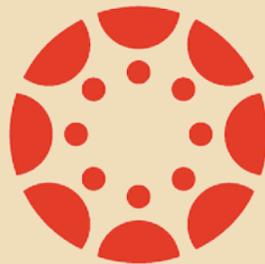# CANVAS

Navigating De Anza College Online Courses

Navigational Basics

Dashboard

When you first log into Canvas, you will see your Dashboard. This is the place where you can see all courses you are associated with, regardless of your role in your class. If you have a role in many courses, you may need to use the Courses button to see the complete list.

The Dashboard is a global overview of Canvas, with items in your "To Do" and "Coming Up" list (right side of your screen) incorporating all items from courses in which you are enrolled.

The icons in "Global Navigation" (far left) are also associated with all courses of which you are a part. For instance, if you click on "Calendar" in Global Navigation, you will see calendar event for all of your courses (assignments, quizzes, events, etc.). If you click on "inbox", you will see your options for emailing people in the classes of which you are a part.
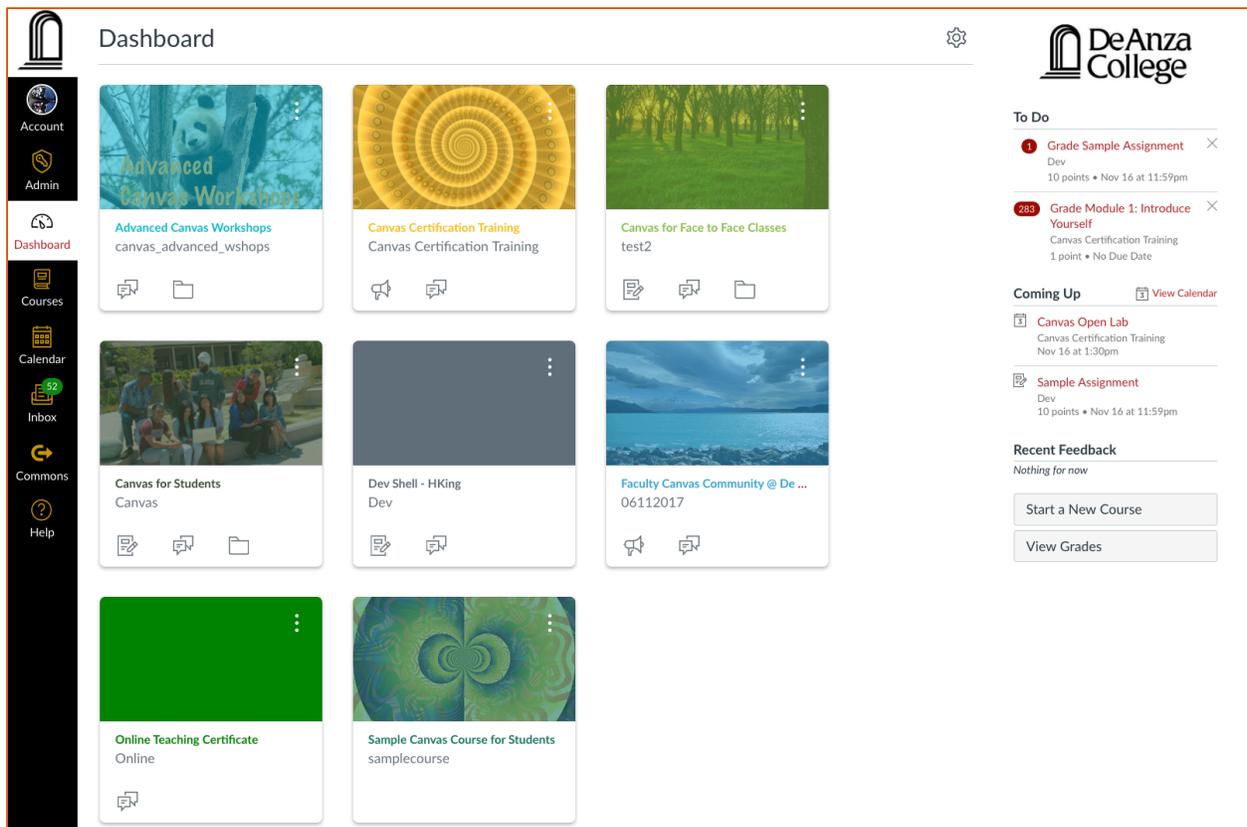
Global Navigation

Course Cards

Global Sidebar

Course Navigation

When you click on a course card, you will enter the online classroom. The middle section of the page is the course home page, which may be different from course to course.

Instructors may use from just a few to many course navigation links. Some instructors prefer to limit access to course navigation links and have their students access course materials primarily through Modules; others prefer students to access all activities, pages, etc. from the Course Navigation menu.
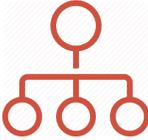

| Course Navigation Menu | Course Home Page | Course Sidebar/Activity Stream |

Course Organization

As with face-to-face courses, faculty organize their online courses in different ways. Some focus their courses around discussions, others around assignments; some use Canvas only as a pass through to publisher content on external websites.

Most online classes use Canvas Modules as their main form of organization to help students stay on task. Modules can be organized by weeks, by topics, by chapters, by units or in any other way a faculty member feels it best to present their course content. Some faculty will use a combination of tactics; for instance, having weekly modules but also having a module for course resources and/or a quarter-long project.

Positives: Modules help keep students on track and are a place for instructors to present material in logical "chunks" or groupings where navigating through the course activities is logical.

Pedagogical/Design Considerations: Modules should make the weekly assignments and activities look manageable, and faculty may need to reorganize how they present content in order for modules to no be overwhelming to students. Break down information in smaller chunks, use headings within modules to create a predictable weekly or unit-based roadmap for students, consolidate long lists of resources or downloadable files on a single content page.

The following are two examples of possible Module organization in an online course.
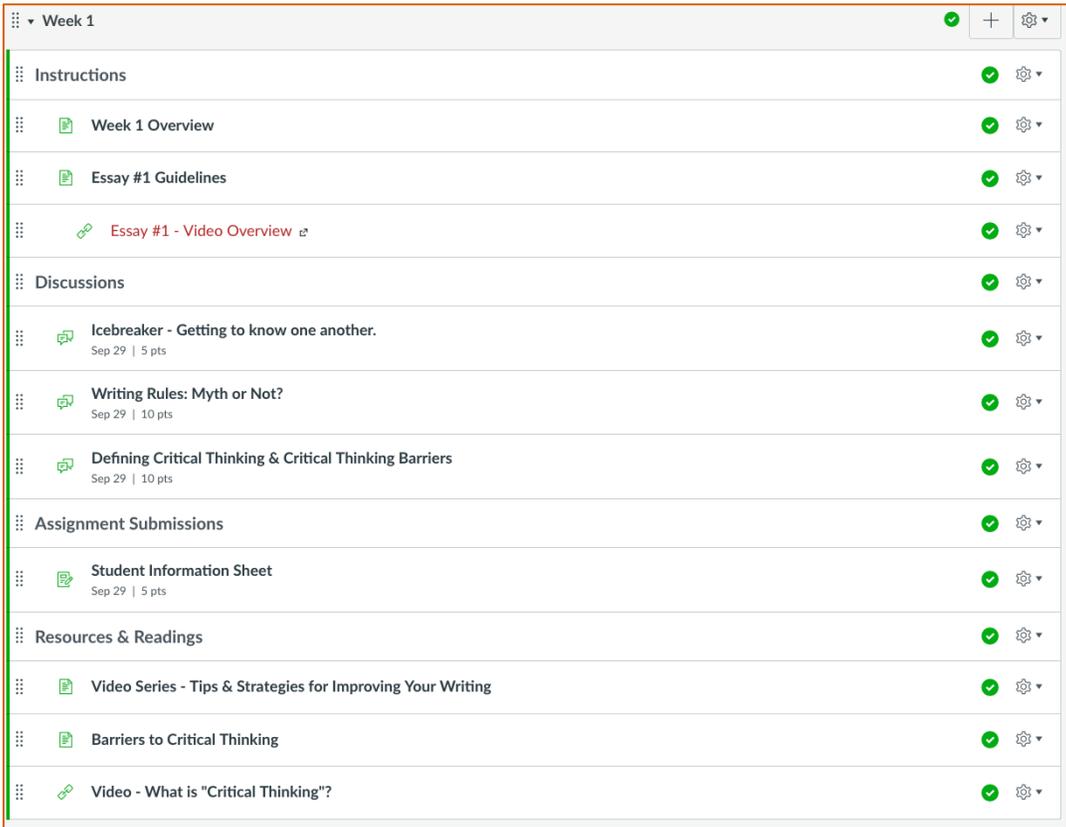
⋮ ▾ Week 1	✓ + ⚙ ▾
⋮ Instructions	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ 📄 Week 1 Overview	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ 📄 Essay #1 Guidelines	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ 🔗 Essay #1 - Video Overview ↗	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ Discussions	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ 💬 Icebreaker - Getting to know one another. Sep 29 | 5 pts	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ 💬 Writing Rules: Myth or Not? Sep 29 | 10 pts	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ 💬 Defining Critical Thinking & Critical Thinking Barriers Sep 29 | 10 pts	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ Assignment Submissions	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ 📝 Student Information Sheet Sep 29 | 5 pts	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ Resources & Readings	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ 📄 Video Series - Tips & Strategies for Improving Your Writing	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ 📄 Barriers to Critical Thinking	✓ ⚙ ▾
⋮ 🔗 Video - What is "Critical Thinking"?	✓ ⚙ ▾

Figure 1 Example of a Weekly Module format that uses headings to organize information
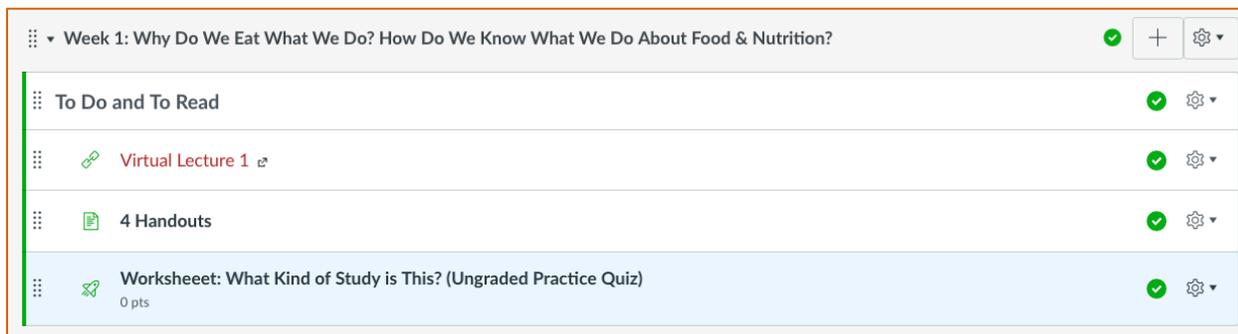
Figure 2 Example of a Weekly Module format that truncates information into Content Pages and Links

Understanding Module Icons

Each item in Canvas Modules will be designated by an icon:

Content Page – used to create pages that contain information, links, and/or embedded videos.

Activity/Assignment – used for online assignments. Some assignments may be file uploads, others may be text entry. Some instructors will link to publisher content, which will show as an assignment. This is also where instructors can integrate Turnitin assignments. If an online course has on-campus exams, these exams may appear with the assignment icon instead of a quiz icon since quizzes in Canvas imply quizzes that are given online.

Quizzes/Exams – used to designate online quizzes and exams that take place in Canvas.

Discussions – used to designate online discussions. Discussions may be for the entire class or organized into smaller groups.

Links – used to designate links to online resources and external websites.

File Downloads – used to designate documents the instructor wants the students to download. Canvas also provides an inline preview of most document types so students can view online instead of downloading.

The Course Home Page

The course home page is the students' first exposure to their online classroom. Faculty tend to choose one of three options for the home page: A self-designed page, the "Modules" page, or the course Syllabus page. Each has its advantages and the choice is up to the instructor.

A Self-Designed Home Page

Faculty can give a visual and written description of the class with links to pertinent information. These pages can be simple or much more detailed. Some faculty will just include text and links, others will include images, while others may incorporate HTML coding to have columns and tabs on their self-designed page.

Positives: A personal touch to the online classroom, and a landing page where students can find pertinent information with few clicks.

Pedagogical Considerations: Once the beginning of the quarter has passed, students may find the extra click of getting to modules where the majority of content resides to be an irritation. Students may be more likely to just jump to their "to-do" list, and bypass modules, which may lead to them missing out on important information that is not an assignment or quiz. Self-designed home pages are best when they are personal and relevant. Information about course navigation and student learning outcomes, links to announcements and course modules, and instructor contact information are some things faculty may want to include on their homepage

> "Don't raise your voice,
> improve your argument"
>
> – Desmond Tutu
>
> [Course Overview] [Syllabus] 📋 🔗 [Instructor] [Online Office]
>
> Welcome to COMM 9! During the term, we will study argumentation as a means of testing the validity of viewpoints through inquiry and reasoning. We will examine both verbal and written arguments during the quarter, however, this class emphasizes writing much more heavily than your typical COMM class. Ultimately, I hope you complete this class as a more efficient communicator who can craft reasonable and defensible arguments in writing, while addressing and resolving differences with those who may not share your views.
>
> Below, I've included some information on how to find things on this site for a more seamless experience in the course, in addition to the current week's update.
>
> **Navigating this page**
>
> **Course Overview:** Click here to access an orientation to the course and information about optimizing Canvas.
>
> **Syllabus:** Links to the most current copy of the course syllabus. Download and refer back to this regularly!
>
> **Instructor:** This link includes my contact info, office hour and office location so you can better reach me.
>
> **Online Office:** Post questions about the course to me or your peers here: Especially if you think others might benefit.
>
> On the left navigation, "Home" will always take you back to this page. "Modules" will direct you to a week by week layout of the course. "Grades" will give you an up to date assessment on your progress and standing in the course.

Figure 3 Example of a Course Home Page

Modules as the Course Home Page

Some instructors prefer Modules to serve as the course home page so that students can jump right into course content without an extra click.

Positives: Students are more likely to read important course content pages and files that are not associated with a due date. Students tend to complete tasks in the order prescribed by the Modules without being sidetracked by the course "To Do" list.

Pedagogical Considerations: A course home page is a way for faculty to virtually present themselves to students. The Modules page is rather dry, but that doesn't mean faculty can't introduce themselves in other ways. If Modules are used as the home page, faculty can introduce themselves to students via an introductory email or an introductory content page within Modules.

Canvas Syllabus as the Course Home Page

Some faculty prefer the Canvas syllabus as the course home page because it provides an automatically-generated list of all of the published assignments in the course, much like a course calendar in a traditional syllabus might provide. Additional custom text and pictures can be added to the top.

Positives: Students have easy access to all of their assignments for the quarter.

Pedagogical Considerations: Seeing all of the assignments as the first exposure to the course may be overwhelming for some students. If the Canvas Syllabus is used as the course home page (or used at all), it should contain the information from the official course syllabus, either by copying and pasting or by linking to a downloadable syllabus. Faculty should verify the course assignments and activities have due dates so they are presented in a logical order for students.

Figure 4 Example of the Canvas Syllabus with customization as the Course Home Page

Communication Strategies

Canvas provides a variety of platforms for rich student/teacher and student/student interactions. Each faculty member will have different communication strategies for their online course based on what they feel works best for their students and what is most effective for their student learning outcomes.

Discussions

Most online courses utilize online discussions. Some courses will have two or three focused discussions during the term while others will have weekly discussions on a topic, or even multiple weekly discussions. Other instructors may utilize the discussion feature for weekly Q and A or online office hours. Some discussions may be small group discussions while others will include the whole class at once.

Pedagogical Considerations:

- Graded discussions will have the most student participation.
- Discussions should be meaningful and support one or more student learning outcomes.
- Giving students clear communication guidelines for online discussions will make sure exchanges are respectful, equitable and inclusive.
- Consider the amount of time it will take for students to read all of the discussions in the class and respond to one or more of them. Keep the amount of time in mind when creating requirements for an online discussion. Group discussions can help focus students, control the amount of time on task, and build rich online conversations.
- Be reasonable with word counts, if you require them at all.

To Participate or Not to Participate?

This is something each faculty member will approach differently, and it depends on the type of discussions, the amount of interaction already taking place between students, and the personal preference of the faculty member. Some will guide the conversation with short responses while others may provide specific feedback in the discussion thread. Some faculty prefer a summative post when the due date approaches, or will share a content page with a summative response after the discussion is over. Others may prefer to write individual responses to students when they are grading discussions.

Announcements

Faculty often use the announcements feature in Canvas to regularly communicate with their students. Announcements, by default, go to the students' email. Many faculty also utilize the feature where the subjects of recent announcements appear at the top of the course home page. While some faculty may leave the option for students to comment on the announcements, many turn this feature off, preferring to reserve announcements for one-way communications and for students to email directly any questions.

Recent Announcements	
> Essay #3 Feedback Returned.	Nov 13 at 8:30am
> Welcome to Week 8!	Nov 13 at 8am
> Welcome to Week 7!	Nov 6 at 10:42am
> Writing Workshop and Annotated Bibliographies	Nov 3 at 11:17am

Collaborations

Collaborations are a Canvas feature that integrates with Google Docs. Some instructors use collaborations for group projects and use the shared Google sheets to communicate with the different project groups.

Conversations/Inbox

Canvas' Conversations function much like email, where instructors can send messages to individual students, student groups, or the entire class. Canvas acts as a pass-through to both the instructor and students' regular email – messages sent in Canvas will go to the student/instructor email address and can be responded to without logging into Canvas; a record of all messages sent will be stored in Canvas.

Submission Comments

When grading, instructors often use the in-line grading tools available in Canvas as well as an overall Submission Comment. Much conversation between instructor and student can occur in these comments as students have the opportunity to respond. These comments are visible in the gradebook and in Conversations/Inbox.

Page 1 of 2 — ZOOM +

As for week two, I got the jist of the strength of my writing. I got back my in class essay and I had a 3 out 5 points. In the comments, it said the I didn't cite the title and author, no forecast, movie synopsis, and connection. I learned what my mistakes were and I don't want to repeat the them. I hope to keep moving forward in my writing rather than being stuck at a certain point. I'd also like to move that 3 points into 4 points out 5. I want to get better at this and by learning from my mistake is where it starts.

Learning from mistakes are the best because you can't have the same mistake twice, right? Wrong. All my life I can't connect the intro and the first body paragraph. I've heard the same thing over and over again, but can't get the grasp of it. I'd like to learn how to connect each body paragraph with one another so it will sound smooth when reading. Other than learning how to connect each body paragraph, I also want to learn how to properly write a solid forecast. I've heard of it before, but it was never brought out to my attention that I wasn't doing it.

This week, I had a tough time with my girlfriend. I had a big fight on wednesday morning and couldn't get myself to go to school for the whole day. I know I still should've went, but I know I can't focus when I'm not in the mood. It's a nasty trait I have. I'm a stubborn person sometimes because of that. Another obstacle that always appear every week is work. Work gets in the way of me doing school work and relaxation time. I just wish I was rich.

This weeks success is doing all my work on time. Other than my reading class because I skipped the day where we had to turn it in, but it was still a success for me. To be honest, I consider being alive a success. I have been feeling down lately and not feeling good about myself. I don't have any confidence in myself and i'm not satisfied

Make sure you have an all [...]

start documenting the changes for the [...]

TRUE! You'll be making a different [...]

Ahhh that depend s on the type of ess [...]

The PREVIEW of your essay. Just [...]

Mark, thanks for sharing. I am glad y [...]

Ahh, it is hard to have to work. I had [...]

TRUE. I am sorry to year this Mark. [...]

It doesn't have to be psychologists [...]

Submitted: Oct 6 at 1:19am

Submitted Files: (click to load)

Week 2.docx

Assessment

Grade 2 out of 2

Assignment Comments

Take one week at a time Mark. Use this space to express the excess energy and the unhappy feelings. Sometimes, that is just enough to keep you going.
Oct 14 at 11:48pm

Add a Comment

Submit

Figure 5 Image of a sample graded paper with inline instructor comments and a general comment and grade on the right. Students can respond to the assignment comments if they choose.

"Message Students Who"

One of the most effective features of Canvas is the ability for instructors to immediately reach out to students who have not done well on a particular assignment to offer advice, or to reach out to students who haven't submitted yet to remind them to do so. "Message Students Who" finds students that fit the parameter the teacher chooses and sends each student what looks like an individual message. This feature is accessed through the gradebook.

Figure 6 Message Students Who...window