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Make Canvas work smarter, not harder with streamlined course navigation [1]

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Every semester we host several Canvas Basics trainings for faculty. My baseline goals for faculty attending Canvas Basics are simple: know how to organize your course with Modules, customize your navigation, and seek help using the Canvas Guides and/or the Helpdesk.

Since I pack a lot into a short amount of time in that class, I wanted to use this opportunity to highlight the ability to customize your course's navigation and expand upon why I think it's important for all online courses.

The needs of everyone's course and their course shell differ, but I typically recommend you include the following in your navigation: Home, Announcements, Syllabus, Modules, People, and Grades.

So, why edit your navigation?

Streamline the User Experience

Peter Morville's User Experience Honeycomb stipulates that information should be useful, usable, desirable, findable, accessible, and credible in order to generate a valuable user experience. While all are important, the two aspects I am focusing on here are usable and findable.

Usable = "site must be easy to use"

Findable = "content needs to be navigable and locatable"

Every single educational item (Content Pages, Files, Discussions, Quizzes, Assignments, etc.) can be housed in a module through Canvas. The less clicks students need to access content and assessments, the faster they get to what they need. We use Canvas to facilitate learning, not create barriers for ourselves or our students.

By using Modules to organize course content, and then customizing course navigation, students can easily be directed if they have questions. "Can't find this week's lecture/assignment/quiz? Check out the Modules!" We increase the usability and findability by grouping our content in a logical manner and then focusing on the most effective pathways for students to reach that content.

Minimize Content Related Errors

It happens every semester: a frantic call goes through to the Help Desk because an instructor

or TA has uploaded an answer key to the Files section of Canvas and students have accessed the file prior to an important assignment, quiz, or exam. Restricting access to the File section greatly reduces the chance of this happening. Streamlining your navigation can help avoid some catastrophes!

Here’s to small changes that make big impact on your online course!

References

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