

# **CANVAS REVIEW FOR INSTRUCTORS**

## **July 9, 2021**

### **CANVAS REVIEW: THE WHAT, HOW, & WHY**

Our practice has been for reps to schedule one-on-one Canvas reviews with their new instructors to ensure that their Canvas modules are ready for the upcoming quarter.

With everything going online, we felt it was important to ensure that our Canvas courses were fully optimized for student engagement. This means making sure that you are making use of all the features Canvas has to offer in order to provide a rich online environment for your students to learn.

Why is this important?

Several studies on learning, such as the one conducted by the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences, show that we heavily rely on our senses to process information when we're learning something. For their study the scientists created an artificial language called Vimnish. Over the course of a week, participants were asked to memorize the meaning of abstract and concrete Vimmi-nouns under different conditions.

At different times after the learning period, the researchers then checked whether the participants could still recall the terms. What they discovered was that when participants heard the term and its translation and also observed a corresponding image, they were able to remember the translation better.

So what this study, and many other studies have shown, is that engaging more than one sense when teaching can help with information processing. This is why we need to think about how to make learning multi-sensory.

And this is at the heart of what we're trying to do. While we don't have smell-o-vision integrated into Canvas yet, there are a variety of ways we can use the platform in order to make our students engage with our materials more easily, and for them to learn concepts more efficiently.

## YOUR CANVAS MODULES

### A. INTRODUCTION

**First impressions matter. What students see or experience first in their online environment often sets the tone for the rest of their class experience. You want to make them feel welcome and comfortable so they can ease into their class. All the little details matter as students explore the modules.**

1. Make sure you have an updated profile: bio + photo
2. Welcome students, introduce yourself as an instructor
  - You can use a video/audio intro
  - Things you can mention in the intro:
    - Course overview
    - Course goals
    - Expectations
      - What you expect from students
      - What students should expect from you as an instructor (teaching style, etc)
    - Share a fun tidbit about yourself/your writing process/ any writing tips
    - Identify your anticipated course activity schedule here and in syllabus:
      - *I will routinely check in on class on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays at a minimum, and often other days as well so I can keep track of your discussions and assignment submissions. Please be mindful that an email message sent to me may not be received for up to 24 hours. I will notify you if my minimum schedule changes. If you have contacted me and haven't gotten a response in 24 hours, please email me at xxx to ensure I receive your message.*
    - Include a note telling students they will have a chance to submit a course evaluation at the end of the quarter and that their feedback is important to you.
3. Have students introduce themselves to each other as well:
  - Ask them for a short bio, perhaps include a quick question you'd like for them to answer which can help set the tone for the class. Examples:

- In a YA class: *Please post a brief bio introducing yourself. And just for fun, tell us something about yourself as a teen. Where did you grow up? What did you wear? What music did you like?*
- In a Travel Writing class: *Write at least a paragraph bio introducing yourself to the class. Tell us a bit about you and why you are interested in this class. Then also answer the following questions.*
  - *What is travel writing?*
  - *Tell us about a bad experience you had on a trip.*
  - *Also tell us where you would like someone to pay you to travel to, if you could go anywhere? Why?*
- Set an example. When you pose a question, share your answer as well. Sharing a bit of your story will make students feel more at ease in class, and comfortable in sharing their answers.
- You can also fold your introductions into a class assignment. Instructor Sehba Sarwar did for her class when she asked her students to write a letter sharing their history, and something they're passionate about.

## B. SYLLABUS

1. Use the Writers' Program syllabus template
2. Make sure your syllabus is complete
  - Descriptions are lifted from the official course description submitted for your course approvals. No need to update this.
  - Objectives – your goals for the class
  - Outcomes – what skills/proficiencies successful students should have obtained by the end of the class.
  - Materials – very important to submit your textbook requests on time. Often we have students sponsored by work/VA that need to get their textbooks by a certain date.
  - Deliverables – what final project/s do you expect them to have at the end of the course
  - Evaluations: important to put grading criteria and breakdown
  - Course Policies
    - Workshop Guidelines: make sure to spell out all your expectations for the workshopping process, as well as your expectations of the course in general.
  - Note specific course policies/late submission policies

- Schedule: Course calendar
  - Each week is listed with course activities
  - Include assignments so students can plan ahead

## **C. WEEKLY OVERVIEWS**

Give students a weekly overview—let them know what lectures, discussions, assignments, readings they should expect this week. – You can use Video/Text/Audio

This is also a place where you can add due dates for assignments and so on.

## **D. LECTURES**

There are different ways to present your lectures in class:

1. As a module page, or as a downloadable PDF file.
2. As powerpoint slides
3. As prerecorded videos
4. You can incorporate other videos into your written lectures in class

## **E. ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Format
  - If you want assignments to be visible to everyone in class (recommended for workshopping), use the Discussions function
  - If you want assignments visible only to you (recommended for journal entry exercises, for example), use the Assignments function
2. Due Date
  - Make sure to indicate due dates on each assignment. Posting due dates multiple times in several areas (like the syllabus, overview, announcements and assignment module) is encouraged for clarity and reinforcement

3. Whether you use the Discussion function/ Assignment function, make sure to assign points so students can track their progress.

## **F. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1. Use weekly announcements to remind students that a new week has started.  
Example: "Welcome to Week 3! Here's an overview of what we'll be tackling this week."
2. Use announcements to communicate changes, updates or reminders. Examples:
  - if you're traveling for part of the week and there's a chance that your online availability may be impacted.
  - You posted a new lecture/resource/ material based on students' needs

## **G. WORKSHOP FORMATS**

1. Small groups within the class. Ex. 15 person class, 3 groups of 5.
2. Modules for each individual student (advanced course/smaller group of students). Aside from weekly modules, each student gets their own module to contain their assignments as well as feedback on their submissions.
3. Weekly Workshopping – students give and receive feedback each week.  
Ex. each week, students will choose two classmates to give feedback to.
4. Assigned workshop weeks  
Ex. Lara, Ben & Sara are up for workshopping this week and will upload their chapters to this discussion board by Tues, midnight, April 18th.  
Everyone, including this week's writers, will Critique two of these chapters using the Critiquing Template. Two meets the course requirement, but feel free to respond to all three, if you wish. Please spread criticism evenly so that each writer is getting roughly the same amount of feedback.
5. Alternating between writing week/workshopping week

### **Note on Workshopping:**

You can utilize videos in your workshopping as well. Take for example, instructor Noel Alunit, who incorporates short videos of himself talking about the critique in every one of the workshop submission spaces.

## **H. RESOURCES MODULE**

You can create an additional module outside of your weekly modules which may include any/all of the following:

1. Teacher's Office/Lounge – Discussion post where students can:
  - Post craft questions to instructors unrelated to that week's current topics (Ex. Do you have a favorite writing software?)
  - Keep the conversation going regarding craft/writing life
  - Let the instructor know about challenges they may be facing with their current writing work
2. Students Lounge/Water Cooler/Coffee House
  - Space for students to talk to each other without the instructor
  - Space for students to chat with each other, share tips, say hello, exchange manuscripts, etc
3. Extra Credit Space
  - Space for students to respond to extra exercises, prompts, extra credit assignment.
  - Space for eager students who want more than what the class requires of them
4. Bookshelf/Library
  - Recommended reading/watching/listening list which could be created as a content page, or a discussion page if you want other students to contribute to the list
5. Meditation Room/Fun Room
  - Fun space for students to come to check out whatever you'd like to share that's outside of the class topics.
  - For example. Meditation space/podcast/videos/other articles you'd like to share

6. Workshopping/Feedback Guidelines

- So students can easily refer to this when needed. Some instructors will also attach the feedback/workshop guidelines each time they have a feedback assignment.

## **I. WRAPPING UP THE COURSE**

1. Post a reminder that they'll receive an email to their address associated with their student account to complete the course evaluation, and that their feedback is important to you.
2. Create a discussion post to end the class – thank yous, last words of wisdom
3. A space for students to share email addresses with each other if they wish to continue workshopping with each other outside of the course.
4. Encourage them to stay in touch and reach out to you if they achieve writing success.
5. Remind students that they have access to Canvas for 30 days. If they completed assignments tied to a grade, they can download a zip file with all of those graded assignments or discussions any time after they've completed the course.

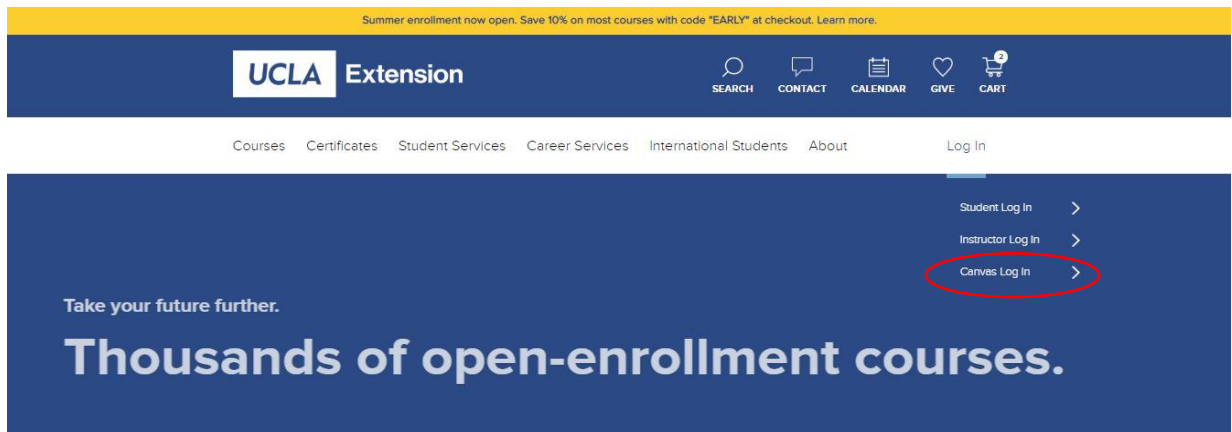
## **J. OTHER TIPS**

1. In an online class, all the students have to go on is what they see in the course. Be specific about your assignments, rubrics, deadlines, etc.
2. In an online class, posting is what makes you “visible” to students. If students don't see replies from you in discussion threads, they perceive you to be absent (and get really upset!). It's very effective to spend 5 minutes at the beginning or end of your day checking on new posts and adding something as simple as “Great point, Nutschell!”
3. The syllabus is an important tool to communicate policies, guidelines, etc. You can always refer students back to rules and expectations when a dispute arises.
4. Add videos, songs, photos/graphics to your modules
5. You can also invite a guest speaker to your online course.

6. Use quizzes to survey the course. It might be helpful to do this in the beginning of the course so you can customize upcoming discussion questions/materials
7. Use settings to automatically release modules weekly. Edit>Lock until
8. You can use the Zoom Tab to schedule optional web conferences/one-on-one advising/consultation sessions/workshops

## K. CANVAS INFO

1. Canvas can be accessed via the UCLA Extension main website:  
<https://www.uclaextension.edu/>



2. If students are having technical difficulty with Canvas, refer them to the ATLI (Academic Technology and Learning Innovation – formerly IDLS) Canvas support at [support@unexonline.zendesk.com](mailto:support@unexonline.zendesk.com) or 310 206 2329. They can also use the Help tab, located on the blue bar on the left side of the screen on Canvas.
3. Students working off their phones/tablets may have difficulty submitting assignments. Access to a desktop/laptop is best for accessing the full functionality of Canvas.
4. Google Chrome/Mozilla Firefox work best as web browsers to access Canvas
5. Rubrics are useful for communicating the expectations for the assignment and showing exactly what a student is being graded on. To add a rubric, make a new



assignment and save, then click on the + Rubric button. You can make them for discussions or assignments.

6. Students have **active** access to Canvas courses for 14 days and read-only for approximately two weeks after that. Students can only download material during the 14 day active window after the course ends. If the completed assignments are tied to a grade, they can download a zip file with all of those graded assignments or discussions anytime after the completion of the course.
7. Quick start guide is available for Panopto (VIDEO) and Zoom. Resources for Instructors can be found here: <https://instructor.uclaextension.edu/instructor-support/>

Contact ATLI for details

CANVAS questions:

[support@unexonline.zendesk.com](mailto:support@unexonline.zendesk.com)

310 206 2329

Mon-Fri 7am-6pm