Discussions

Why use Discussions?

Canvas has an integrated feature for class discussions allowing both instructors and students to create and post discussion topics. Discussions can simply serve as a forum for questions and current events in the class or they can be created as an assignment to allow grading of student contributions. Instructors might introduce a class project in a discussion forum allowing students to ask questions and make suggestions.

Note: An Announcement and a Discussion are not the same. The main difference is that Announcements are intended for broadcasting information to an entire class while Discussions are designed for participating in a public dialogue.

Canvas has a Discussions Index page

The Discussions Index Page is organized into three main areas: Discussions, Pinned Discussion, and Closed for Comments. Clicking on this button will open the Edit Discussion Settings Dialogue.
Edit Discussion Settings

This dialogue allows you to give students the ability to create discussion topics, edit and delete their own posts, or attach files to posts. It also allows you to manually mark posts as read.

Discussions Types

1. Discussions. These are current discussions within the course. Discussions can remain open indefinitely, or you can specify a date range in the available from/until date setting. Students will only see this section heading if there are discussions within this section.

2. Pinned Discussions. These are discussions that you want your students to see at the top of their page. Pinned discussions can be arranged in any order. Students will only see this section heading if there are discussions within this section.

3. Closed for Comments. These discussions have been manually closed for comments, or the discussion is past the available from/until date. Students will always see this section heading, even if there are no discussions within this section.
Discussion Settings

Different types of content can be added to the Discussion HTML editor. The editing toolbar includes options for links, files, math equations, video and images.

Discussions in Canvas offer many possibilities in terms of settings.

You can attach a file to the discussion or set different options including allow threaded replies, require users to post before viewing replies, enable a podcast feed, allow user to like, or make it a graded discussion.

Clicking on Allow threaded replies allow replies within replies and is intended for longer periods of time than the default focused discussions.

Graded Discussions

Clicking on this checkbox opens up the Graded Discussions settings

You can set points and determine how grades will be displayed. Graded discussions are put in the Assignments Group unless you move them.
Peer Reviews

Canvas gives you the option to require peer reviews on graded Discussions.

Peer reviews can be assigned manually by you or assigned automatically.

A good practice is to attach a Rubric to peer reviewed assignment to help students formulate constructive feedback. You can create a rubric in this table, or use an existing rubric.

Assign To and Due Dates

The Assign to section allows you to set who in your course will have access to the discussion and when postings are due.

Clicking on the Add button allows you to create versions with different due dates.
Canvas allows you to create discussions that are restricted by group. Clicking on this checkbox opens up the Add Set of Groups dialogue box.

You can choose to let students sign-up or manually create the discussion groups yourself.