the option for the students to select their own discussion group or to keep groups together that are already set, setup the group structure (ie. you have 20 students and want 5 groups of 4, or 4 groups of 5), and have the option for who is a group leader in the discussion.

Image #9: Groups in Discussion Set

> *Tip: If you want to mix it up so that students are not always in the same group then having different discussion group sets is helpful.*

3.Setting Discussion Board Due Dates

An issue in discussion boards no matter the LMS is how to set the due dates. There is yet to be a system that allows for a double due date: ie. Initial posts due on X and response posts due on Y. So, often instructors ask: How do I manage the discussion board due dates? Do I set up the due date for the initial post or the response post?

The simplest solution (so far) is to set the due date for the initial post and make sure to have both dates clearly stated in the instructions. The due date setting in Canvas should be for the initial post. The final availability date and time can then be set for when the responses are due.

Image #10: Set the Due Date and Availability "until" date

Image #11: What the Prompt Might Look Like for Clarifying Due Dates

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	✔ **Published**	✏ **Edit** ⋮

This is a graded discussion: 2 points possible   due Aug 26

Lamott Reading Discussion Board

Read the following linked article. 1-Shitty First Drafts.pdf ⤓

Do not worry, it is very short but extremely helpful I think in recognizing some important aspects of writing:

No one is a perfect writer! No matter how long they have been writing, everyone must write drafts, and everyone must edit and revise. You are not a "bad" writer for needing drafts, for needing to edit and revise! Good writers have multiple drafts and edit and revise their work MULTIPLE times.

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Search entries or author	Unread	👁	⬆	⬇		✓ Subscribe

↩ Reply

Tip: If you have discussion boards you want to keep very close track of, such as general questions, concerns, assignment emergencies, then you can click the "Subscribe" button seen in the above image and receive email alerts from particular discussion boards.

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center by email.