Collaboration and Social Media in Canvas

Div of IT Learning Technologies
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Collaborations and Social Media in Canvas

This workshop will introduce participants to the Canvas Collaborations and Social Media Integration tools.

Introduction to Collaborations

The Collaborations tool in Canvas lets teachers and learners work together with the online authoring tools **Google Docs** and **EtherPad**. Any Canvas user can create a collaboration and invite other users to join in. Both options include online word processors that allow users to create and format text documents and collaborate with other people in real time. Word documents and Excel spreadsheets can also be uploaded for collaboration.

How do I activate Collaborations?

The first step for using the collaboration tools in Canvas is to enable the **Collaborations** component in Canvas. Canvas components are enabled when they appear black in the navigation bar to the left.

If the **Collaborations** component is inactive (grayed out) in your section:

1. Click **Settings**, then the **Navigation** tab.
2. Drag the **Collaborations** cell to the top list.
3. Click **Save**.

Click and drag the Collaborations tool to the list above to activate
How do I start a new Collaboration?

Once the **Collaborations** component is enabled,

1. Click on the **Collaborations** link in the navigation menu.

2. Click **Start a New Collaboration**.

3. Select either **Google Docs** or **EtherPad** from the “Collaborate Using” drop-down menu. The two options are described in more detail below. (More information about **Google Docs** and **EtherPad** can be found at their respective websites.)
4. Enter a **Document Name** (required), a **Description** (optional), and a selection of course **Users** to collaborate with to be given editing rights.

5. Click **Start Collaborating**.

**Google Docs**

Collaborators will need a **Google** account in order to participate in Google Docs collaborations.

1. Follow the steps above, selecting **Google Docs**.
2. Click **Start Collaborating**; you will be prompted to authorize Canvas to access your Google Account by signing in to your gmail account.
3. Once access has been granted, collaboration can begin:

   ![Google Docs collaboration screenshot]

**Chat Feature**

**Google Docs** can also incorporate the **google chat** window for real-time discussion by collaborators. When another user is viewing the collaboration, their name will appear in the upper right hand corner of the window. Google chat is only visible within Google docs when there are two or more people viewing the document.

**Comment Feature**

Google docs allows you to comment on documents in a sidebar, as well as respond to other users’ comments.
Comments can be hidden or opened by clicking on the Comments button.

**EtherPad**

1. After you click Start Collaborating, a window with an access code will appear. Click Create pad.

![Create Pad]

2. Begin Collaborating:

![Chat Feature]

**Chat Feature**

EtherPad also has a chat window within the document space. This appears whether there is one user or multiple users viewing the document.
Note: Users who are selected to collaborate on a document are either (1) automatically authorized (if they've already added their Google Docs/EtherPad info to their Canvas Profile) or (2) sent an invitation. Either way, a notification goes to the student according to his or her notification preferences in Canvas. The student then logs into Canvas, clicks the link for that collaboration, and is taken to the Google/EtherPad login page (if he or she is not already logged in).

Activity 1: Create an EtherPad Collaboration

1. Click on the Collaborations link in the navigation menu.
2. Click Start a New Collaboration.
3. Select EtherPad from the “Collaborate Using” drop-down menu.
4. Enter a Document Name (required), a Description (optional).
5. Click Start Collaborating.
6. Click Create pad.
7. Begin Collaborating by typing some text into the EtherPad document.

How to edit a Collaboration

Click Collaborations in the navigation menu to go to the Collaborations page.

1. To Edit the Collaboration information, click the pencil icon to the right of the Collaboration you want to change.

2. Now you can change the title or description, and add or delete collaborators.

To access the actual collaboration document, click on the title of the collaboration to be taken into either GoogleDocs or EtherPad to see the actual collaboration.

How to delete a Collaboration

To Delete a Collaboration, click the trash bin icon. Google Docs will give you the option of deleting the link just from Canvas, or from Google Docs as well.
EtherPad will only ask if you are sure you want to delete the document. Note: Once a document is deleted it cannot be retrieved.
Discussions

A Discussion, is a forum wherein the instructor and students can engage in a virtual, asynchronous conversation around a defined topic. Setting up a discussion is straightforward, though there are a number of options that define differently the function and behavior of a discussion, each of which is addressed below.

Starting a discussion

1. Click on Discussions in the navigation menu. (Canvas components are enabled when they appear black in the navigation bar to the left. If the Collaborations component is inactive (grayed out) in your section, you will need to go to Settings to enable it.)

2. Click on the blue button labeled Start a discussion. Clicking this will invoke a new discussion window wherein you may introduce and edit content. (As Discussions are created, they will be listed here with a search window with the parameter modifiers “Unread” and “Assignments.”)
3. Use the *Rich Content Editor* to manipulate text (font size and character, highlighting, left-, center- and right-justified), insert pictures, create hyperlinks, etc. (A Discussion is structurally the same as a Wiki page.)

4. You can also include course materials (links, files and images) from the right content pane.

5. You can choose when the discussion will be available (even if it is non-graded) by setting the ‘Available From’ and ‘Until’ options.

6. Choose from the **Options** available to a Discussion. (These can be edited later.)

7. Click **Save**
Options explained

A Discussion can take on a few different flavors depending on the options you select. Below is a brief primer on these options.

Allow threaded replies

By default a Canvas Discussion is created as what is known as a “focused discussion,” which is structured for: the initial posting, replies to that posting, and side comments (a reply to a reply) for a total of two layers of nesting.

Threaded Discussions extend the range of posting to allow for discussions in which different and new threads to be originated by students and instructors alike. As in a focused discussion, the structure of a threaded discussion is hierarchical:
Control how and in what context you see new posts by using the buttons to the right of the discussion window labeled Expand All, Expand Unread, etc. Threaded Discussions can potentially grow quite long, and with new replies appearing within different threads, it is useful to be able to focus only on new unread posts.
Delay posting

With this option you can create and finalize the content for a discussion post and set a date and time for that content to be made available to students.

Ticking Delay Posting allows you to preload a discussion and, using the calendar feature, select the date and even the time for the discussion to be available to participants in the course.

Limit Availability

You can decide when, and for how long, your students can access the discussion by changing the ‘Available From’ and ‘Until’ dates.

Users must post before seeing replies

Ticking this option, which withholds from participants access to a discussion beyond the initial posted content until they post a reply to that content, seems best suited to practice quiz and testing situations.
Enable podcast feed

Ticking this option means that the discussion will be distributed via an RSS feed that one sets up at the Course level (under settings). An option to allow student replies will appear once this option is chosen.

Use for grading

Ticking this option registers the Discussion in question in Calendar, Assignments, and Syllabus (if all are visible to the students) as a graded assignment.

Activity 2 - Create a Discussion

1. From the course home page, click on Discussions link.

2. Click on blue “Start One Now” button.

3. Type in the Topic Title: First Discussion: Introductions
4. In the rich content editor, type: Please tell your classmates a little about yourself. What is your name, what are you studying, and where are you from?

5. Check the box for “Delay Posting.”

6. Click on the calendar icon to set the posting date.

7. Click Save.

Social Media Integrations (Web Services)

Canvas integrates with numerous outside social media sites, allowing the instructor to easily communicate with students through their preferred online modes of communication.

Social media preferences are established by the individual users via their profile settings. If you will be requiring the use of any of these tools in your course, be sure to notify your students that they will need to have a registered account for that service. All of the accounts listed below offer free registration for users:

LinkedIn
LinkedIn is an online networking site designed for professionals. It’s sometimes described as “Facebook for grownups.” It is a place where users can post online resumes and make connections with other individuals and groups in their industry.

**Facebook**
Users with Facebook accounts can install the Canvas app and receive course notifications on their profile. Users can specify which types of notifications they want and how often they’d like them sent.

**Twitter**
Students may also choose to receive notifications through a Twitter account. An added feature of Twitter is that users are not restricted to having one single account, so a user could create an account solely for schoolwork. Users will receive a Twitter message that they have a Canvas notification.

**Skype**
Skype is a service that allows users to communicate over the Internet via microphone, web cam and instant messaging. Connecting a Skype profile to a Canvas user profile enables a Skype Status icon to appear in several places in Canvas to indicate if the user is logged into Skype.

**Delicious**
Delicious is a tool that lets you store and share your bookmarks with others. Canvas’s rich content editor will let you search your Delicious tags to easily link from within Canvas to other resources you find useful.

**Diigo**
Diigo is a social bookmarking tool tailored specifically to research and education. Canvas’s rich content editor will let you search your Diigo tags to easily link from within Canvas to other resources you find useful.

**Checking Students’ Registered Services**
To see what services your students have registered for:
1. Navigate to your course site.
2. Click on the **People** link.
3. Click on **View Registered Services** on the right side of the screen.

**Activity 3: Connecting to social media accounts**
1. Click on your name at top of page
2. Click on **Edit Profile**
3. Click on **Manage Registered Services**
4. Choose one of the **Available Services** to register.
Integrating Web Tools into Canvas Pages: Diigo

Diigo (pronounced dee-go), is a useful tool for any web-based activity. Diigo allows users to easily share web resources, comment, and collaborate. Users have the option of installing a Diigo toolbar that enables drag and drop functionality.

In Canvas, instructors can use Diigo in several ways. The common feature, however, is the ability to easily integrate what’s going on in Diigo with the course site in Canvas. Two easy ways to integrate Diigo groups into a Canvas course site are described below.

Course Group
Instructors can create Diigo groups as a way to efficiently post links to relevant web resources. Posts are added automatically from an RSS or Atom feed as announcements for this course. Depending on the students’ preferred notification settings, they can receive these new Diigo announcements in their email, Twitter, or SMS text message accounts, for example.

Student Groups
Students working on group projects can also utilize Diigo to easily share web resources with their group members. Students can set up Groups in Diigo, or instructors can set them up for student groups. Either way, students who have connected their Diigo accounts with Canvas can easily move back and forth between the two to share web resources with each other and/or with the entire class.

Steps to Create a Diigo group

2. Click on My Groups.
3. Click the Create a Group button.
4. Fill in the box for Group Name and for Group URL (these can be the same thing).
5. You can choose from the customizing options, or scroll down and type the security words in the box.
6. Click Create my group.

Adding an RSS Feed for a Diigo group to your Canvas course site

1. Access your group page in Diigo

2. Click on the RSS icon on the right side of the page
3. From the resulting feed page, copy the complete URL:

4. Go to the **Announcements** page of your Canvas course site.
5. Click on **Add External Feed**.
6. Paste the URL you just copied into the window that reads **Feed URL**.
7. Select from the drop down menu whether you want to display the full article, a truncated version, or just a link.
8. Click **Add Feed**.

The RSS Feed will now be available as a link on the side of the **Announcements** page:

New posts are also designed to appear as a new **Announcement** as they are posted. This is not immediate, however, and there seems to be a significant time lag.