CLAYTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

Desire2Learn: Discussions

Discussions allow students to talk among themselves, either as a class or in groups. Discussions can be graded, open/closed on certain dates, and locked so that they can be read but no more discussion takes place. There are two important distinctions with discussions in D2L, the availability of forums and topics:
- Forums are essentially categories, under which you can associate multiple discussion topics.
- Discussion topics must be organized into a forum (category). You can't create a topic unless you select a forum to associate it with.

This tutorial covers the following, you may click on the below links to jump to a specific section of this tutorial.

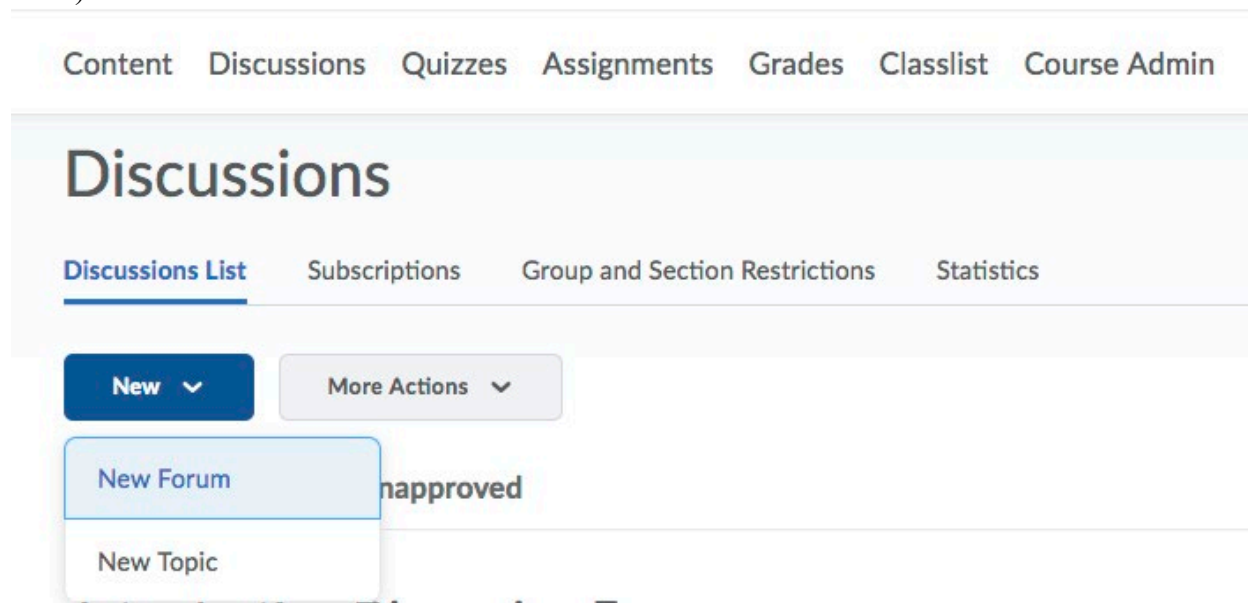## Creating a Discussion Forum (Category)

1) Click on the Discussion icon on the Navbar, along the top of the course.

2) Click on "New" and select "New Forum".

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: CELT@clayton.edu
Phone: 678-466-4190

3) Enter a title for the forum on the properties tab. Remember, this is a category name. For this example, I will name the forum "Orientation." Adding a description is optional, but encouraged. The description box allows you to provide instructions or direction to students to inform them of the purpose of this particular forum, or discussion category. Other choices include creating a topic by the same name, allowing anonymous posts, approving messages before they can be displayed, creating a thread before students can read and reply to other threads, and display forum description in topics.

Content   Discussions   Quizzes   Assignments   Grades   Classlist   Course Admin

New Forum

Properties	Restrictions

New Forum Details

Title *

Orientation

☐ Create a new topic in this forum with the same title ❓

Description

[Editor toolbar: Paragraph | B I U | Font Family | Size | ...]

Options

☐ Allow anonymous posts ❓
☐ A moderator must approve individual posts before they display in the forum ❓
☐ Users must start a thread before they can read and reply to other threads in each topic ❓
☐ Display forum description in topics ❓

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: CELT@clayton.edu
Phone: 678-466-4190

4) Other options include setting the availability and locking the forum. By default, a forum is always visible, but you can hide it or make it available for only a certain period of time by changing the availability settings, as shown below.

a. Visibility means the forum (and all associated topics) will be hidden from the students. Students will not be able to view or interact with any forums or topics either before or after the start/end dates for this option. **Please Note:** If you hide a forum, students will **NOT** be able to see any topics under the forum, even if those are set as visible.

b. Locking a forum means that it is still visible and can be read but not interacted with. This can be useful if you've graded the discussion postings and still want students to be able to read them but not to make any more changes. **Please Note:** Locking a forum will also lock any subsequent topics under the forum.

5) Click either "Save and Close", "Save and Add Topic", or "Save" when you've finished making changes.

Availability

▼ Hide forum visibility options

Visibility

◉ Forum is always visible
○ Hide this forum
○ Forum is visible for a specific date range
　☐ Has Start Date
　　5/9/2018　　1:09 PM　　Now
　　United States - New York
　☐ Has End Date
　　5/16/2018　　1:09 PM　　Now
　　United States - New York
　☐ Display in Calendar

Locking Options

▼ Hide locking options

Locking Options

◉ Unlock forum
○ Lock forum
○ Unlock forum for a specific date range
　☐ Has Start Date
　　5/9/2018　　1:09 PM　　Now
　　United States - New York
　☐ Has End Date
　　5/16/2018　　1:09 PM　　Now
　　United States - New York
　☐ Display in Calendar

| Save and Close | Save and Add Topic | Save | Cancel |

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching　　　　　*For Technical Support contact the CELT*
Updated: 7/28/2020　　　　　*Email:* CELT@clayton.edu
　　　　　Phone: 678-466-4190

Creating a Discussion Topic

Once you have created Forums, you can add Topics. An example of Topics under the Orientation Forum might include "Introduce Yourself" or "Syllabus Questions." We'll use both of these in this example.

1) If you are not already working in the Discussions Tool, click on Discussions on the navbar, then click "New" and select "New Topic".

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: CELT@clayton.edu
Phone: 678-466-4190
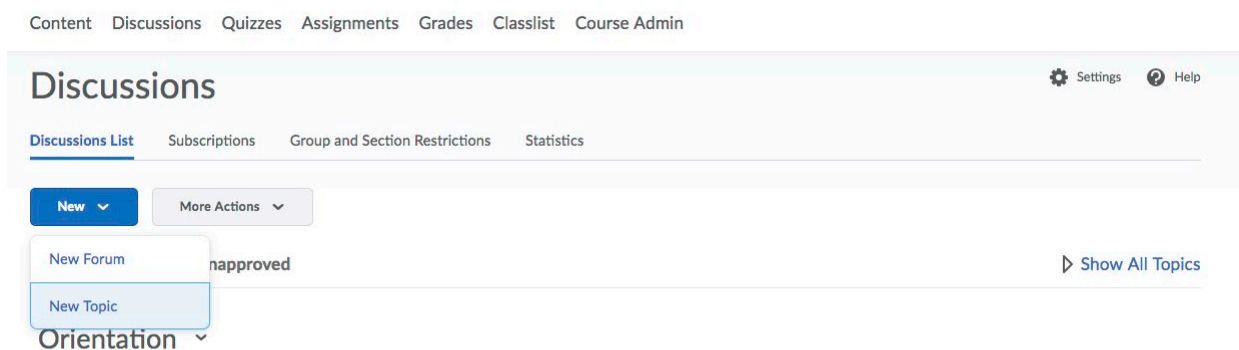
2) Select the Forum for the new Topic (remember, Forums are like categories). If you do not select a Forum for this topic, you will receive an error message upon saving.
   a. Descriptions are optional, but highly encouraged for discussion Topics. The inclusion of a description allows you to provide direction or instructions for students on how to complete this particular activity.
   b. The other options, allow anonymous posts, approval of posts before they display, and creating a thread before students can read and reply are all optional settings. Feel free to experiment with these settings to see if they fit the nature of your course.

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: *CELT@clayton.edu*
Phone: 678-466-4190

3) Just as with a Forum, you may set availability options for your discussion Topic.

Please Note: Any availability settings you applied to the Forum, will supersede settings applied to the Topic. For instance, if you set your Forum to hide on February 1st, at 3:00pm, but your discussion Topic is set to always be visible, students will **NOT** be able to view or interact with the topic after February 1st at 3:00pm.

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: *CELT@clayton.edu*
Phone: 678-466-4190

4) You'll notice there are three other tabs besides the Properties tab on the edit topic screen: Restrictions, Assessment, and Objectives.

a. The Restrictions tab allows you to set "Release Conditions" for the topic. A release condition is when the student is required to meet one or more criteria to be able to view the topic or activity (release conditions can be applied to a number of things in D2L, other than discussion Topics). For more information on Release Conditions, please visit http://www.clayton.edu/cid/Desire2Learn and look for the "Release Condition" tutorial.

b. The Assessment tab allows you to associate the discussion Topic with an item in the gradebook. This is useful if you wish to grade the discussions.

c. The Objectives tab allows you to associate the discussion Topic with learning objectives that you've created for your course. For more information on creating Learning Objectives within D2L, please visit http://www.clayton.edu/cid/Desire2Learn and look for the "Learning Objectives in D2L" tutorial.

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: CELT@clayton.edu
Phone: 678-466-4190

5) Once you've set your appropriate options for the topic, click "Save and Close" at the bottom of the screen.

Posting a Discussion Message

1) From the Discussions tab, select the title of the Topic you'd like to post a message to

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: CELT@clayton.edu
Phone: 678-466-4190

2) Then click "Start a New Thread". You'll then have the ability to enter a subject line and enter your message in the larger box underneath the subject. You'll notice the description for the Topic is viewable, which could help remind students of what they need to include in their posting, particularly if this is a graded assignment.

   a. You may add an attachment to the posting by clicking the "Add attachments" link.
   b. Selecting the "Pin thread" checkbox will keep your message as the top post in the Topic.
   c. Any topic in which you create a message (whether a new thread or replying to an existing comment) will by default select the "Subscribe to this thread" checkbox. If you leave this selected, you will receive notifications when someone has interacted with the thread.

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: *CELT@clayton.edu*
Phone: 678-466-4190

6) Once you're satisfied with your message, click "Post" along the bottom of the screen. Your message will then look similar to the below:

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: CELT@clayton.edu
Phone: 678-466-4190

7) To reply a message already posted, click the title of the post

And then click "Reply to Thread". The process for replying to a message is the same as creating a new one.

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: CELT@clayton.edu
Phone: 678-466-4190

Creating a Graded Discussion

1) Navigate to the Discussions tab, located in the navbar along the top of your course. If you've already created your discussion Topic, click the down arrow to the right of the topic and click "Edit Topic", then click the "Assessment" tab

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: CELT@clayton.edu
Phone: 678-466-4190

2) If you have already setup your gradebook, click the dropdown list under "Grade Item". If you have not setup your gradebook, or simply don't have a grade item for a discussion topic, select "New Grade Item".

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: *CELT@clayton.edu*
Phone: 678-466-4190

3) Once you select "New Grade Item" you'll be allowed to give the item a name, maximum number of points and other options like is this a bonus item, do you want the gradebook to exclude this grade from the final grade calculation. Complete the appropriate information for your course and then click "Save". The only required items are "Name" and "Maximum Points".

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: CELT@clayton.edu
Phone: 678-466-4190

4) Then input a number for "Score Out Of". You may wish for this to equal the maximum point number you previously set when creating the grade item or it could be a greater or lesser number. For instance, the point value for this item in the gradebook might be 10 points. However, you can set a "Score Out Of" as 100 if you wish. This is not a required item however, so you may leave it blank.

Please Note: We do recommend leaving the "Allow assessment of individual posts" UNCHECKED. If that item is unchecked, you will be able to see all posts for a particular student at once and enter a score.

5) Once you are finished, click "Save and Close"

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: CELT@clayton.edu
Phone: 678-466-4190

Assessing a Graded Discussion

You can assess students' postings from two places: inside the topic while reading messages or on the "Assess Topic" page. Assessing users from within the Topic lets you read students' messages in context and evaluate as you perform other reading-related tasks. Assessing students from the "Assess Topic" page enables you to see scores for all students and view all of a student's messages together on one screen.

Assess Students from Within a Topic

1) Click the title of the topic you'd like to assess and select Assess Topic.

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: CELT@clayton.edu
Phone: 678-466-4190

2) Click on "Topic Score", underneath the student you wish to grade.

3) Enter the number of points the student earned in the "Score" area on the right-hand side. Once you are finished, click "Save and Close" along the bottom of the window.

Please Note: Along the top of this window, located directly underneath the "Maximum Post Score", there is a checkbox for "Publish score on save". You may select that checkbox if you

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: *CELT@clayton.edu*
Phone: 678-466-4190

wish for the grade to automatically publish to the student once you save their score. Otherwise, you may publish the grades by selecting the "Publish to Grades" checkbox, within the assess topic screen

4) After you've finished grading all students within the course, click "Save and Close" or "Save" along the bottom of the window.

Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Updated: 7/28/2020

For Technical Support contact the CELT
Email: CELT@clayton.edu
Phone: 678-466-4190