Course Portal Overview for Faculty and Group Administrators

This document is designed to help give a basic overview of tools available to instructors in the course portal.

For questions or assistance using the portal, please contact:
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How to Login to the Portal

The portal is a password protected portion of the seminary website. You can access a wide array of seminary information, access online library resources, and share class materials. For each course you instruct or oversee, there is a portal group. To get to those groups, you need to first log in to the portal. In order to do that you will first click on the link labeled “Portal Login” on the top of the main seminary website.

Next, you will be asked to enter your username and password. Your user name will be the portion of your seminary email address before the “@” symbol.

So the user name for John.Doe@austinseminary.edu would be John.Doe. Your default password the first time you login will be emailed to you by the Learning Technologies Librarian. Instructions for changing your password are in the following section.
You will first be directed to the dashboard of the faculty portal. Along the top, you will see tabs for various departments and groups on campus.

Your classes are on the left, as well as the link to update your password. On the right, you have the quick links to a number of resources. On the bottom you can click on the links on the blue bar. If you click on your name you can access your account information, and use the logoff link at the bottom when you exit the portal.
How to Change Your Password

You may want to change your password the first time that you login to the portal. To do that, you click on the “Update your password” link in the box labeled “My Account” on the portal dashboard (see diagram on page 3).

After you click on that link, a new window will open that asks you to enter a new password and confirm it. Once you have done that, click on “Update.”
How to Access Your Classes

To access your classes, click on the name of the class in the My Classes box on your portal dashboard.
When you enter one of your course groups for the first time, you will notice some new features along the top banner.

If you click on Dashboard, this will open a dashboard where you can track all of your classes. In this space you will see the activity for all of your course groups, as well as a calendar with all of your classes’ events and assignments in one place.

If you click on the classes’ link, you will be able to move easily from one course group to another.

On the right, if you click on Portals, you will be directed back to the main portals dashboard that you see when you first login.

And finally, if you click on your name you will be able to access your account information, change your password and log off.
Home

The Home page is what students see first when they enter your course’s portal group. This is a great place to list important information such as the time and days the course meets and place, as well as the professor's office hours and contact information. It has a number of elements that can be edited and adjusted to fit your needs, you can edit the layout of your home page by clicking on the word “customize” on the right (see directions below). On the top of the page are tabs for the various tools, you can enable and disable all of the tools by clicking on the plus symbol at the top and then selecting the first option, the gear symbol (see directions below). If you wish to add an assignment, resource, or another item to your group, click on the plus sign on the top right, and select the item you wish to edit.
Editing the Home Page Layout and Content

To edit what appears on the home page, find the button labeled “Customize” near the top right (see above diagram). After you click on that button, a new, smaller window will open. All of the items that you can include on your Home page are listed at the top. For some items, such as embed or content, you will see a number in a circle after it. That number tells you that you can include multiples of those items in the Home page layout. To move an item, click on the item you want to include. Then after it appears below either drag it to its desired location or use the arrows that will appear at the bottom of the screen to move its placement. To remove an item from the Home page, simply click on the X next to it and it will return to the bank of items at the top.

At the bottom of the screen you can adjust the layout, by using the drop down menu. You can choose between 1, 2, and 3 column layouts.

After you have the layout you desire, click on “Apply” to save your changes.
When you are back on the Home page, you can edit the content of the items in your layout. For certain items, you will see a small blue pencil in the right corner, click on this pencil to edit that item. To remove items from the Activity Stream, hover your cursor over the item, so a grey “X” appears to the right of the item. Click on the “X” to delete that entry. With other items, such as Bulletins or the Calendar, click on the “Manage” link in the top right.
Controlling What Tools are Available to Students

In the default setup all of the available tools will appear to you as an instructor. Students will only see the tools that you have used. However, it is also possible for you to disable any of the tools you are not using, so you will get a better sense of what your students see.

To do that, click on the gear icon on the top right:

A new window will open. In the Features portion of that window, you will see all of the tools listed. To disable a tool, click on the drop down menu next to the tool and select “disabled” from the list. Click on “Update Settings” at the bottom of the window to save your changes.
If you need any help configuring your dashboard please contact Mandy Deen for assistance.

Home Highlights

- The activity stream helps students to know when new content has been posted.
- Provides quick access to calendar and other course components.
**Calendar**

The calendar helps both you and your students to keep track of assignment due dates, class events, quiz dates and other important events. (Use the numbers in the diagram below to navigate through the following subsections.)

1. **Choosing your view:**

On the top right side of the Calendar, you can choose the length of time you wish to view at the top right. Clicking “Today” will return you to the current day. Selecting “Agenda” will organize events as a list. On the top left, use the arrows to scroll through the calendar.
2. Adding an event, assignment, or quiz:

To add an event, assignment, or quiz to the calendar click on “Add Event” on the top (see previous diagram). Then fill out the following form. Fields with a red asterisk must be completed, the remaining fields are optional. You will want to name your item. Then under “Event Type” use the drop down menu to select event, assignment, or quiz. Location is optional. For assignments you must enter both a date assigned and a date due. An assignment’s “Time Due” is optional. The default setting is at the end of the day (11:59 p.m.). For events and quizzes, you just enter the date.

If you wish to have a repeating assignment or event, click on the yellow pencil by the word “Repeat.” The description box can be used to enter in text to provide your students with a description of the assignment or event. The grey bar along the top contains editing tools to edit your text. If you are teaching multiple classes you can copy events or assignments to a different calendar by clicking the checkbox next to different course names on the dropdown menu. Below the calendar option you can add the entry to the Gradebook. The Notes field is just for your reference, meaning that students will not see any information you enter here. You can include an attachment to the event or assignment. And finally, if you wish to create a Dropbox for an assignment, click on the box at the bottom of the form (This can also be done in the Dropbox section). Once you have everything set, make sure the publish box is checked and click on “Save Event.” If you wish to copy this to another group, click on Save & Clone. If you wish to save your work as a draft, uncheck Publish and click on Save Event.
3. Learning more about an event

If you wish to get more information about an event, click on the title event or assignment name.

When you click on an event, you will see the following information:

In addition to the event details, you can edit the event, clone it to a different calendar, delete it from the calendar, or unpublish it so it is not visible to students.
4. Calendar Tools

If you click on the link for calendar tools, you will be able to access options for bulk publishing, bulk deletions, importing other calendars, exporting the calendar to other formats, and establishing calendar alerts.

If you wish to import a calendar as a file it needs to be in either an iCal or tab delimited text file. Or you can import an iCal calendar using a URL. A calendar can be exported in the following file types: iCal, XML, CSV, MS Excel (Raw), MS Excel (Formatted), and iCal for Outlook.
5. Manage Calendars

Clicking on the Manage Calendars button, on the top left side of the Calendar, will allow you to see all of your groups calendars at once and in one place. You can use the menus on the left to control how much or how little you see. If you hover your cursor over the name of a particular calendar, then a gear symbol will appear (see below). Click on the gear to get the menu to open (see screen shot below). You can use this menu to change the colors of calendars, export the calendar, view only that calendar, or to add an event to that calendar.
Calendar Highlights

- Helps students to visualize course schedule.
- Can be used for events, quizzes, and assignments.
- Entering assignments on calendar creates an automatic DropBox for the calendar.
- Repeated entries can be created.
- Calendar can be exported and imported.
Resources

The resources tab is a file manager where you can store copies of files, links to websites, embedded videos or text that you enter directly into the portal. You can view the resources page in either a grid or list view. Use the links on the right to switch your view.

Here is the grid view:

And here is the list view:
Creating a resource folder

Before you can add a resource, you must first create folder. Find the New Folder button on the top right portion of the screen.

Click on the green New Folder button to begin. This will open a new window:

![New Folder window](image)

Enter a folder name.

In the field labeled “Parent Folder” decide where your folder will be placed. If it is a top level folder, then select Main Folder. If you would like to put a folder within a folder, select the appropriate folder from the drop down list.

The description field can be left blank, or you can use it to provide your students a description of the folder.

The thumbnail field is used if you wish to attach an image to the folder (this is optional and the thumbnail image will only be visible in the grid view). That image would display instead of the default folder symbol you see in the screen shots above.
The display date is when you want your students to be able to see the folder’s contents. It will always default to the current day, however, you can select a later date if you wish to control when students have access to materials.

The archive date is optional, but it is recommended you do NOT put in an archival date. Once a resources is archived it is no longer available on Finalsite for future use.

The check boxes at the bottom are all optional items that help you to copy this content to other course groups. Once you are finished, click on Save Folder.

Re-using a resource folder from a previous archived course group:

Many times professors will want re-use a Resource from a previous Portal Group. This is easily accomplished. On the top right side of the Resources page, select the green button titled: “Import”

This will open a pop-up menu with your previous courses listed. When you find the course you want, click on the name. It will then open with all the folders from the course listed below it. Select the checkbox next to the folder or folders you wish to import and select “Import Folders” at the bottom.
Adding a resource to an existing folder

After you have created your folder, you can now begin to add resources. Begin by selecting New Resource on the top right:

![New Resource button]

The following window will open:

![New Resource window]

First, title your resource. Next, select the folder you want your resource to appear in.

The description field is optional. You can add a brief description here that students will see. The thumbnail is also optional. If you wish, you can attach a picture that will display as the resource's icon.

The display and archive date are the same as they are for a resource folder. Use these options if you wish to establish a date range when students can access this resource.
Then finally, select the type of resource you wish to add. In the image above, link is selected. In order to add a link to a web-based resource, you simply type or cut and paste it into the box.

If you are linking to a resource from the library’s on-line databases, it is important to make the link usable for students that might be trying to access the material from off-campus. In order to do this, you must route the link through the EZ Proxy server so that the student will be recognized by the database as having access. In practice, this means that you must add a prefix to the link address. The prefix is:

https://apts.idm.oclc.org/login?url=

**IMPORTANT: Don’t forget to include the equals sign (=) at the end of the prefix and delete any spaces!**

If you have questions, or if you’d like a librarian to walk through this with you in person, please contact us at libraryiq@austinseminary.edu or view our FAQ at www.austinseminary.edu/ezproxy

If you wish to attach a file, select the file tab, then click “Browse”. This will open your computer’s file directory, where you can choose the file from your hard drive or external storage device, similar to the way you attach a file to an email message. Once the file has been attached, click save resource.

And finally, if you wish to type content in directly, or embed a video, select the content tab.
You can simply enter text into the box, and use the basic editing features along the top. To embed a video, click on the icon with “< >” symbol on the top of box. This is the symbol for html input. This will open the input box:

Cut and paste the embed code into the box and select “Insert.” This should close the pop-up and return you to the original pop-up. There might be no discernible change in the Content box, so don’t assume your input was unsuccessful.
Finally, back on the original add resource window, click on save resource.

Resource Highlights
- Quick access to readings and other course materials.
- Can include links to web resources, file attachments, embedded videos, or you can create resources within the course portal.
- Folders and subfolders help to keep materials organized.
DropBox

The DropBox is where you will create and collect assignments. The landing page for your DropBox will look like the following.

Dropboxes will be sorted in chronological order by due date. You can use the drop down filter menu to restrict your view to see only open assignments (these will show their status in green), closed assignments, or unread entries. DropBoxes can be edited using the yellow pencil icon on the right, archived by selecting the file box folder, deleted by clicking on the grey trash can icon, or you can export the submissions made to the dropbox by selecting the export icon at the end.
How to add a new DropBox

Begin by clicking on the Add DropBox button on the top right of the main DropBox page (see diagram on previous page). The following form will open:

![Add New Dropbox Assignment form]

This form should look similar to creating an assignment on the calendar, with a few more options. All fields that have a red asterisk need to be completed, the rest are optional.

Begin by titling your assignment. Enter the date assigned and the date due. If you choose to enter a time due, add that in the appropriate field, otherwise the default is for the DropBox to close at 11:59 p.m.

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If you wish to have a repeating assignment, click on the pencil icon by the word repeat to set up those parameters.

You can enter a brief description of the assignment in the space provided. You can also include an attachment of the assignment if you prefer.

Make sure to select which class calendar the assignment needs to appear on.

You can also associate the dropbox with a gradebook entry.

The notes field is for your own reference, this information will not display for students. Put any information that students need to see either in the description field or in an attachment.

Finally, under DropBox options, you can select if you will accept late submissions, meaning after the due date. These submissions will be clearly marked as late. You can also select to receive an email each time something is submitted to the DropBox.

Once you have completed the form, make sure publish is checked and click on Save DropBox. If you wish to clone this assignment to a different class, you can click on Save and Clone. And if you want to save your work, but not have it published to the group, uncheck publish and click on Save DropBox.

**Viewing responses and downloading assignments**

Now if we go back to the main DropBox page, we can see under the submissions column, how many students have turned in any particular assignment. So for “Reflection Paper” we can see there is 1 submission and 3 comments.
If we click on the title of that dropbox, we get a new page where we see the entire roster of the course, and can view submissions, write comments to students, download assignments and return student work.

In this example, you can see that the test student account “test, test” is highlighted on the list. The (1) under the name lets me know that there is a submission by this student to the dropbox. Since her name is highlighted, her comment and file are available on the right. I can click on the title of her assignment to open it. I can also use the comment box on the top right to respond to her. If I wish to send her a file, such as her assignment with comments, I can attach it by clicking on “Browse”.

Finally, if you wish to download all assignments at once, scroll to the bottom of your list of students, and then click on “download all submissions.”

This will put all of the student’s assignments in a zip file. Click to save the file, when prompted:
Go to your computer’s downloads folder, and look for the zip file named “assignments.” Double click to open the folder.

Once the folder is open, you will see each assignment is clearly labeled by the student’s name, just double click on whatever assignment you wish to read. In order to include comments on a student assignment, you will need to save the document in a different location other than the zip file. You may wish to retitle the file so you know that you have commented on it. Also, pay attention to where you save the file on your computer so you can easily find it when you wish to return it to the student via the dropbox. Alternatively, you can save all of the
documents in the zip file at once if you right click on the zip file and select “Extract All.” You will then be directed to select a new location for the files. From the new location you select you can edit and read through the documents.

DropBox Highlights
- Collect assignments in one place.
- Use comments to communicate with students.
- Return assignments with comments.
- Assignments are automatically added to the course calendar when a DropBox is created.
Quizzes

You can give quizzes through the portal. These quizzes can be timed or untimed, autograded, or manually graded.

When you first click on the quizzes tab, you will see ONLY the quizzes are currently scheduled for the course portal group you are in. There is a colored banner to the right of the title of the quiz that indicates the status of the quiz (ungraded, unpublished, and published). The icons on the far right of each quiz title allow you to adjust the schedule of the quiz (the purple calendar icon), delete the quiz (trashcan), or export the quiz results (the bottom icon).

To create a new quiz, select the blue button “Create Quiz.” This will bring up a pop-up window. Fill in the name of the quiz (it will be stored with ALL the other quizzes you create, so it would be good to name it something quite descriptive), and the quiz instructions. Select “Save”
Once you save the quiz details, you will be taken to the empty quiz itself. Select “Add Question” to create the first question.

This will bring up a pop-up window with several options:

There are five question formats available:

- **Multiple Choice/Single Answer**: Students are given a range of possible answers, and must select one
- **Multiple Choice/Multiple Answer**: From a range of possible answers, students select all that apply
- **Short Answer**: Students write a short response that must include at least one keyword/keyphrase that teachers identify in advance as being 'correct.'
- **Long Answer**: The same as Short Answer, but students are given much more room to write their response.
- **True/false**: Similar to multiple choice/single answer, but the true/false answers will be created for you.

Select the format for your first question, and enter the question text in the field provided. Select a correct answer (or enter a reference answer for short/long answer questions). You may also add an explanation that will be shared with students when you open your quiz for student review.
To keep adding questions to the quiz, select the blue “Save and New” button. Once you have added all the questions you wish, select the green “Save” button, and you will be returned to your “My Quizzes (Master Copies)” homepage.

Please note that when you originally select “Create Quiz” or “Quiz Templates” you are taken from the course portal group you were in, and sent to your own quiz manager. Here you will see all the quizzes you have ever created in the history of your membership in the Portal.
To schedule your quiz, find the quiz among your other quizzes, and select the purple calendar icon. On the resulting pop-up menu, be sure the Quiz parameters are set how you want them to be (timed, randomized question order, and if students are allowed to review each question after the Quiz has been graded). The quiz manager will automatically assign the quiz to the first course portal group in the dropdown menu next to “Calendar” so be sure it is assigned to the correct course portal group.
When you have arranged the Quiz to your liking, select “Schedule” and this should make the Quiz active in your course portal group and return you to your “Quiz Manager” page. To navigate back to the course portal, select the dropdown menu “Classes” on the upper left hand side of the page:

![Classes drop-down menu](image)

However, if you have a quiz from a previous class that you’d like to repurpose for a course portal group, simply select “Quiz Templates” which will take you directly to the Quiz Manager where you can edit and schedule quizzes that you have already created.
Gradebook

The Portal also has the capacity to create house and store grades for various assignments. In order to set up Gradebook for a course portal group, Professors must first contact the Learning Technologies Librarian and request it be added to a specific course. It is important to note that the grades in the course portal group are not official, and do not replace the physical reporting of grades to the Registrar.

Once this step has been taken, professors may proceed to configure the gradebook settings, and then begin adding graded assignments to the class calendar.

When first clicking on the Gradebook tab in the LMS, teachers will be prompted to configure the Gradebook settings, and then begin adding assignments to the class calendar.

![Gradebook Settings window](image)

The Gradebook Settings window pops up when a teacher clicks the "Settings" button. (Teachers can also open the Gradebook Settings at any time - the "Settings" button appears on the Gradebook tab.) Read on for a detailed description of each control in the Settings panel.
**Grading Scale**

The grading scale section allows professors to determine whether classwork is graded on a percentage scale or by tallied points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Drop Lowest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Paper I</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Paper 2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Add Category]

- Use individual gradebook entry weightings

**Grade Display**

- Display notation
- Display percent
- Highlight grades equal to or lower than 70 %

**Gradebook Visibility**

- Hide from parents
- Hide from students
- Hide from students/parents until marked published

[Save]
Once gradebook has been activated for a class, professors can start using it right away to assess students on all kinds of in-class and out-of-class coursework. Assignments created via the class calendar are automatically added to the gradebook. Additional assignments can be created and added manually via the gradebook tab in the LMS.

**Assignment Weighting**

The relative value of different types of work (tests, quizzes, homework, class participation, etc.) can be customized by professors on a per-class basis, if desired. For example, if a class syllabus specifies that “Class Participation” counts as 25% of each student’s final grade, professors can reflect that in the gradebook. Professors can create assignment categories (such as “Class Participation,” “Exams,” “Quizzes,” etc.) and assign a different grading weight to each one. Each assignment for the class is placed into a category, and gradebook factors the category weight for each one into the final grade for each marking period.

**Creating Assignment Categories**

On the gradebook tab in the LMS, click the gray “Settings” button to display the gradebook options.

At the top of the window, select “Standard” or “Weighted” - “Standard” grading will weigh all assignments equally - so a test, a quiz and a homework assignment would all have an equal impact on students’ final grades.

“Weighted” grading allows teachers to set the relative value of each coursework category. Click the green “Add Category” button to create a new classification. Give the new category a name, and assign it relative weight percentage. The total percentage of all categories must equal 100%. The total is calculated at the top of the list; if the total does not equal 100%, it will be highlighted in red to prompt you to edit the category weights as needed.

Assignment weight settings will only apply to the current class; professors must edit the grading settings of each of their classes separately.

**Calculating Grades**

Gradebook calculates the arithmetic mean of all the submissions within each assignment category for each student. If weighted grade categories have been established, the category averages are then multiplied by their weighting percentage. The weighted averages are then tallied up to find the final grade.

**Assignment Grading**

Assignments are graded by tallying the number of points earned and dividing them by the total number of possible points (i.e., the Maximum Points) that could be earned.

**Grade Factoring**

Factoring is a way of distinguishing between different types of assignments within the same category by making them worth more or less points relative to one another. This is done by varying the Maximum Point value of the assignments. For example, if an in-class quiz is worth twice as much as a take-home quiz, then the in-class quiz could have a Max Point value of 20 while the take-home has a Max Point of 10. In this way, both kinds of quizzes will be counted in the "Quizzes" grade category, but the in-class quiz will have twice as much of an impact on the students' "Quizzes" score as the take-home ones.
Under "Standard" grading, every single assignment for the class will count toward each student's final grade in the same way. This can be changed though by switching to the "Weighted" grading option. When you click the "Weighted" button, Gradebook will ask you to define the various types of assignments that make up the syllabus, and to give each one a percentage value indicating how much each assignment type counts towards students' final grades. The system will show a tally at the top of the list of assignment types; this tally is shaded red if it does NOT equal 100%.

**Grade Display**

The Grade Display options determine how grades are presented on the LMS. These settings will apply to the teacher, and will carry over to students.

The "Display notation" dropdown menu will determine what letter or number grading scale corresponds to students' overall percentage grades. These scales are generally configured in advance by site admins. Austin Seminary currently does not use any grades from A-F through the Portal. The "Display percent" checkbox controls whether or not a percentage score is displayed alongside the grading scale result.
Grade Visibility

The Grade Visibility checkboxes determine whether or not students can see Gradebook data when they login to the LMS. (Professors can always see and edit Gradebook info!)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gradebook Visibility</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Hide from parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Hide from students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Hide from students/parents until marked published</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bulletins

Bulletins can be used to post announcements or messages to students. By using the Bulletin tool, you can keep all of these messages in one location, making it easier for students to locate information. To create a new bulletin, click on the green box on the right. To edit an existing bulletin, click on the yellow pencil button. And to delete a bulletin, click on the grey trashcan button.

If you click to create a new bulletin, a new window will open for you to create and edit the bulletin.

Title your bulletin, and then enter your text in the text box. On the top of the text box, you have your basic editing tools. Set the date when you want the bulletin to appear (the default is always today’s date). If you wish for the bulletin to not be visible after a certain date, enter that information into the Archive Date field. This feature is optional. Finally, if you wish to clone this message to another group, click on the link at the bottom, and select the group(s) you wish to clone the bulletin to. Once you have the bulletin how you want it to appear, click on Save Settings.
Bulletin Highlights

- Communicate class announcements.
- Keeps all messages in one location.
- Set dates when bulletins are visible.
Blog

The blog is a place for instructor created content. You can use this space to write blog posts, post lecture notes, or embed videos. One advantage to using the blog space is that you can provide a space for students to comment directly on the content in the blog.

When you first click on the blog tab you will be asked to “activate” the blog. Click on the link in blue.

Next you will be asked to modify the blog’s settings:

If you wish to moderate the blog, which means you will receive an email when new entries are posted, enter your email in the moderator email space. Then you have the option to allow people to comment on the blog.
These comments can also be moderated and subject to your approval. You can also control whether or not commenters are allowed to edit their posts. Additionally, you have the ability to determine how many posts display per page, and you can remove email links from a commenter’s name. Once you have the settings the way you wish, click on update settings. You can alter these settings at any time.

Now your blog is ready to go. To create a new post, you will click on the green button labeled New Post.

You will see the following form to create your blog post. Begin by titling your post. Then use the text box to create your post. Notice you have the usual basic editing tools along the top.

Below the text box you can decide if you wish to hide other comments until the user has posted his or her own comment. You can also create categories to help to help organize your blog posts. If you click on Save Draft, you can return to edit the post at a later time. Or if you click Publish the post will be saved and posted to the group.
After you have some posts on your blog, the main blog page will look like the image below. Along the top you will find where you can add a new post or change the blog’s settings.

For each post, you have the option of clicking the small green button with two squares in it to make a copy of the post to post on a different group’s blog. You can use the yellow pencil button to edit a post. And you can use the grey trash can button to delete a post.

On the right you can see the categories that you have used to organize posts. Just click on a category name to see all posts in that group. You can also search through the posts by month.

Finally, along the bottom, you will see if a post has comments on it. Click on this link to read and respond to those comments.

Blog Highlights

- A place to post lecture notes for students to comment and ask questions.
- A place to embed links to video and audio content, which can then be discussed in the comments.
Discussions

The discussions tool will allow you to conduct asynchronous discussions with your course group.

You must first begin by creating a discussion board. After you have created the board, then you will have the ability to post multiple topics or conversations on each board. Begin by clicking on the green box labeled New Discussion Board.

Next you will be asked to establish the board’s settings:

This will require giving the board a title, deciding if you want the board to display the posts chronologically or in a thread (based on who responded to whom). Then you can determine if students are allowed to post new topics on the board, or if you want only the instructor to post new topics. You can also determine if you will allow students to return to edit their posts after they have been initially posed. If you wish, you can share this discussion with one of your other course groups. Finally, you can determine if you want to moderate and approve replies and new topics. Once you have the settings the way that you want, click on Save Settings. Please note that the last checkbox is to moderate replies by students. It is default checked when you are setting up a board. Most professors prefer that replies by students be UN-moderated. If students don’t know the message board is moderated, they might be confused and frustrated when their replies don’t immediately appear.

Select “Save Settings” and now your new board will appear, click on the link to add a new topic for discussion:
Now you can compose your post. Give it a title. If you wish, you can hide responses from students until they have posted their own response. Check the box next to Hide Forum Responses if you want to enable this feature. If you want to save a post before you post it in the course group, click on Save Draft. When it is ready for your students to see, click on Publish.

After you have set up your boards and posted some discussion topics, your discussion page will look similar to the one below. On the left, you will see any recent activity. You can add a new board, by clicking the box labeled “New Discussion Board.” You can add a new topic to a discussion board by clicking on the green button with the plus sign to the right of the board’s title. You can edit a board’s settings by clicking on the yellow pencil icon. You can delete a board and all of its discussion topics by clicking on the grey trash can, and you can collapse and expand the discussion boards, by clicking on the small box with the triangle in it. Next to the title of each topic, you will see a count of how many comments and views each board has.
When you view a specific discussion board you will see that you have options on the right as to how to view the board. You can filter the responses by a specific submitter. This can make it easy to track participation. You can also adjust the view so you either see posts chronologically or in a threaded manner, in which responses to a post are directly below the post they are responding to. You will see that for the responses there is both a grey box with an ‘X’ in it and a yellow editing icon. Students will only see the editing icon on posts that they submitted (if you enable that feature). The grey box with an ‘X’ is what you click on to delete a reply. To reply, select the blue box with an arrow, titled “reply” that is under the entry you wish to reply to.

If you wish to delete an individual topic, you would use the trashcan icon to the right of the topic title.
When you choose to reply to a post, the following will appear at the bottom of the discussion topic:

Again you will see the same editing tools as before. As an instructor, you can save a draft, or publish immediately. If you wish, you can be notified when someone replies directly to your post. You can also mark the message as ‘private’ which means only administrators on the course portal group, and the person you are replying to will see the message.

Discussion Highlights
- Discussions can be viewed and monitored in a variety of ways.
- Students can engage with course content asynchronously.
- Faculty can filter by student in order to quickly tally participation.
- Media can be embedded into a discussion.
The Members section allows you to see everyone enrolled in your course and allows you to email them while you are in the portal group. To email an individual student, click on the envelope in their entry. To email the whole class, click on Bulk Email.

If you email an individual student, the following window will open. You will see that the class that I am working in is in bold text and that the box next to the name of the person I am emailing is checked. Complete the email. Notice that you have editing tools along the bottom. However, there is no way to send attachments through this email system. You either need to use your normal email client to send attachments, or you can post the attachment in the course group and direct students to where they can find it. Once you have drafted your email, click on Send Now.
Select the appropriate constituents within each class and compose your email below. A confirmation receipt will be sent to your own email.

Send To

- My Classes
  - CIM Preview
  - Entering Class of 2013
  - Learning Technologies
    - Roster
      - Alsup, John E. (jalsup@austinseminary.edu)
      - Bodman, Whitney S. (woodman@austinseminary.edu)
      - Caldwell, Lesley (lcaldwell@austinseminary.edu)
      - Cole, Allan Hugh (aco6e@austinseminary.edu)
      - Hooker, Paul (phooker@austinseminary.edu)
      - Johnson, David W. (djohnson@austinseminary.edu)
      - Lincoln, Timothy D. (tlincoln@austinseminary.edu)
      - Osbon, Brenda (bosbon@austinseminary.edu)
      - Parrish, Lilie (lparish@austinseminary.edu)
      - Riemersma, Alison (ariemersma@austinseminary.edu)
      - Rigby, Cynthia L. (crigby@austinseminary.edu)
      - Saldine, Kristin Emery (ksaldine@austinseminary.edu)
      - Sorensen, Kristy K. (ksorensen@austinseminary.edu)
      - Todd, Asante (atodd@austinseminary.edu)
      - White, David F. (dwhite@austinseminary.edu)
      - Wiggins, Melissa (mwiggins@austinseminary.edu)
    - Administrators
    - Theology: Doctrines & Themes
    - CIM Orientation

From

Deborah Hamilton <dhamilton@austinseminary.edu>

BCC

Subject

Importance

Normal

Message

[Email editor interface]

Send Now
If you send a bulk email, you will see that the same window opens. This time you will need to check which course roster you wish to email. Compose as before and send. Attachments are also not available in bulk email.

Members Highlights
- Send bulk email to class groups.
- Quickly identify students and contact them.
Questions?

If you have any questions or need any assistance using the portal, please contact:

Mandy Deen
Learning Technologies Librarian
mdeen@austinseminary.edu
512-404-4874