Canvas is the University of Washington's course management system—the primary portal where students and teachers can share course information online. However, many faculty members may have only used a few of its functions, or in some cases be entirely unfamiliar with it.

This guide is intended to help you learn the basics of using Canvas to communicate effectively with your students.

The basics

Tutorial - getting started with Canvas

Add-ons

- Tutorial - creating a class email list
- Tutorial - creating a basic syllabus page on Canvas
- Tutorial - creating an anonymous survey in Canvas, (e.g. to gauge the general level of student technology access)
- Tutorial - creating modules in Canvas
- Tutorial - utilizing Pages in Canvas to help organize your course content, (by Professor Green)
- Tutorial - adding Panopto Recordings to modules
- Tutorial - using Zoom for office hours

Quick tips

- Canvas has a very flexible (some might say complicated) notification architecture. You don't need to configure it, but you might want to have some sense what options your students have available to them. To check out the notification settings interface, click Account on the far-left side in Canvas, and then choose Notifications.
- Most things in Canvas are not published by default, and most things are not visible to students until published. Keep an eye out for grey slash icons—which usually indicate "not published." Normally when you click it, the green checkmark will appear, indicating it is published.
- Wonder what the students are seeing? In your Canvas course, choose Settings from the list of course pages on the left side, then on the right-hand panel click Student View. This will let you see the course as students see it.

Stories from the trenches

- "Remind [students] of due dates. It might feel like handholding, but be honest: Don't you appreciate the text reminder from your dentist that you have an appointment tomorrow? [Canvas] has an announcement system that allows you to write an
announcement now and post it later. As you put your materials online, write an announcement reminding them of the due date
to be released 24 hours before it is due. The morning of, send a note to everyone who has not yet turned it in."
- Rebecca Barrett-Fox, "Please do a bad job of putting your courses online"

- "Schedule the same amount of time each week to be visibly present and engaged in your semester-long online class. And I do
mean visible, meaningful engagement. Here are some ways to do that:
- Post a weekly announcement to provide an overview of the coming week's topic or a recap of the previous week's work, or both.
- Respond to questions posted in an online question-and-answer discussion forum or sent to you by email.
- Hold online office hours according to a schedule, by appointment, or both.
- Post a quick video to clarify misconceptions about a class topic or assignment.
- Grade and return students' work in a timely fashion.
- Talk with students in online discussions."
- Flower Darby, "How to Be a Better Online Teacher," Moving Online Now

Created by the Department of History Ad-hoc Tech Support Team: Eric Johnson, Kristin Roberts, Alexandra Colley, Josh Apfel

Department of History
University of Washington
318 Smith Box 353560
Seattle, WA 98195-3560

Phone: (206) 543-5790
Fax: (206) 543-9451
histmain@uw.edu

Source URL: https://history.washington.edu/online-teaching-canva