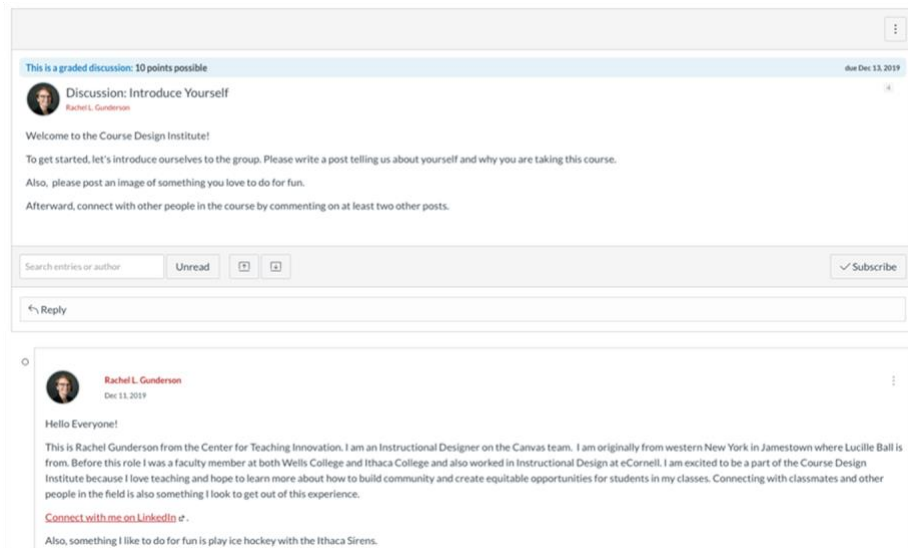## Challenge

Create a discussion activity that provides a structured learning environment, meets course objectives, engages students, and keeps the conversation going.

(View of Canvas Discussion Tool with an ice breaker prompt and response)

Considerations

- Design activities that are interesting & motivating.
- Allow students to suggest discussion topics
- Create discussions for small group use (no more than ~8 students)
- Establish a minimum posting requirement to original post and peers.
- Establish expectation that students are the central focus of discussion and to take ownership of their learning experience.
- Create guidelines for how credit will be awarded. Success criteria such as posting regularly, responding to classmates' posts, staying on topic, etc.

Tips

- Provide clear guidelines for posting material (how often to comment, length of comment, what info to include, to cite readings or sources.)
- Demonstrate the behavior you want to see
- Specify the level of formality
- Encourage posting early on
- Email students who are not participating and offer assistance.
- Have students establish clear netiquette guidelines and acceptable behavior policies at the very beginning. Monitor discussions regularly.
- Don't dominate conversation as the facilitator.

Instructions

1. Inside your course site, click on **Discussions** tab on the left navigation panel.
2. Click the **+ Discussion** button in red on the top right of page.
3. Insert a **topic title** followed by the **discussion prompt** in the larger box. Decide which sections or all sections it will be posted to. Select desired options. In this case, we will create a **Graded discussion**.
4. Assign points, percentage, complete/incomplete, GPA scale, or letter grade.
5. Optional: Assign the Discussion to a group you have created or Require Peer Reviews.
6. Assign to **everyone** or a **specific section**. Insert the **Due Dates** and **Available Dates**. Use the **+Add** at the bottom to create different due dates for sections or individuals. Click **Save.**
7. Optional: **Add Rubric** using the 3 vertical dots (see Recipe for Building a Rubric in Canvas)

Discussion Board with a Purpose

- Demonstrate Key Concepts and Critical Thinking Skills
- Community Building/Student Leadership
- Reflection
- Debate
- Polling or Consensus building
- Role Play
- Peer review and feedback
- Develop or share group projects
- Invite Experts
- Problem solve and find solutions
- Classroom questions or content related questions (Reduce student emails, TA can facilitate)
- Resource sharing or current event sharing

Encourage Critical Thinking

- *Exploratory*: probe facts & basic knowledge
- *Challenge*: interrogate assumptions, conclusions or interpretations
- *Relational*: ask for comparisons of themes, ideas or issues
- *Diagnostic*: probe motives or causes
- *Action*: call for a conclusion or action
- *Cause & Effect*: ask for causal relationships between ideas, actions or events
- *Extension*: expand the discussion
- *Hypothetical:* pose a change in the facts or issues
- *Priority:* seek to identify the most important issues
- *Summary:* elicit synthesis

Source: "Mastering Online Discussion Board Facilitation" 2010. TeacherStream LLC. Edutopia.org

WhatWorks?
New Ideas in Grading and Assessment

Challenge

Find a way to assess discussions that works for you. This example uses the Canvas Speedgrader tool to provide qualitative and quantitative feedback for Discussion tool activities. These scores go into your Canvas Gradebook.

Considerations

- Assessment must be matched to learning outcomes of course.
- Assessment must be aligned with instruction. How is it relevant to class?
- Provide success criteria and clear guidelines regarding how student work will be assessed.
- Grading can be done by teachers or peers using peer review.

Tips

- Include a rubric from the beginning on Canvas. Show students where find it.
- Assess both quality and quantity of responses.
- View history of individual students posts or see them within conversation.

(View of student posts from inside Speedgrader Tool)

Instructions

1. Go into the discussion activity you want to grade in Canvas.
2. Once inside the discussion, click on the **three vertical dots** on the top right of the page and select **Speedgrader** in the dropdown menu.
3. Inside Speedgrader, view an **individual student's posts all together** or select **view the full discussion** to see the posts in context. Use the **left and right arrows** in the top right to view different students work.
4. On the right side of the screen, **post qualitative comments**, **insert a score**, or **Select rubric** (if you provided one in the system) to offer more specific feedback using criteria. (See rubric criteria ideas below). Select **Save** if using a rubric. Select **submit** for final comments.
5. If using **Automatic Grading Policy**, students will receive the feedback and a notification as soon as a score is inserted. If using **Manual Grading Policy**, go to the crossed-out eye icon at the top left of the black bar and select **Post Grades** when you are ready for students to receive. This will trigger a notification to students.

Rubric criteria ideas: Assessing discussion quality

- Critical thinking (Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, or Evaluation)
- Connection to material/relevance
- Thought-provoking or Persuasive
- Originality
- Accuracy
- Developed an argument (citing credible sources)
- Level of engagement/High quality participation
- Preparedness
- Attitude
- Conciseness

Use Cases for Assessment

- Self-Assessment (not included in Canvas)
- Peer Assessment (using Peer Review tool)
- Checklists (self or peer)
- Reflective Journals
- Graphic Organizers
- Concept Maps
- One Minute Papers
- Pre and Post assessment

Source: "Mastering Online Discussion Board Facilitation" 2010. TeacherStream LLC. Edutopia.org