

Resource Guide

Building Discussion Boards in Canvas

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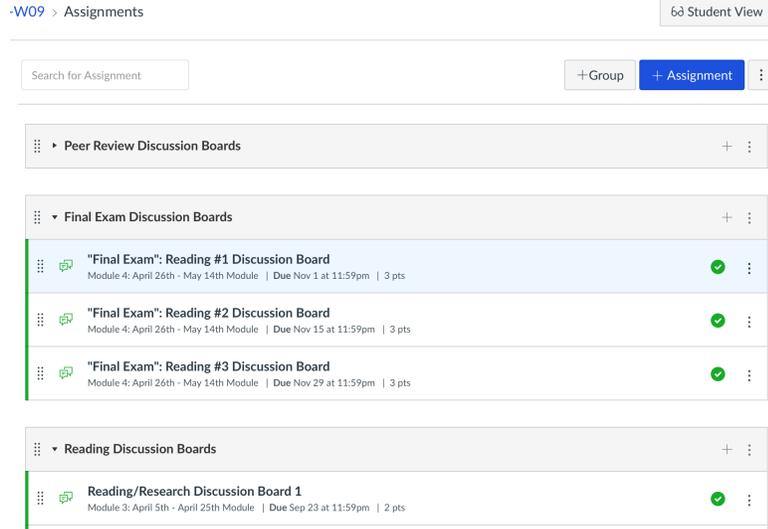
1. Building Discussion Boards in Canvas
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Whether you are teaching in-person, online, or a hybrid course, Canvas Discussion Boards provide a space for asynchronous communication where students can discuss their readings and other course materials, individual 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.

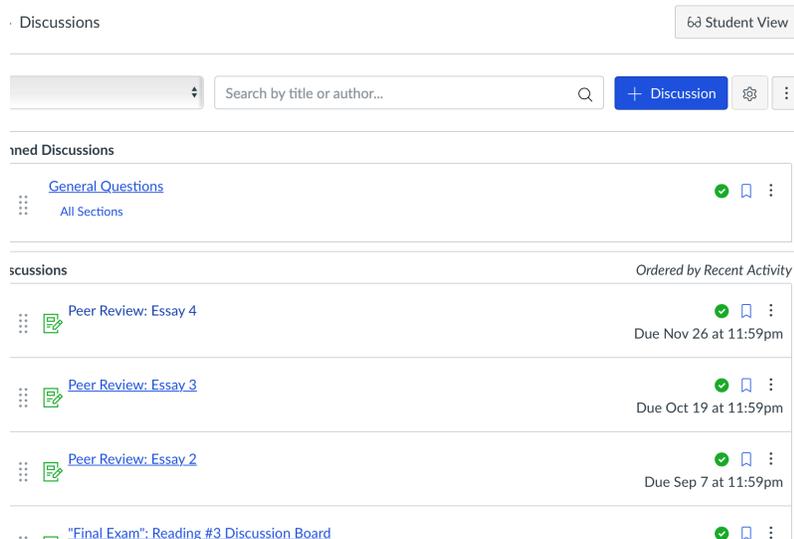
Image #1: Various Discussion Boards in Assignment Groups



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 [Color] [Background Color] T² [Link] [Image] [Video] [Audio] [Code] [More]

p [Share] [Like] 0 words [Code] [Link] [More]

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 [Share] [Like] 151 words [Code] [Link] [More]

Attachment 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

Display Grade as

Assignment Group

Peer Reviews Require Peer Reviews

Assign

Assign to

Due

Thu Aug 26, 2021 11:59pm

Image #6: Graded Options continued

Peer Reviews Require Peer Reviews

Assign

Assign to

Due

Thu Aug 26, 2021 11:59pm

Available from

Until

Sun Sep 5, 2021 11:59pm

+ Add

Cancel Save

Image #7 : Choosing an Assignment Group

The image shows a portion of the Canvas assignment settings interface. At the top, there is a 'Points Possible' field with the value '2'. Below it is the 'Display Grade as' dropdown menu. The 'Assignment Group' dropdown menu is open, showing a list of options: 'Peer Review DB', 'Final Exam Discussion Boards', 'Journals', 'Final Exam', 'Reading DB' (which is selected with a blue highlight and a checkmark), 'Assignments', 'Imported Assignments', and '[New Group]'. Below the dropdown menu is the 'Peer Reviews' section with a checkbox for 'Require Peer Reviews'. At the bottom, there is an 'Assign' section with a text box containing 'Assign to' and a dropdown menu showing 'Everyone' with a close button (X).

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

Group Set Name

Self Sign-Up Allow self sign-up [?]
 Require group members to be in the same section

Group Structure Create groups now
 Limit groups to members (Leave blank for no limit)

Leadership Automatically assign a student group leader
 Set first student to join as group leader
 Set a random student as group leader

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

.463 > People > Groups

Everyone Beowulf Bruts and Monsters Chaucer Decameron

Self sign-up is enabled for these groups. [?]
 Groups are limited to 4 members.

Unassigned Students (0)

There are currently no students in this group. Add a student to get started.

Groups (5)

▶ Decameron 1	0 / 4 students	⋮
▶ Decameron 2	0 / 4 students	⋮
▶ Decameron 3	0 / 4 students	⋮
▶ Decameron 4	0 / 4 students	⋮
▶ Decameron 5	0 / 4 students	⋮

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

The screenshot shows the Canvas LMS interface for setting assignment parameters. On the left is a blue navigation sidebar with icons for Account, Dashboard, Courses, Calendar, Inbox, History, Commons, and Help. The main content area displays the following settings:

- Allowed Attempts:** A dropdown menu set to "Unlimited".
- Group Assignment:** A checkbox labeled "This is a Group Assignment" which is unchecked.
- Peer Reviews:** A checkbox labeled "Require Peer Reviews" which is unchecked.
- Anonymous Instructor Annotations:** A checkbox labeled "Anonymize all annotations made by instructors on submissions for this assignment in DocViewer" which is unchecked.
- Assign to:** A dropdown menu set to "Everyone".
- Due:** A date field with a calendar icon, set to a date in the future.
- Available from:** A date field with a calendar icon, set to a date in the future.
- Until:** A date field with a calendar icon, set to a date in the future.
- + Add:** A button at the bottom of the settings panel.

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

The image shows a screenshot of a discussion board interface. At the top right, there are three buttons: a green 'Published' button with a checkmark, an 'Edit' button with a pencil icon, and a three-dot menu icon. Below this is a light blue header bar with the text 'This is a graded discussion: 2 points possible' on the left and 'due Aug 26' on the right. The main content area has a title 'Lamott Reading Discussion Board'. The text of the post reads: '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.', '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', and 'Do not simply post "oh yes, I agree" or something like that. You must give substantial responses and interact with the post for full points.' Below the text is a control bar with a search input field labeled 'Search entries or author', an 'Unread' button, an eye icon, two arrow icons (up and down), and a 'Subscribe' button with a checkmark. At the bottom is a 'Reply' button with a left-pointing arrow.

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](#).