

# Introduction to Blackboard 8 - Students

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## Blackboard Overview

Blackboard is the course management software product used by Worcester State University to put course content online. Course shells are created for all traditional and online courses. Faculty members add course materials into a shell to make them available to their students. For traditional classroom courses, it is up to each professor to determine how much content to add to their shells.

## New BB8 Features

**Grade Center:** The Grade Center has replaced the Gradebook. When viewing grades, students can view faculty comments regarding individual items.

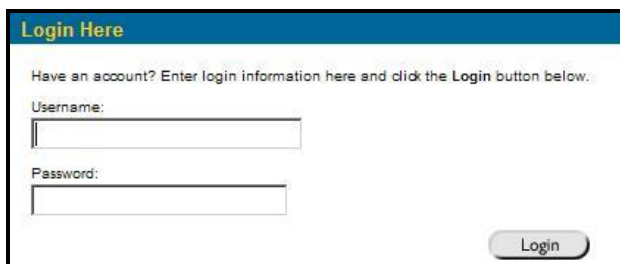
**List/Tree Views:** Discussion Board threads can be displayed in List View, which displays the top level threads, or Tree view, which shows an expanded view.

**Home Page:** Home Pages can be created by selecting Tools from the Course Menu. Students can add general information about themselves to help instructor(s) and students get to know one another. Basic guidelines should be covered by faculty.

## The Community System

The Community System is a portal that provides access to Blackboard course shells, e-mail, WebAdvisor and other important campus resources.

1. Enter <https://community.worcester.edu> into the address box of your browser and press **<Enter>**.
2. Type your **WSC Username** and **Password** and click the **Login** button.



The Community System Student Central page displays.

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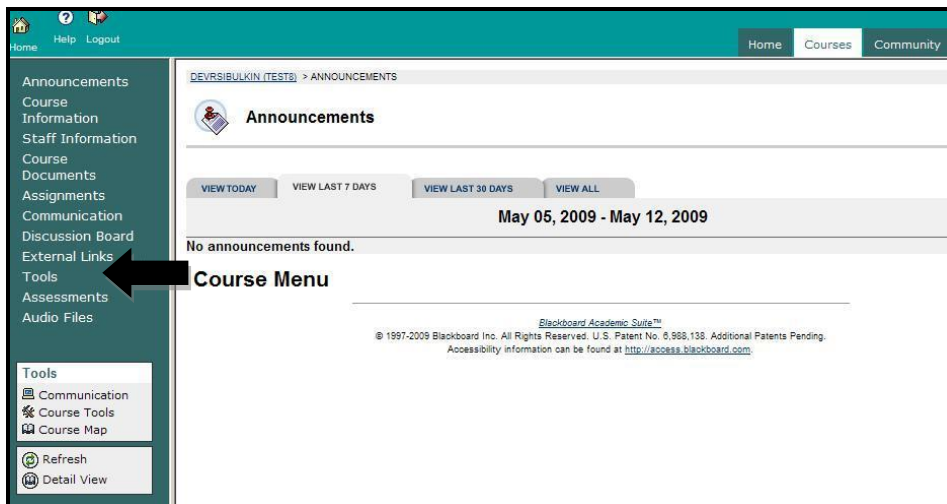
## My Courses

The My Courses module contains links to courses in which a student is enrolled.

1. Under **My Courses**, click the link for the course content you wish to view.



The course shell opens, displaying a **Course Menu**, from which to move to different content areas within the course, **Tools**, and the **opening screen**.



## Course Information

Course Information usually contains documents such as Course Objectives or a Syllabus, although a professor can add additional types of documents as well.

1. In the Course Menu, click **Course Information**.
2. If a **document** has been uploaded to this area, **click its link to open and view its content**.

If the document is a Word, Excel, or other application file, the file can be opened using its corresponding application. If a document was saved in the .pdf format, Adobe Reader (installed on laptops purchased through the WSC laptop program) can be used.

To read more about the new MS Office 2007 format go to <http://sharepoint.worcester.edu/external/it/guides/Shared%20Documents/Software/FFrmt07.mht>

3. Click additional headings on the Course Menu, to view additional course content.

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## Communication

The Communication area provides access to communication components such as class Discussion boards and e-mail.

Many professors take advantage of Blackboard's Discussion board component.

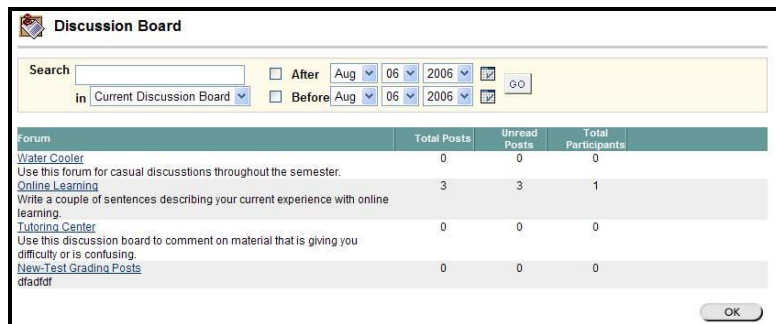
A faculty member can setup a Discussion board (Forum) on a particular topic or unit being studied in class, and students can respond at a different time or day. Some faculty members require participation and add requirements in their course syllabus.

A professor creates a discussion board, also known as a forum, on a specific topic, unit being studied, or subject on which the professor wants student feedback. In a totally online course, this option provides a good method for student participation. It also affords students an opportunity to get a feel for other people in their class.

## Discussion Boards

1. A professor posts a discussion board, also known as a forum, in a course.
2. On the Course Menu, click the Discussion Board link (or the Communications link followed by the Discussion Board link).

Discussion Boards/Forums contained in the course display, listing the number of posts, unread posts, and total participants posting in each forum.



The screenshot shows the Blackboard Discussion Board interface. At the top, there is a search bar with a dropdown menu set to "Current Discussion Board". Below the search bar, there are date filters for "After" and "Before" with dropdown menus for month, day, and year, and a "GO" button. Below the search bar is a table with the following data:

Forum	Total Posts	Unread Posts	Total Participants
<a href="#">Water Cooler</a> Use this forum for casual discussions throughout the semester.	0	0	0
<a href="#">Online Learning</a> Write a couple of sentences describing your current experience with online learning.	3	3	1
<a href="#">Tutoring Center</a> Use this discussion board to comment on material that is giving you difficulty or is confusing.	0	0	0
<a href="#">New-Test Grading Posts</a> dfadfdf	0	0	0

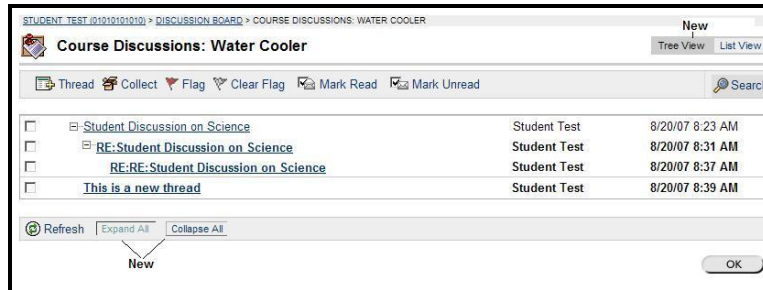
An "OK" button is located at the bottom right of the interface.

A student responds to the Discussion Board by clicking the link for the **Forum** to which they want to respond.

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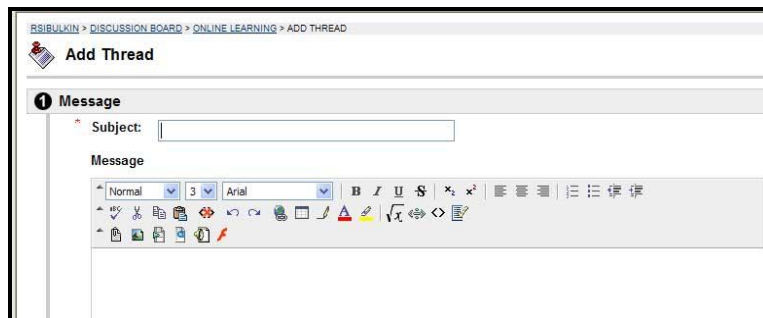
## Discussion Boards

The Course Discussions screen lists all of the threads that have been posted.



3. Add a new thread by clicking the + **Thread** button to open the Add Thread screen.

Red asterisks denote required fields.

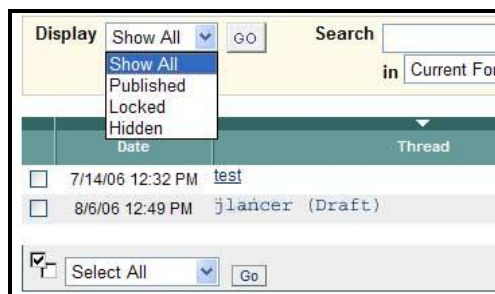


4. Type a **Subject** (response to the post) and **Message** for the thread. Then, click the **Submit** button.

**Important Note:** If you are not ready to post the thread, clicking the Save button will hold the post as a Draft and not make it visible to others.

To locate and complete a Draft:

- A. Click the link for the Discussion Board in which the Draft is stored.
- B. Select **Show All** from the Display drop-down menu and click **Go**.



- C. Click the **thread** containing your draft.
- D. Click the **Modify** button beneath for the thread you wish to complete.
- E. Click **Submit** followed by **OK** to post the completed Draft.

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5. To respond to an existing thread, click the **link** for the **thread to which you want to reply**.
6. Click the **Reply** button, complete the Message and click **Submit** or Save, depending on whether you want to post the response or save a draft to complete and post at a later time.

**Faculty members determine how much content they add to their Blackboard course shells and which components they choose to use. Refer to your course Syllabus, course documents, or contact your professor if you need information regarding your course.**

**To locate online support guides or if you are having difficulty using Blackboard:**

**Contact the IT Help Desk by calling 508 929-8856, go to the Helpdesk in LRC-310, or submit an IT HelpDesk Support Request form found in the blue banner at the top of <http://it.worcester.edu>.**