Facilitating class discussions

Covered in this guide:

• Using Canvas Discussions to provide a discussion space
• Using Google Hangouts to host live discussion sessions
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Using **Canvas Discussions** to provide a discussion space
1. Open Canvas in web browser

- Go to **elms.umd.edu** in your web browser
- Log in using your University ID, password, and complete the Duo multi-factor authentication
2. Navigate to the Canvas course for which you wish to create a discussion space

- Select courses from the left-hand navigation menu, and select the Course for which you wish to send an announcement
3. Open the Discussions section of the Canvas course

- Select “Discussions” from the left-hand side menu
4. Create a new discussion

- Click “+ Discussion” to create a new discussion
5. Create a discussion prompt

1. Enter a discussion topic title
2. Enter the prompt for your discussion – this can include web links, files stored in Canvas (such as that week’s readings), and Panopto recording
6. Specify the discussion settings

1. If you have multiple sections of a course, you can choose to post the discussion to one, some, or all

2. If there is a file not stored in Canvas that you want to attach to the discussion, do so here

3. There are several options to specify how the discussion behaves –
   - “Allow threaded replies” – allows students to reply to other students’ post (a useful feature if you want to prompt a ‘back and forth’ discussion)
   - “Users must post before seeing replies” – will require a student to post before seeing other students’ responses
   - “Graded” – allows you to set a point weight for the activity and have it counted towards their grade
   - “Allow liking” – students can give a ‘thumbs-up’ to posts

4. Group Discussion – You can create groups of students and set the discussion to only occur amongst the students in a group

5. Availability – set when the discussion is available to students

6. Click “Save & Publish” to make the discussion immediately seen to students (however they won’t be able to access the discussion until the date set) or “Save” if you wish to come back later and publish
7. View the discussion - students

- Your discussion will be viewable to students within the “Discussions” section of their Canvas course.
- They will also receive a notification to their email if they have this setting turned on.
8. Manage the discussion

- You can view the discussions you have created by navigating to the “Discussions” section of the relevant Canvas course.

1. There are several management features that you can use:
   - “Close for comments” – close the discussion from accepting student comments. (A discussion will automatically close at the date/time you have made it available until.)
   - “Pin” – discussions will automatically display under the “Discussions” section of the page; pinning the discussion will always display it in the top section of the page.
9. Review and participate the discussion

- From the “Discussions” homepage, select a specific discussion to open it
- You will be able to see all responses from students
- You can participate in the discussion by clicking “Reply”
- If you enabled the “Allow threaded replies” setting, you will also be able to respond to specific student posts by click “Reply” under the relevant post
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Using **Google Hangouts** to host live discussion sessions
1. Open Google Hangouts in web browser

- Go to hangouts.google.com in your web browser
- If you are not already logged into the University’s Google domain, you will need to log in using your University ID, password, and complete the Duo multi-factor authentication
2. Start a new group conversation

- Google Hangouts will allow you to have a group conversation (chat-based only) with up to 150 people
  1. Click “+ New conversation”
  2. Click “New group”
2. Start a new group conversation cont.

- Enter a name for your group
  - Hangout groups do not automatically delete when the conversation is over – this is useful as you will not have to repeatedly set up a group to host a discussion session
- Enter the email addresses of those you wish to add to the conversation
  - Hangouts can only be used with a Gmail address – all faculty/staff have Gmail addresses, as do all students (TerpMail is Gmail-based)
- Click the checkmark to create the group conversation
3. Managing a group conversation

1. The group conversation will open in the same web browser window
   - If you would like to have a larger window for the conversation, click the arrow to ‘pop out’ the conversation to its own window

2. Click to “person” icon to add more people to the conversation

3. There are various settings that can be changed via the “cog” icon:
   - “Notifications” – if you are logged into Google Hangouts, you will be notified in your web browser if there are new messages
   - “Conversation history” – if selected, it will keep a record of all messages sent in the conversation
   - “Joining by link” – you can generate and send out a link (via Canvas Announcements or email) that students can use to join the group conversation (useful if you have many students and wish to avoid entering numerous emails when creating the group conversation)
3. Navigating back to a group conversation

- Group conversations exist until you choose to delete them, allowing you to go back later and continue the conversation.

- To do so, navigate to hangouts.google.com in your web browser, and log in with your University ID, password, and Duo multi-factor authentication if needed.

- Click on the appropriate group conversation from the left-hand menu to open it.