Internet Forums

Internet forums are web-based applications for holding online discussions and posting user-generated content\(^1\). They are also commonly referred to as Web forums, message boards, discussion boards, (electronic) discussion groups, discussion forums, and bulletin boards. These forums have the advantage of being both asynchronous and non-localized, so that faculty and students can make contributions at any time and from any place with an Internet connection.

\(<emma>\) allows faculty to add forums to stimulate class discussion. Some professors have used these forums very creatively – Christine Dinkins and Steve Zides in their “World on the Edge” Humanities course, for example.

Faculty: Starting a New Discussion

Login to <emma> and move to your course. Click on Forum.

Click on New Discussion.

In the window that appears, enter the Title of the forum and text that will help kick-off the discussion.

Click on Submit when you are ready.

You will see the forum on the <emma> forum page.
Entering a Forum

Click on **Forum** and **List Discussions** to see the discussions available.

You now should see the introductory text for the different discussions to which you have access.

Posting a Comment

A student can post a comment on a discussion’s introductory text discussion by clicking on the **Post Comment** button.

The same type of text entry window appears, in which the student can enter his/her comment (including a title).

Notice that it is possible to emphasize text in a bold, italics, or underlined font.
Reply to a Posting

If users want to post a reply to one of the posted comments, they can click on the Post Reply button.

As usual, a text entry window will appear.

Click on Submit when ready.

The reply will be posted within the comment it references.
Adding a Hyperlink or a Picture

A professor or student may want to reference a web page by linking it from a forum posting. As an example, suppose that John Doe has become interested in medical nanorobots and has found a good web site at [http://www.medicalnanorobots.com/]. He wants to post a comment about this field and include a hyperlink to the web site he has found.

Enter the text of the comment shown at the right. Then select the phrase “medical nanorobots” and click on the hyperlink icon.

Paste the URL in the “Insert/Modify Link” window that appears.

Click on OK.

The phrase now is hyperlinked within the text.

John also has found some articles on the use of medical nanorobots to deliver drugs, including a conceptual picture of what a nanorobot might look like. The image he wants to include is available on the web at the URL below:


In Firefox, right-click on the image and select Copy image location from the menu. This copies the URL of the image so that you do not need to write it down.
Post a reply in the Drug Delivery thread.

To include the picture in the comment, click on the image icon.

Paste the URL in the “Insert Image” window that appears. You can click on the Preview button to preview the image.

Click on OK when you are ready.

The comment now will include the picture.

 NOTE: I would not recommend using images stored on your own personal computer because I doubt that the <emma> server can find them.
Closing a Forum

Click on Close Forum to collapse the display of the forum so that only the original question is shown.

Multiple Forums

As we have seen from the “World on the Edge” course, a professor is not limited to one forum.
Making a Journal Entry

A journal is like a private blog in which the instructor is the only reader. It is a useful way for students to privately submit informal writing assignments to their instructor without review by their classmates – responses to a speaker, reviews of a film, etc.

To make a journal entry, a student should click on **Journal** in the course menu and then click on **New Entry**.

The student can make the entry in the workspace in the next window.

Click on **Submit** when the entry has been made.

The new entry will show up in the list of entries. These entries will only be visible to the author and to the instructor(s) of the course.
Viewing Journal Entries

To view journal entries, an instructor should click on **Manage Course** tab. Several ways are available to view the Journals.

Selecting **Journal Composite (7)** will display all the Journal entries in the past week.

Selecting **Journals (Term)** and a particular student’s name will show that student’s journal entries.