Canvas Instructor Quickstart Guide

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Get Started with Canvas

Network and Free-for-Teacher accounts also log in with a Canvas URL. You can also log in to Canvas on the Canvas Mobile apps; learn more about Canvas URLs for mobile apps.

You must have an account to log in to Canvas:

- If you are associated with an institution using Canvas and do not know your username and password, please contact your site administrator.
- If you do not yet have an account, learn how to create a Canvas account as a student or instructor

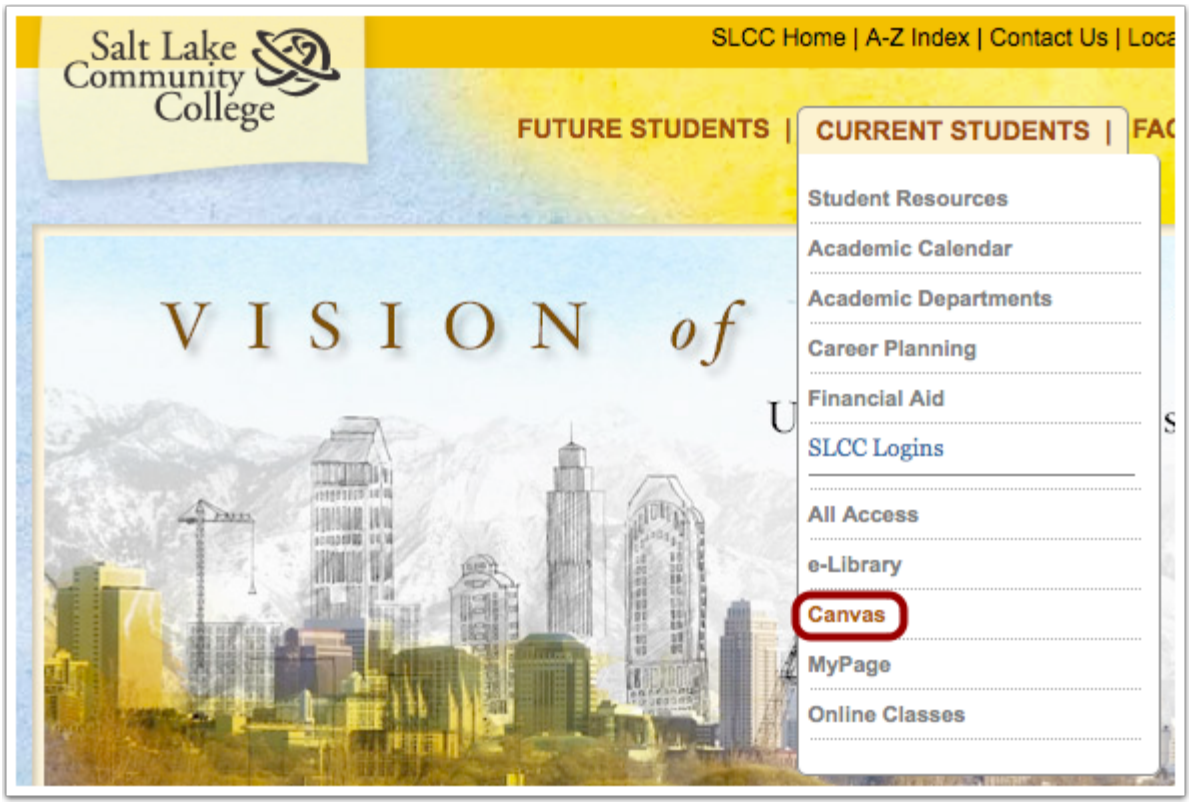
Note: If you are having trouble signing into Canvas, please see the troubleshooting section at the end of this lesson.

Login Troubleshooting

If you are having trouble logging in to your account, here are some tips:

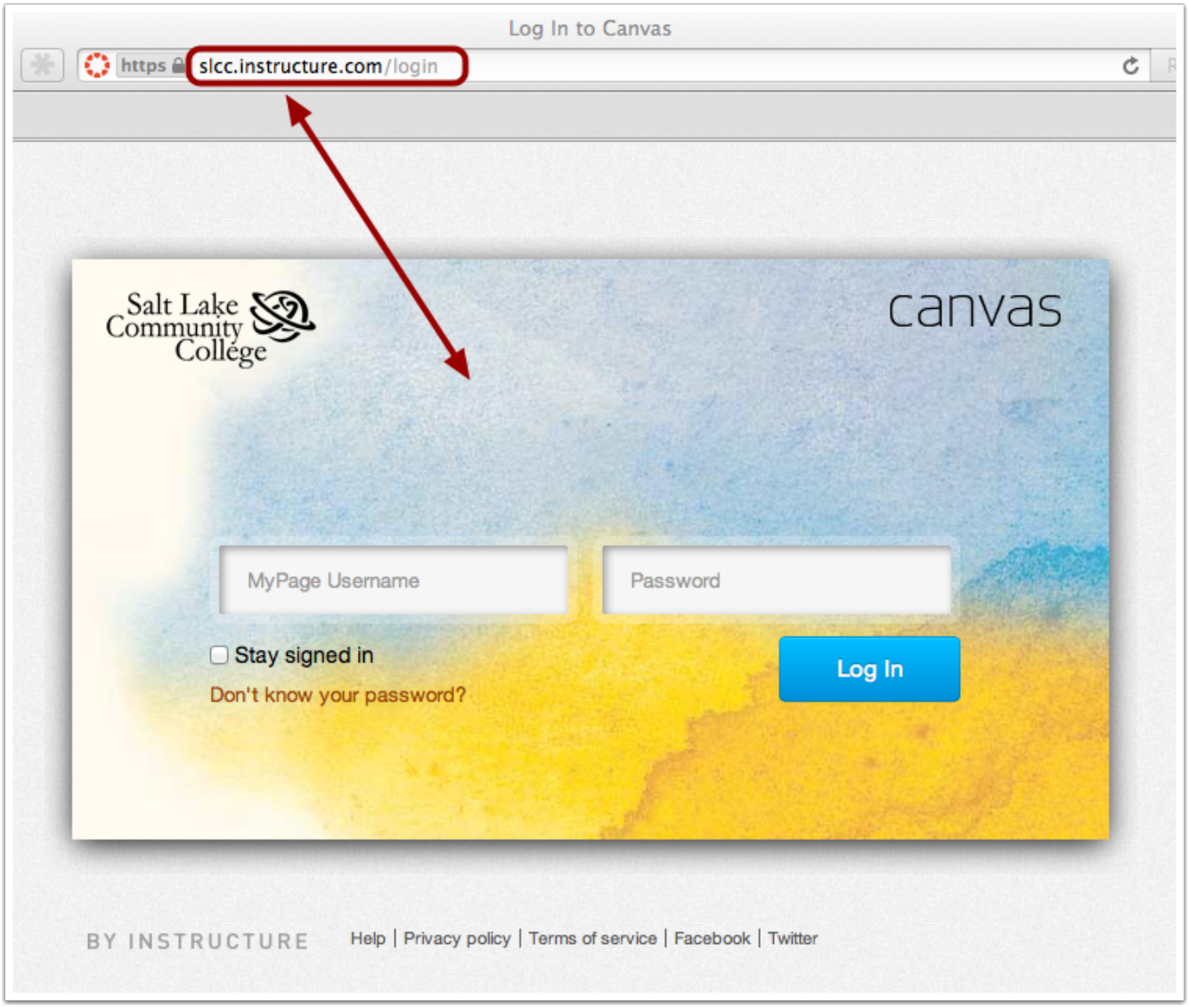
- Verify you are using the correct Canvas URL for your account.
- If you use more than one Canvas URL (such as one for your institution and one for Canvas Network), make sure you are using the correct login and password for each Canvas URL.
- If your login and password were given to you from your institution and you are having trouble logging in, please contact your institution. (Your institution may have changed your login credentials.)
- If you do not have a login and password, you may need to create an account.
- If you have forgotten your password, you may be able to reset your password.

Access Canvas via Institution



Some institutions host Canvas within their website, so you may only need to sign into your institution's internal system to access Canvas.

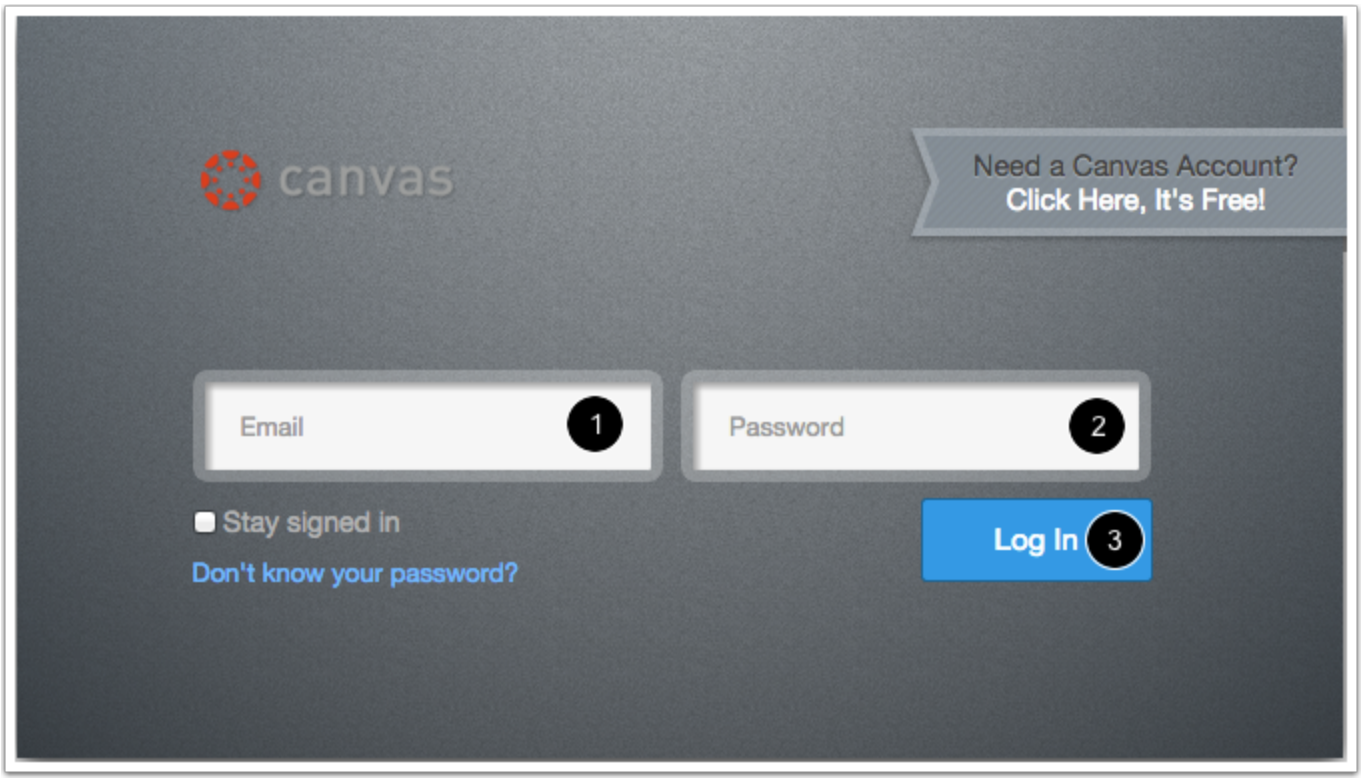
Access Canvas via Canvas URL



Some institutions have you log in to Canvas using the direct link to their Canvas URL. In a browser window, enter your Canvas URL. Your Canvas login page will appear in the window.

Note: The URL for Canvas Network is learn.canvas.net. The URL for Free-For-Teachers (FFT) is canvas.instructure.com.

Log in to Canvas



The Canvas login screen requires your login [1] and password [2]. Depending on your institution, login information may vary.

Click the **Log In** button [3].

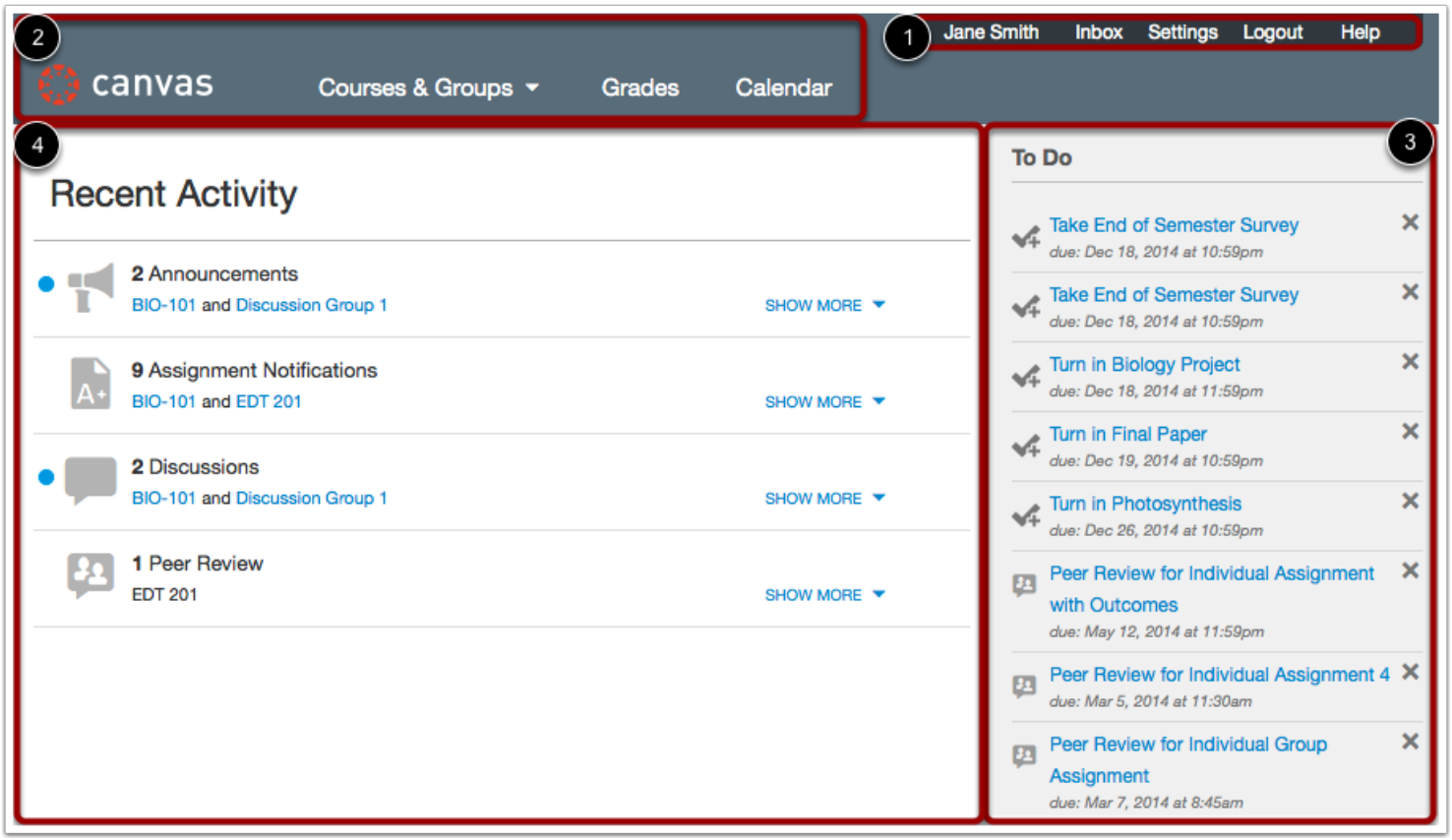
Each screenshot is acknowledged by its respective university for use in this lesson.

What is the User Dashboard?

The User Dashboard is the first thing you will see when you log into Canvas. The User Dashboard helps you see what is happening in all your courses and allows you to figure out what to do next.

You can return to your User Dashboard at any time by clicking your institution's logo in Global Navigation. (For Canvas Catalog users, clicking your institution's logo will return you to your Catalog dashboard.)

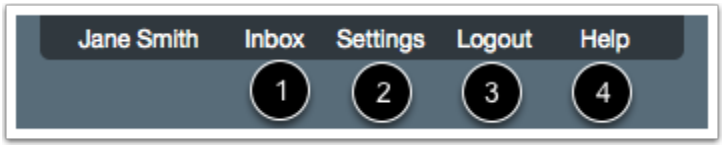
View User Dashboard



The User Dashboard consists of four main elements:

1. the Help Corner
2. Global Navigation
3. the Sidebar
4. the Activity Stream

View Help Corner



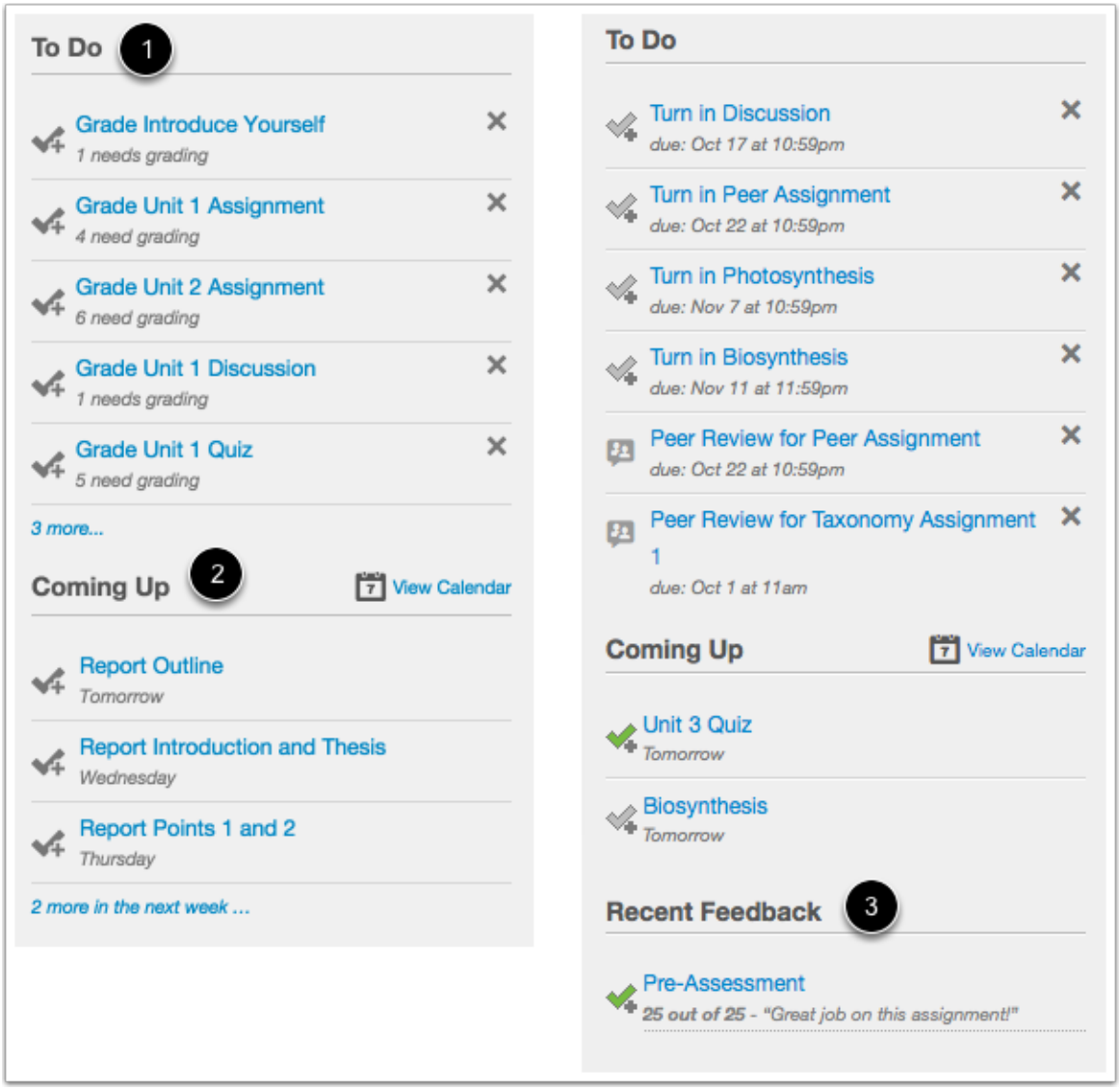
The Help Corner provides easy access to your personal user links and appears at the top of every page in Canvas. You can view your Conversations Inbox [1], view your user settings [2], log out of Canvas [3], and get help with Canvas [4].

Note: If your institution allows you to create a profile (as part of your user settings), you can click your name to view your profile directly.

View Global Navigation

The Global Navigation menu provides you with quick access to all of your courses and groups [1], a summary page for all course grades [2], and the Canvas Calendar [3]. Global Navigation also appears at the top of every page in Canvas. Learn more about Global Navigation.

View Sidebar



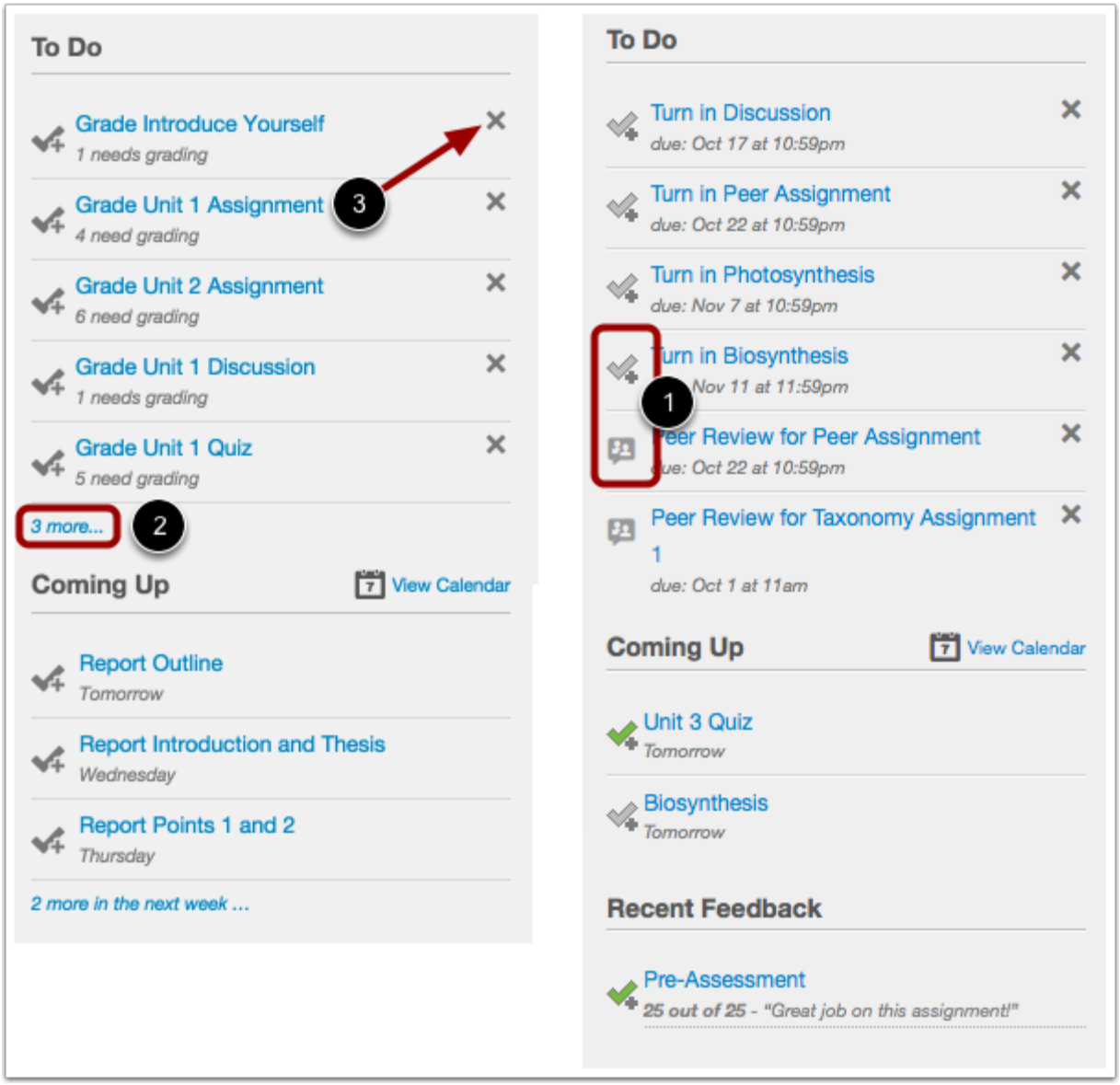
The Sidebar helps you see what you need to do next across all your courses and can contain up to three helpful sections.

The **To Do** section [1] shows assignments or events that require your attention. If you are enrolled in a course as a student, the list shows assignments you need to turn in. If you are enrolled in a course as an instructor, the list shows assignments you need to grade. Items remain in this section for two weeks.

The **Coming Up** section [2] shows assignments and events coming due in the next seven days.

If you are enrolled in a course as a student, the **Recent Feedback** section [3] shows assignments with feedback from your instructor.

Manage Sidebar Items

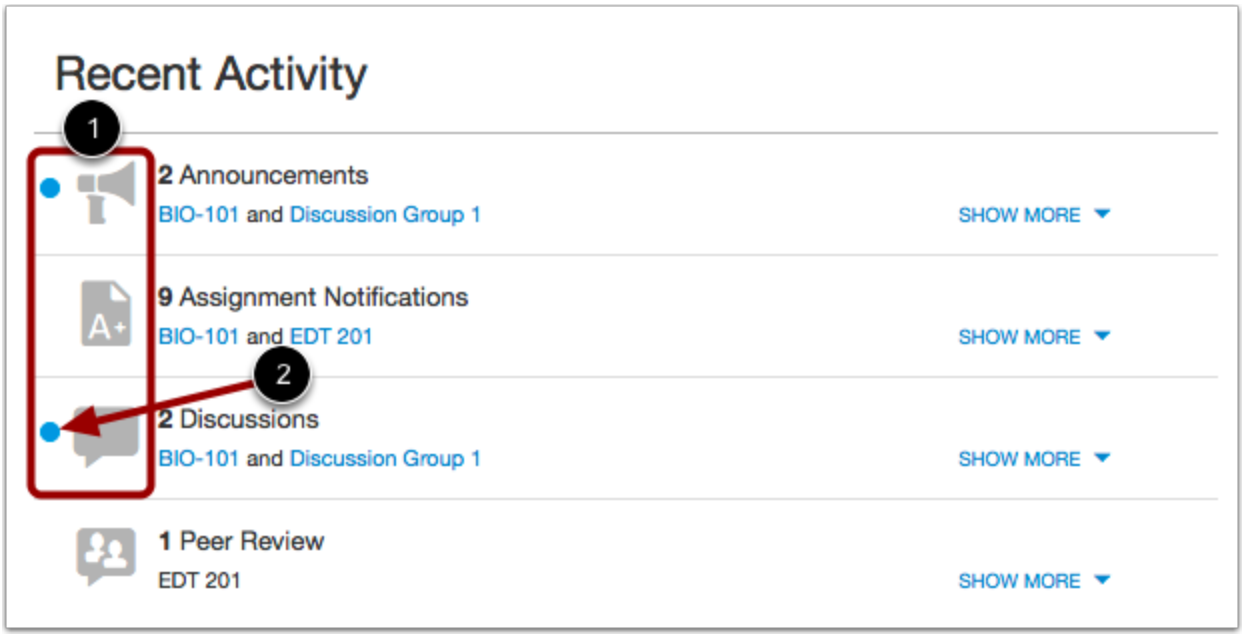


Each section item displays an icon [1] to differentiate between assignments and peer review assignments. Items with green icons indicate the item has been completed as indicated by your user role.

If a section contains more items than are listed, click the **more** link [2].

If there are more than 25 items in the To Do section, you must remove items before you can view any new items. To remove a To Do item, click the **remove** icon [3].

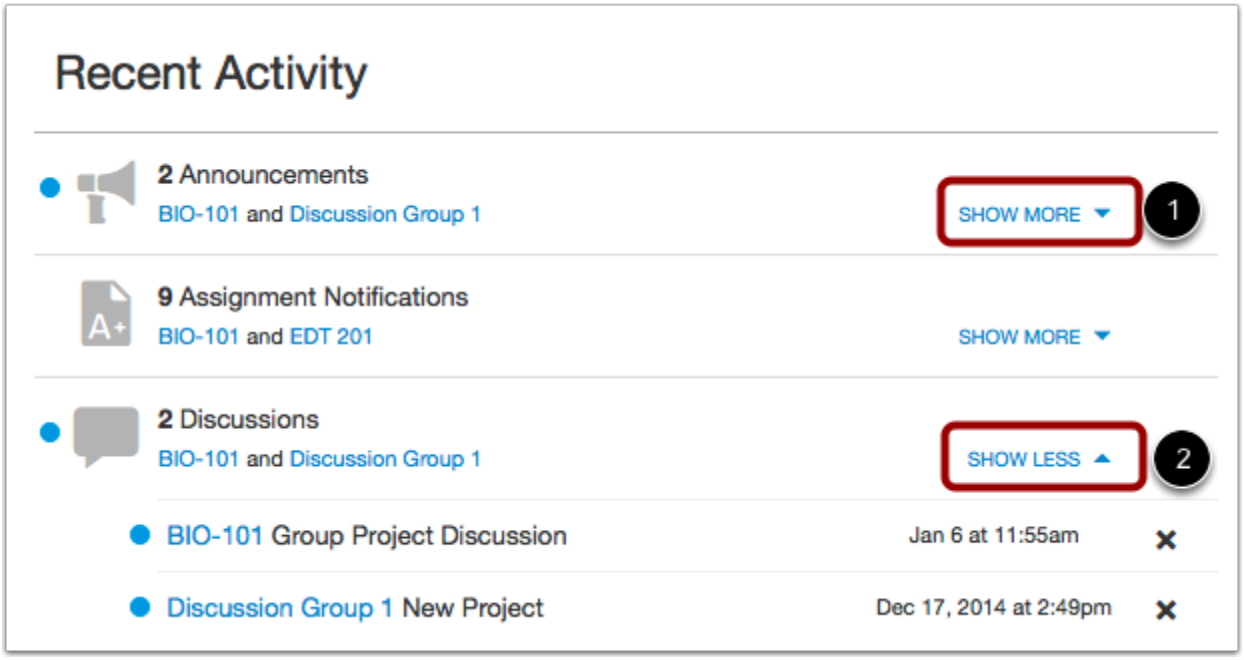
View Recent Activity



Recent Activity contains a stream of recent notifications from all of your courses, including announcements, discussions, assignments, and conversations. This activity stream helps you see all recent activity in your courses and easily ask questions and post to discussion forums.

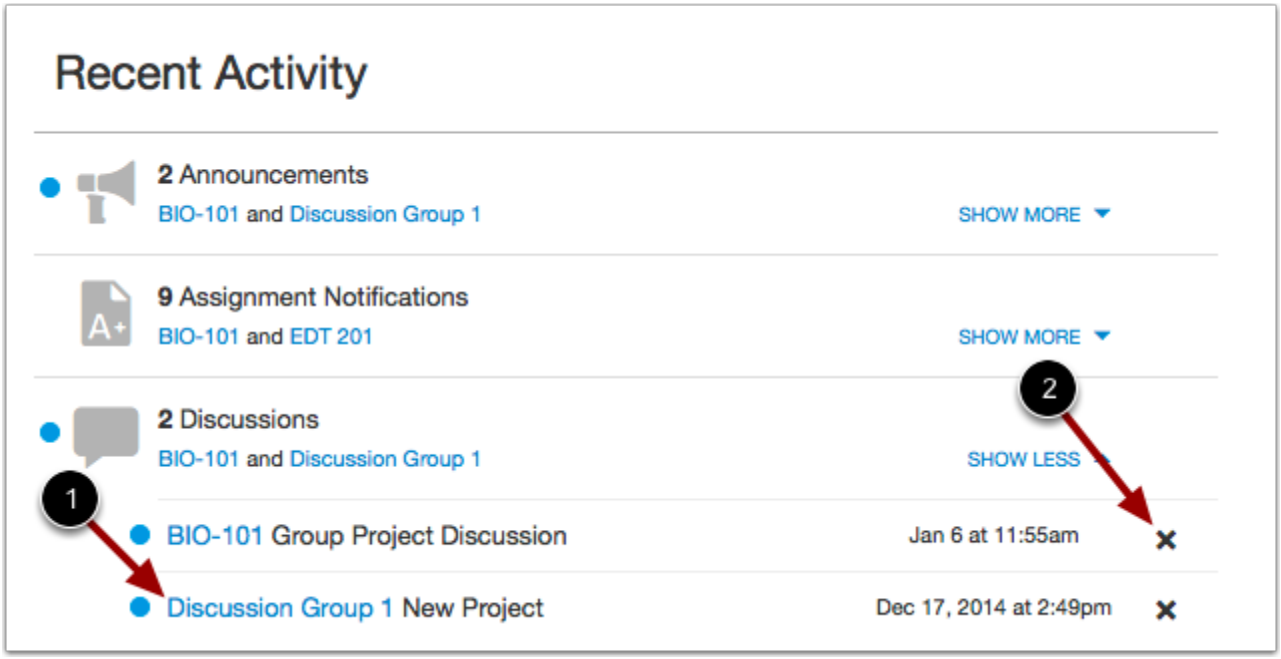
Activities are indicated by activity type and display an icon [1] for the activity. New or unread activities are shown by the blue indicator dot [2]. Recent Activity items remain for four weeks.

Expand and Collapse Notifications



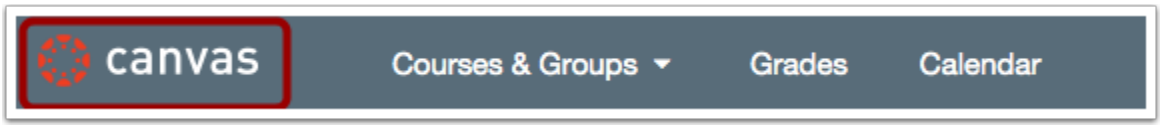
You can view the details of each activity by hovering in the notification area and clicking the **Show More** link [1]. To collapse recent activity, click the **Show Less** link [2].

Manage Recent Activity



You can directly access your recent activities by clicking the course link [1]. To remove a notification, click the **remove** icon [2].

Return to User Dashboard



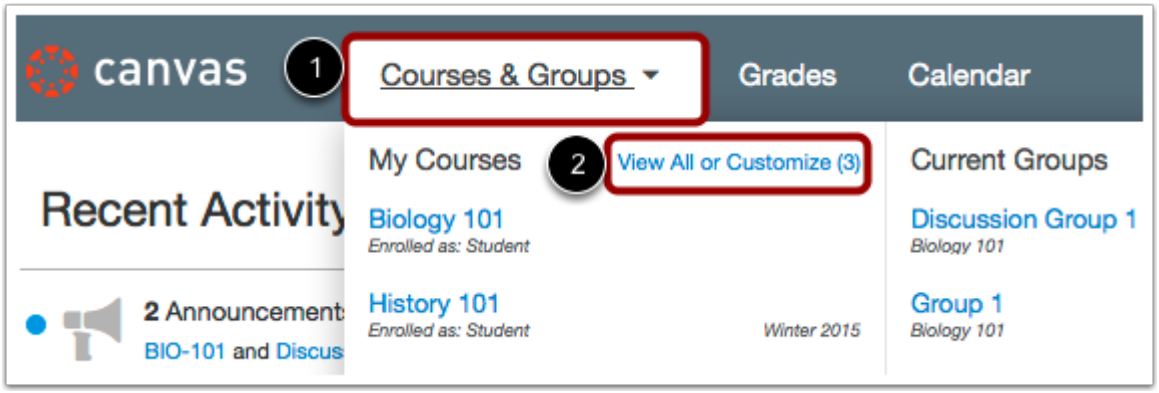
To return to your User Dashboard, click your institution's logo in Global Navigation.

Note: If you are taking a course through Canvas Catalog, clicking your institution's logo will return you to your Catalog dashboard.

How do I view my courses?

After logging into Canvas, you can view your current, past, and future enrollment courses in Canvas.

Open Courses

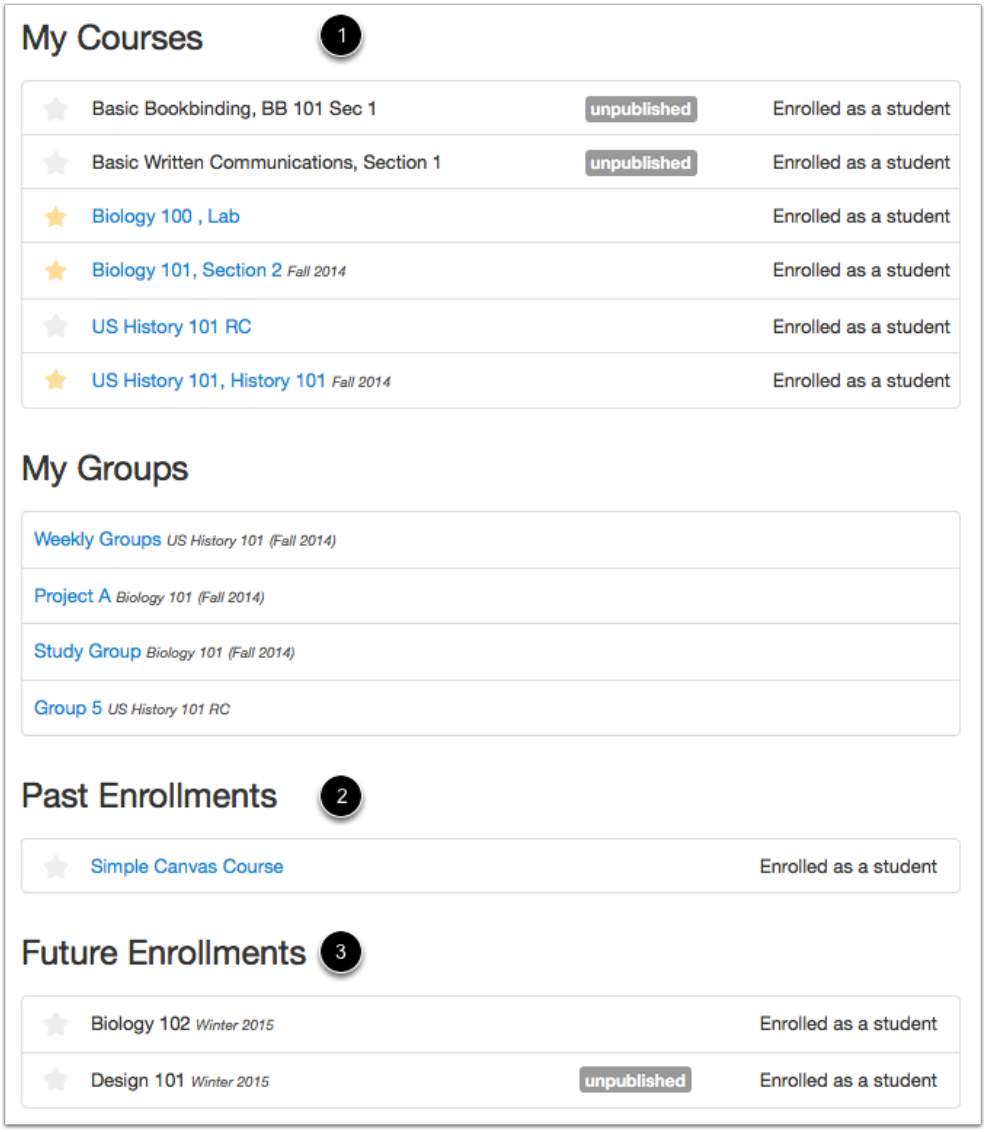


In Global Navigation, click the **Courses** link [1]. (If you are enrolled in any Groups, Global Navigation will show the link as **Courses and Groups**.)

Click the **View All or Customize** link [2].

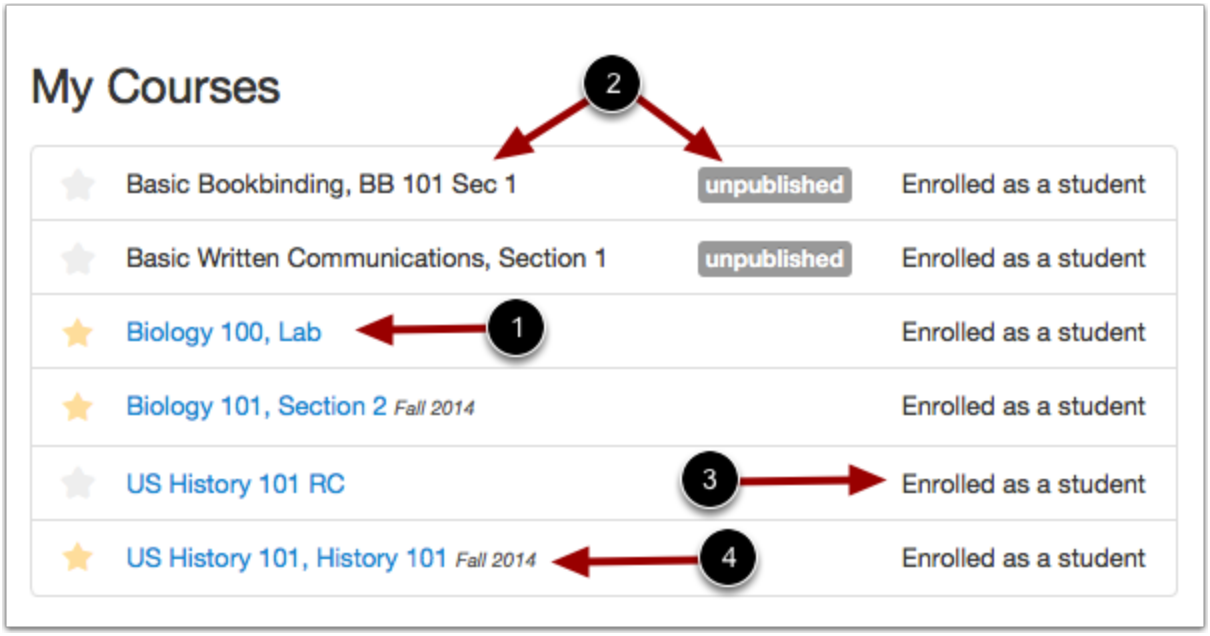
Note: You can customize your courses that appear in the drop-down menu.

View Course Categories



Courses are organized into three categories: My Courses [1], Past Enrollments [2], and Future Enrollments [3].

View Course Status



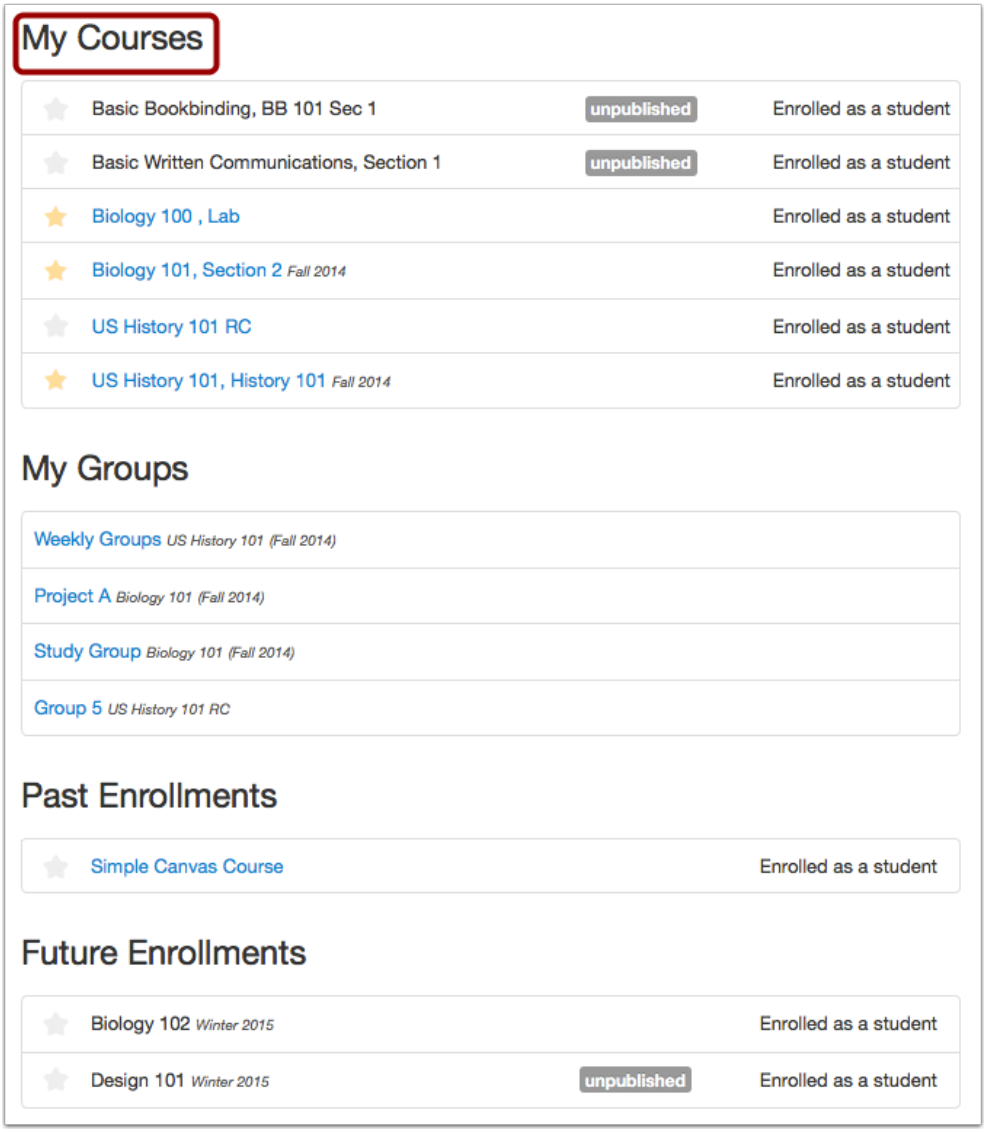
Courses that are available to you are listed in blue text [1]. These courses have been published by your institution, admin, or instructor and include a link to the course.

Courses that are not yet available are listed in gray text and have an unpublished tag [2]. These courses have not been published.

Your enrollment status [3] is displayed next to each course name. Statuses can be student, teacher, TA, observer, or designer.

If there is a term date [4] associated with a course, it will appear next to the course name.

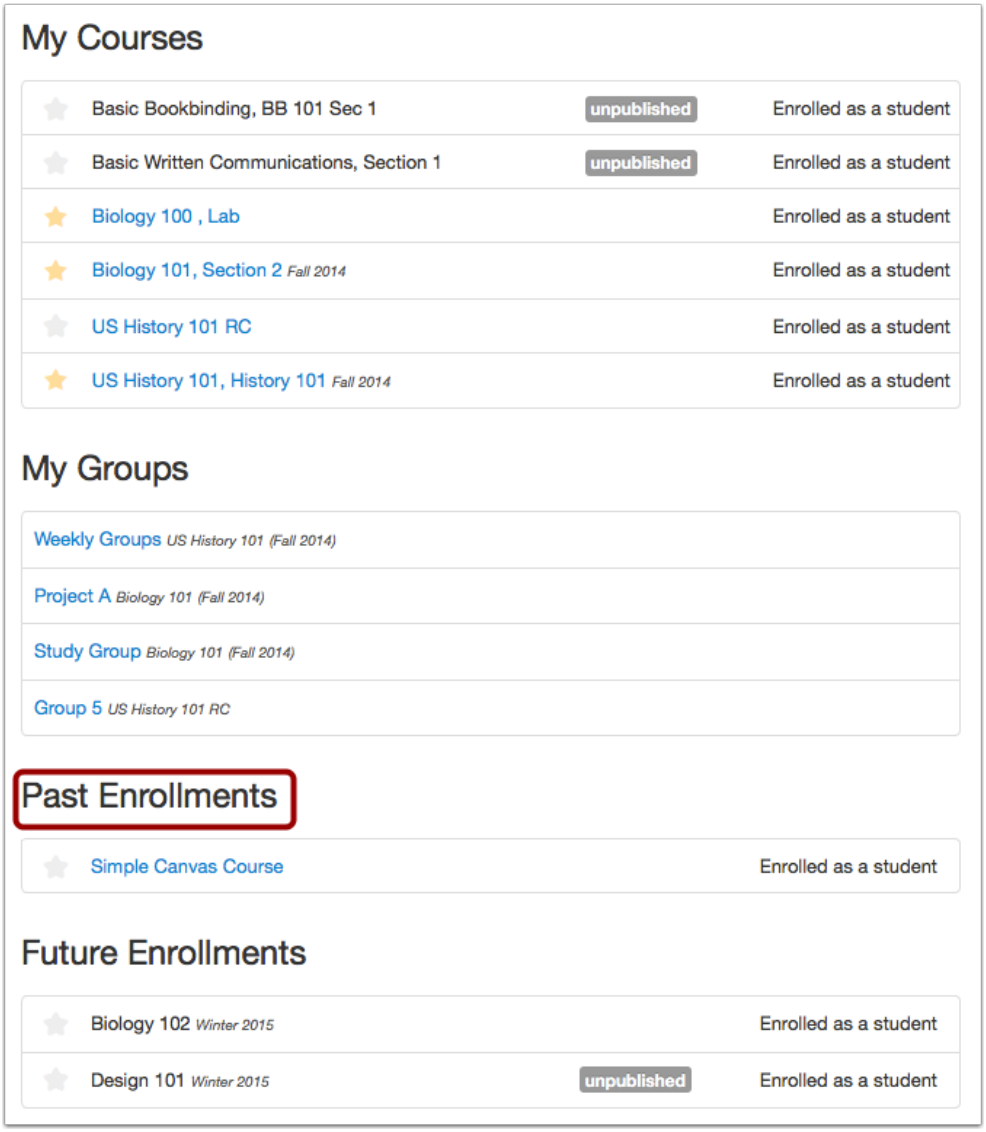
View My Courses



My Courses are courses that are part of the current semester or term. However, depending on access settings for a course, My Courses can also display courses that have not yet started or are unpublished.

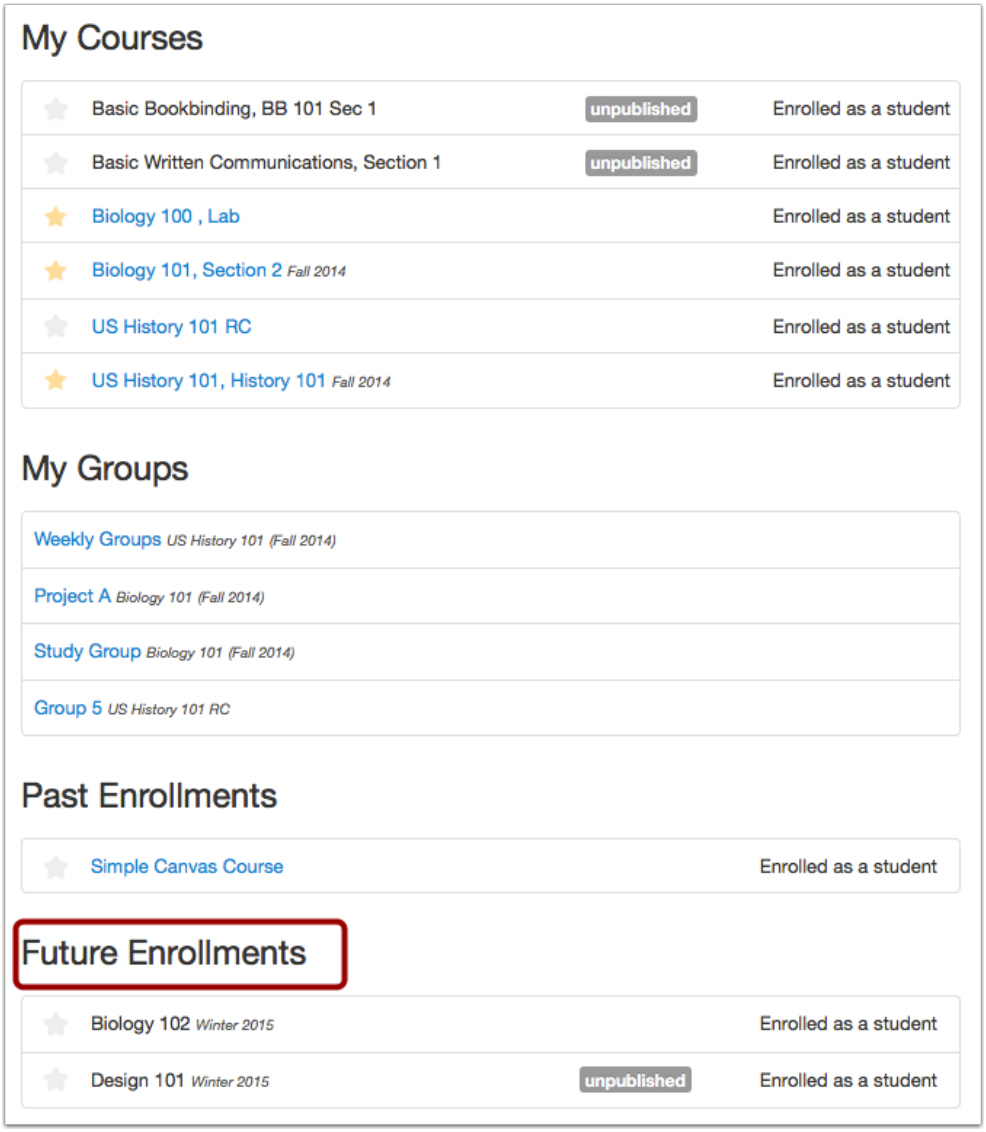
Note: if you are enrolled in groups, the **My Groups** section will appear and display any groups within your current courses.

View Past Enrollments



Courses under the **Past Enrollments** heading are courses that have concluded but are still available as a read-only archived course. Prior users can view course material and grades but cannot submit any assignments.

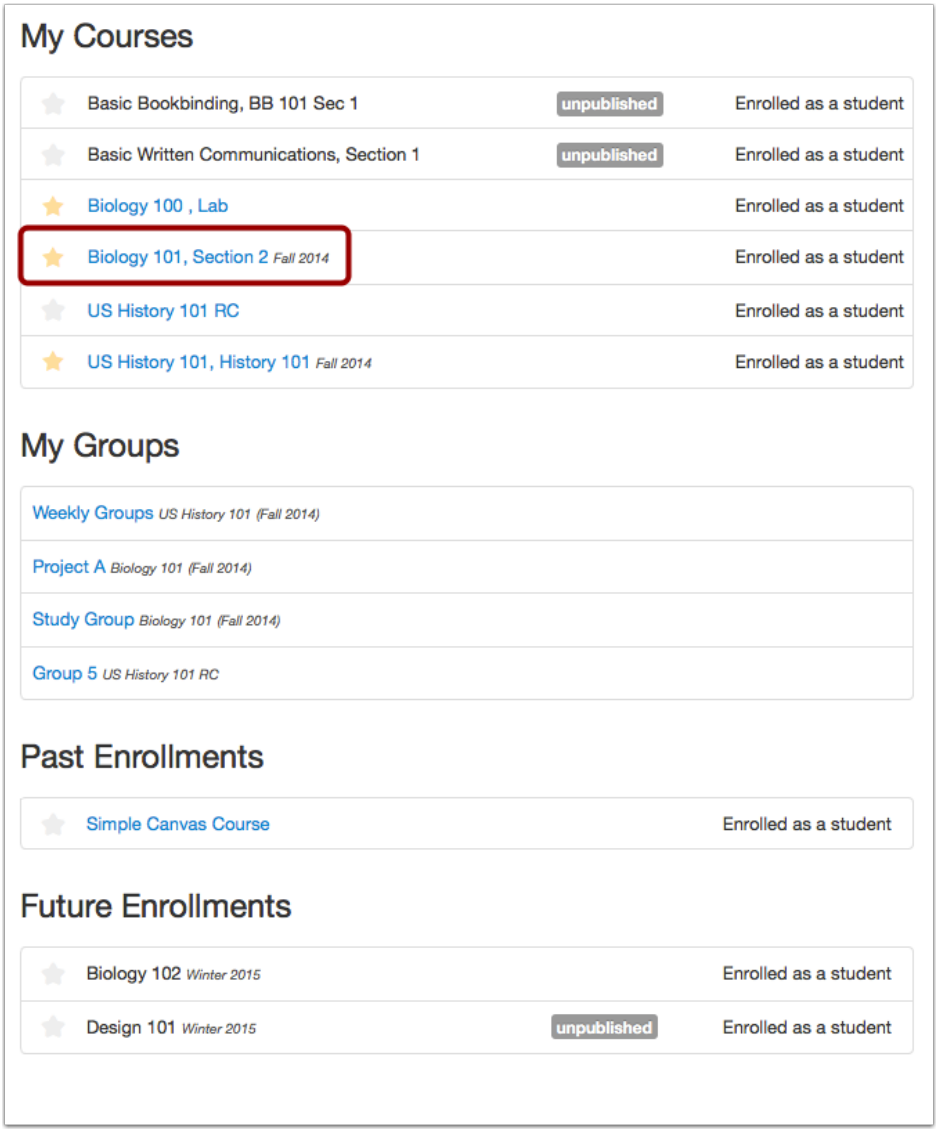
View Future Enrollments



Future Enrollments are courses that will be made available as part of an upcoming term or specific course start date. These courses appear in gray text until they are available.

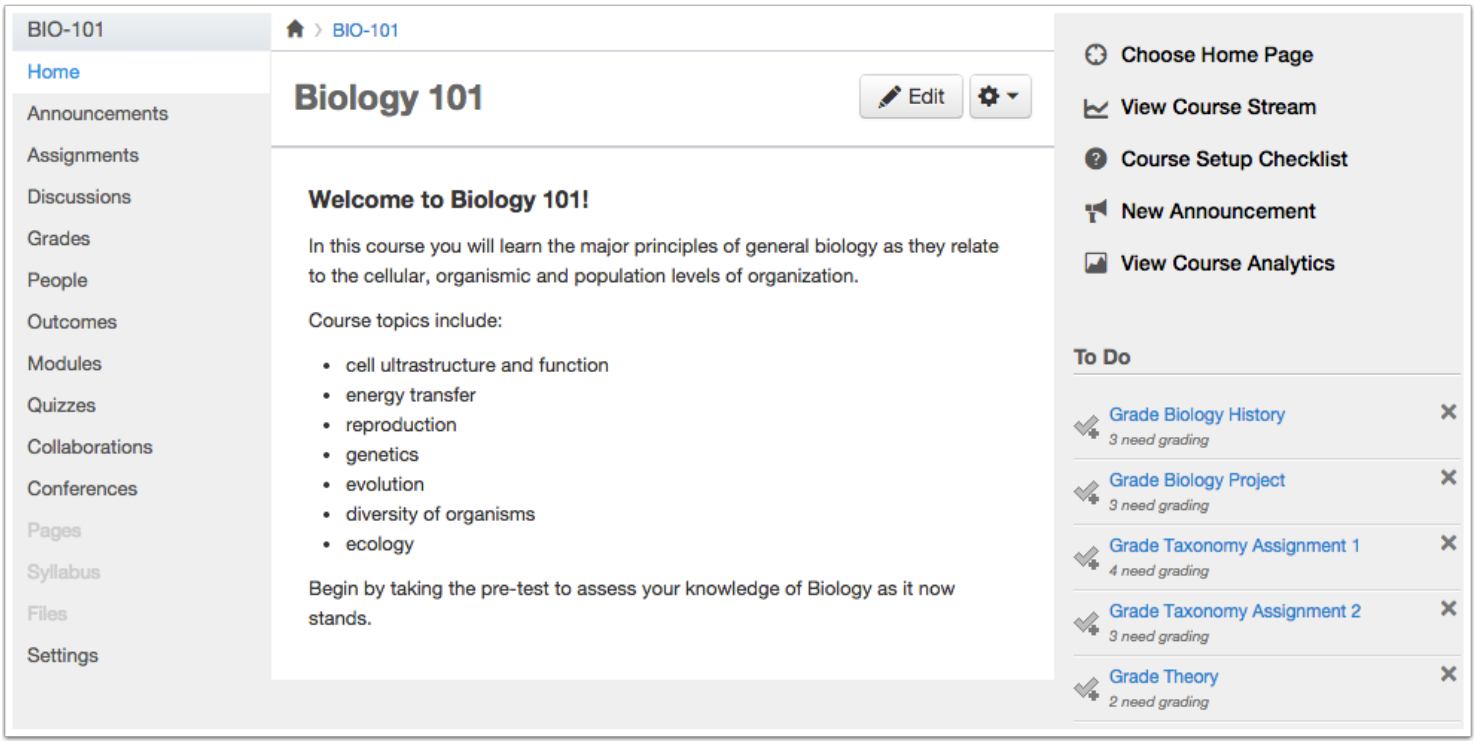
Note: Some institutions may disable the option to view Future Enrollments.

Open Course



To open an available course, click the name of the course.

View Course



View the course dashboard.

How do I use the Course Dashboard as an instructor?

If you are enrolled in a course as an instructor, the Course Dashboard helps you manage your course. You can also customize several areas to create a specific workflow for your students.

To help you learn how to navigate a Canvas course, this lesson uses a course that has already been populated. To learn how to build a new course, visit the create a new course shell lesson.

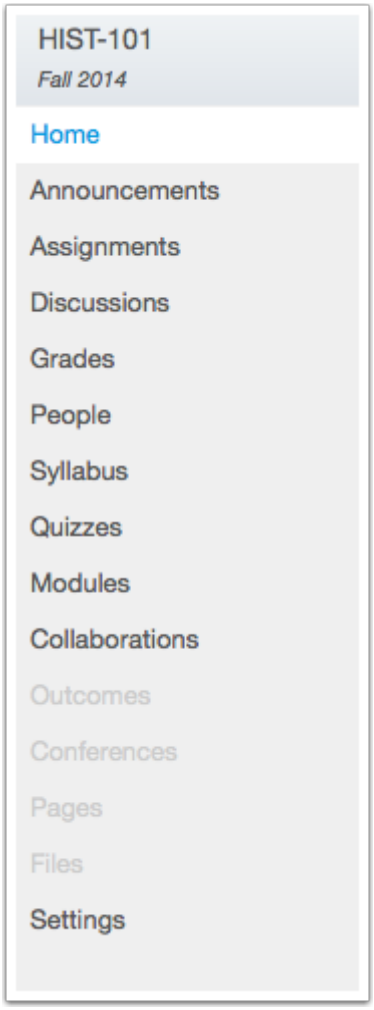
Note: If you are trying to navigate a Canvas course on a mobile device, please see our iOS Phone, iOS Tablet, Android Phone, or Android Tablet guides.

View Course Dashboard

The Course Dashboard consists of four main elements:

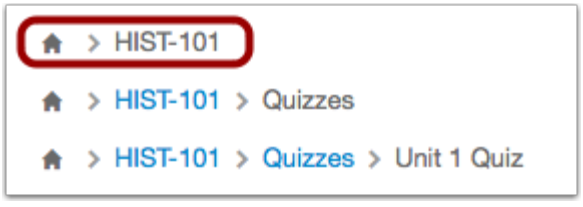
1. Course Navigation
2. Breadcrumbs
3. Sidebar
4. Content Area

View Course Navigation



The Course Navigation links help you get to where you want to go within a Canvas course. As an instructor, you can customize what links are shown in your course. Learn how to use the Course Navigation menu.

View Breadcrumbs

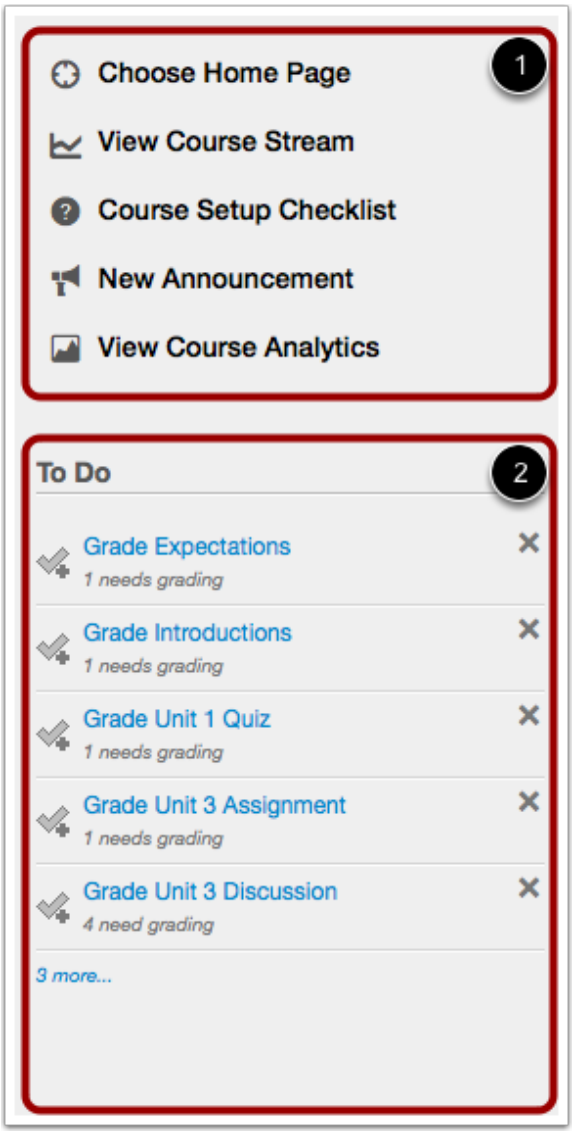


Breadcrumbs appear above the course content area.

As you view course content, the breadcrumbs leave a trail to show where you are inside the course. You can follow these links backward to visit prior course content.

To return to the User Dashboard, click the breadcrumbs **Home** icon.

View Sidebar



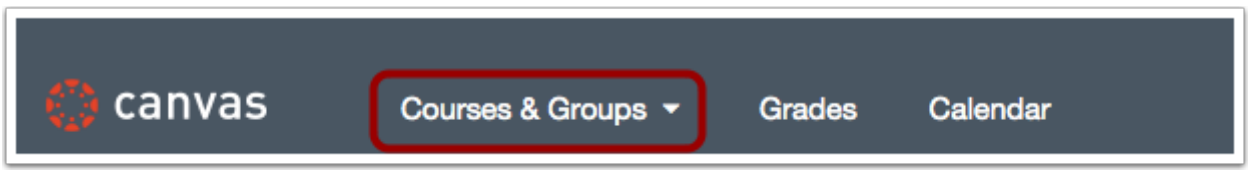
The Sidebar helps you see what you need to do next in your course. The top of the sidebar contains links for managing your course [1]. Depending on the layout you set for the Course Home Page, the sidebar can also display several sections of content for you and your students [2].

Learn how to use the Course Home Page sidebar.

View Content Area

The content of the course is displayed in the Content Area. The content can be a page, the syllabus, discussions, announcements, quizzes, or imported content as set by your Course Home Page. The content can also show the Course Activity Stream.

View Another Course



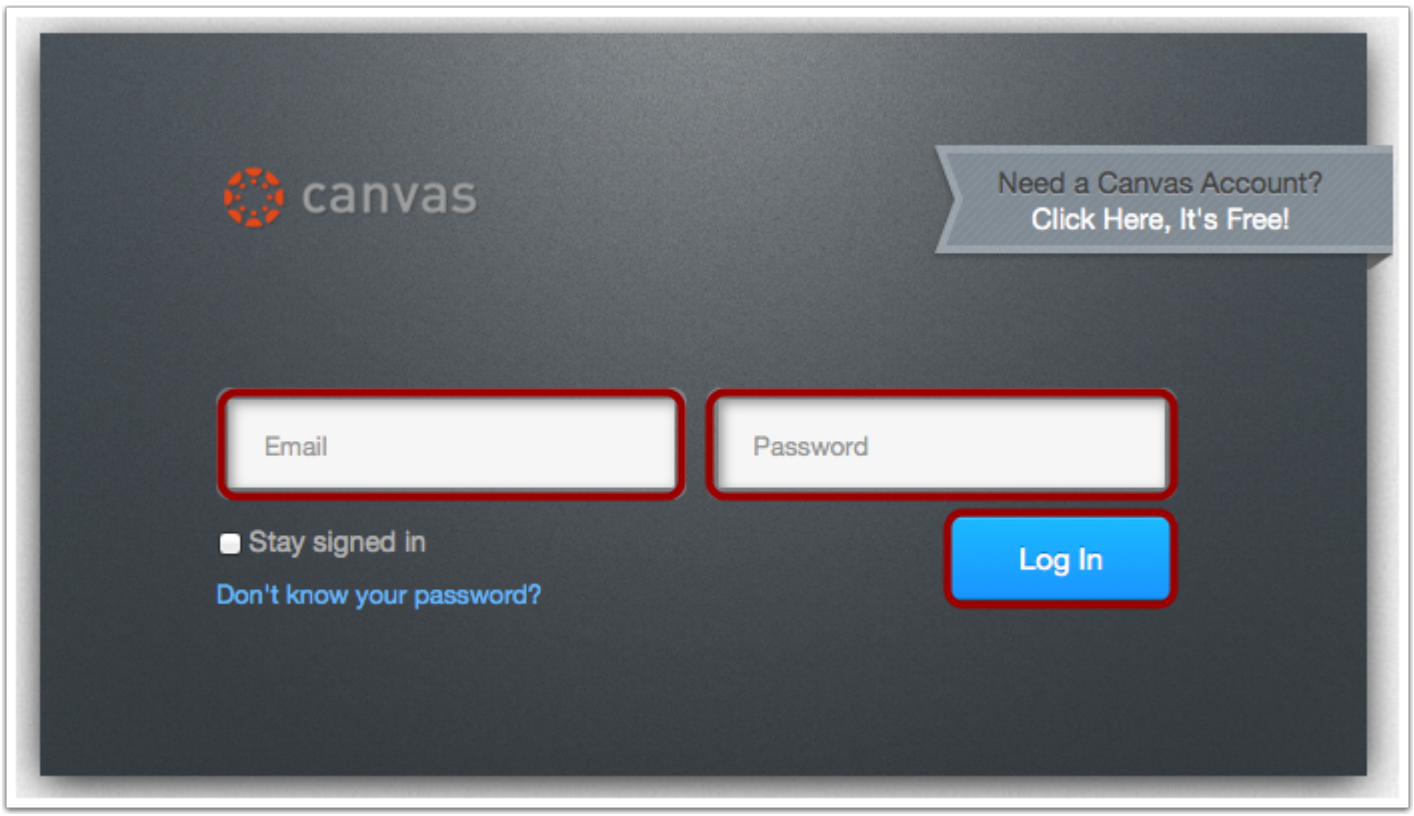
To view another course, click the Courses & Groups menu in Global Navigation.

How do I create a new course shell?

Admins or instructors can create a course shell in Canvas to host courses for their institution. Some institutions will have this option disabled and instead provide course shells to faculty automatically via SIS (Student Information System) imports.

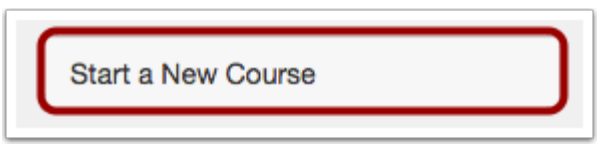
Note: If you are not able to create your own course shell as shown in these instructions, your institution has disabled this feature. Contact your Administrator for assistance.

Log in to Canvas



Login to your Canvas instance by entering your username and password in the appropriate fields.

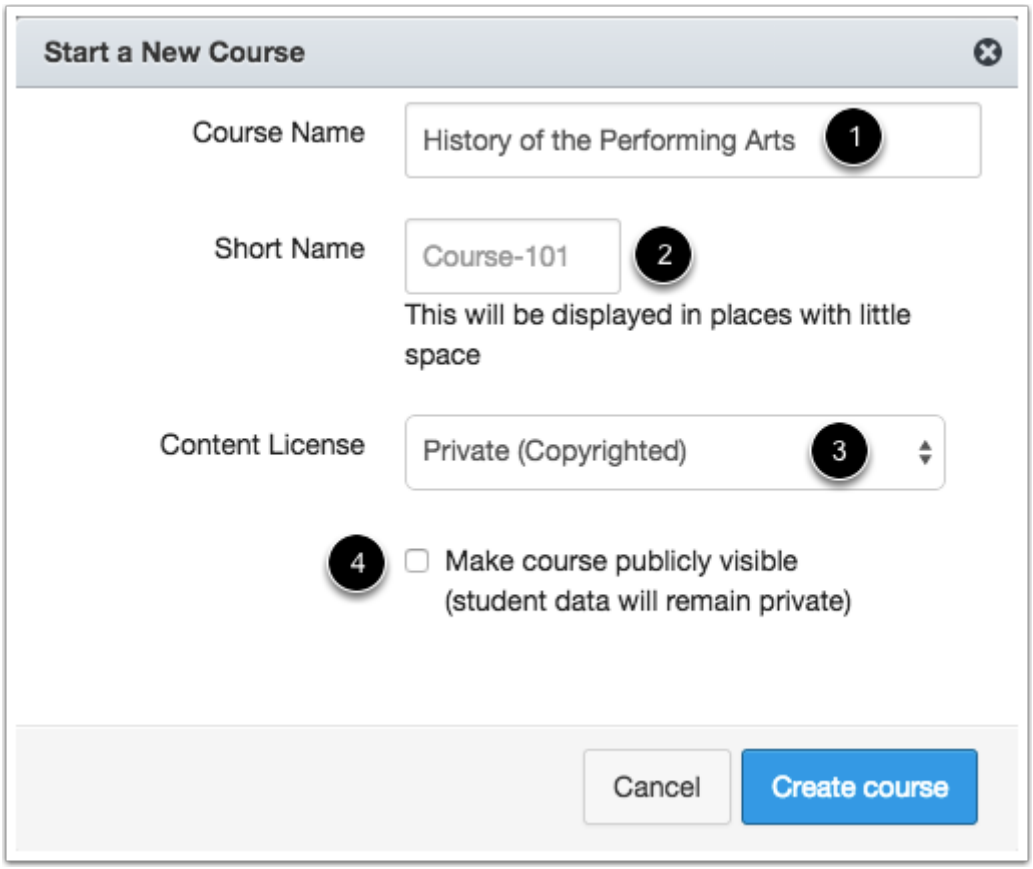
Start a New Course



In the Sidebar, click the **Start a New Course** button.

Note: If you do not see this button in Canvas, your institution has disabled this feature.

Add Course Details



Add your course name by typing in the course name field [1].

If your course name is longer than 21 characters, you can create a course code in the Short Name field [2].

Note: If your course name is too short to create a Short Name, you can create a course code later in your Course Settings.

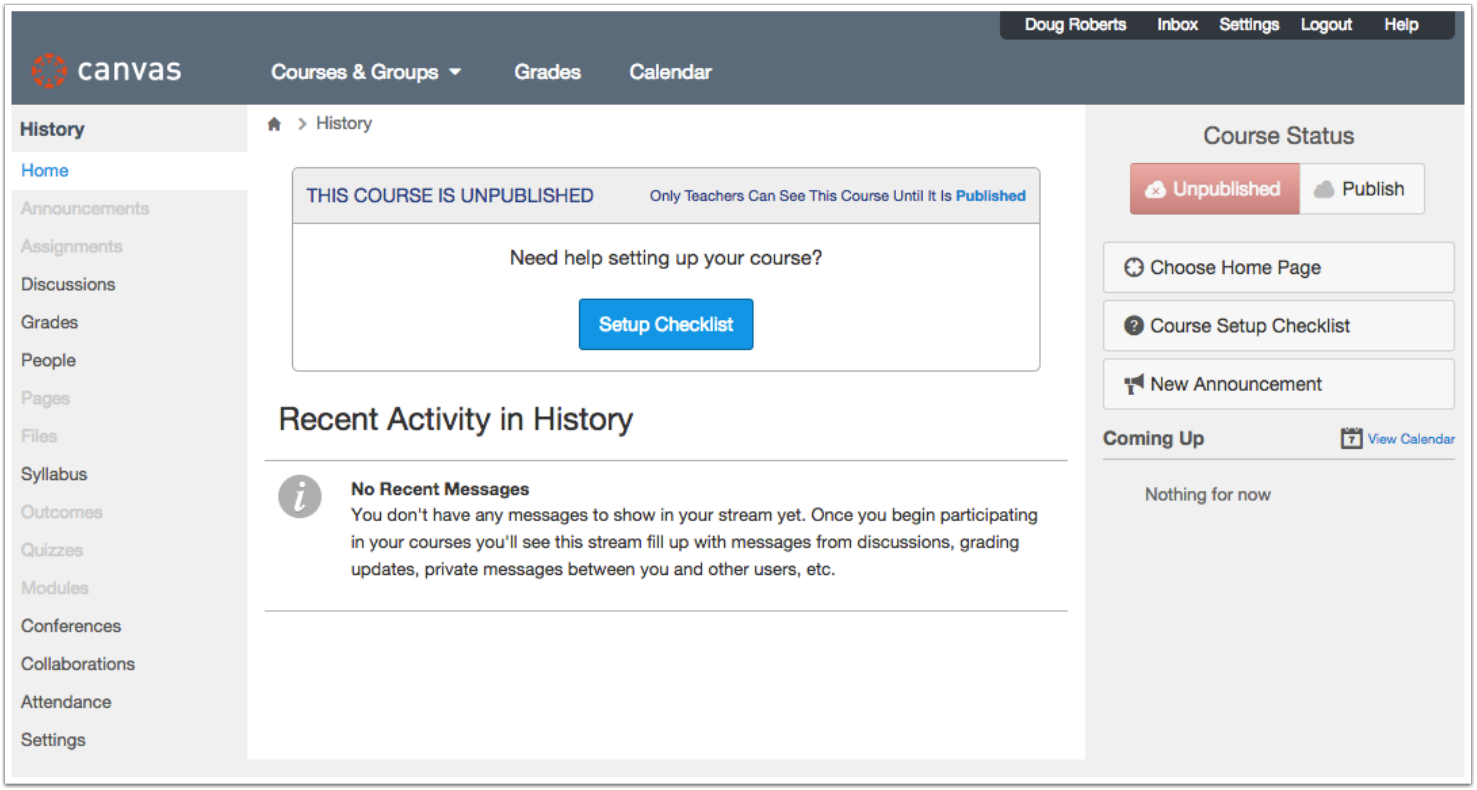
Set the content license by selecting the content license drop-down menu [3]. This setting will help Canvas can track of the default license for content inside of your course. By default all content is considered copyrighted, but you can also release your content to the public domain or choose a Creative Commons license. Learn more about Creative Commons licenses. You can also change the license in Course Settings.

If you want to make the course publicly visible, click the **Make course publicly visible (student data will remain private)** checkbox [3].

Create Course

Click the **Create course** button.

View Course Shell



View the new course shell.

Repeat these steps to create additional course shells.

Will Canvas work on my mobile device?

Canvas is built on open web standards and uses minimal instances of Flash, so most features are supported on mobile devices. With the growing use of mobile devices, instructors should build their courses with best practices for mobile in mind.

Mobile Browsers

You can access Canvas on your mobile device through any mobile browser. However, mobile browsers are not officially supported. We recommend using Canvas mobile applications for an improved user experience.

Mobile Applications

We are actively improving our native mobile applications to support as many Canvas features as possible. Instructure has four native mobile applications free for download on both phones and tablets. Please note that mobile applications are only supported in English at this time.

- **Canvas by Instructure** (iOS 7.0+, Android 4.0+). This app provides access to Canvas for both instructors and students while on the go. Depending on your device, not all Canvas features may be available on the app at this time. View Canvas mobile features by version and device.
- **MagicMarker** (iOS 7.0+ iPad only). This app is specifically designed for instructors to assist them with standards-based learning. Syncs with the Learning Mastery Gradebook.
- **Polls for Canvas** (iOS 7.0+, Android 4.0+). This app is the easy to way for instructors to collect student opinion in their classrooms without any extra devices.
- **SpeedGrader App** (iOS 8.0+ iPad only; Android 4.0.3+). This app is specifically designed for instructors and allows them to grade student submissions on the go. Syncs with SpeedGrader and the Gradebook. View SpeedGrader mobile features by version and device.

You can learn more about mobile applications in the Canvas Mobile Guides.

Customize Canvas

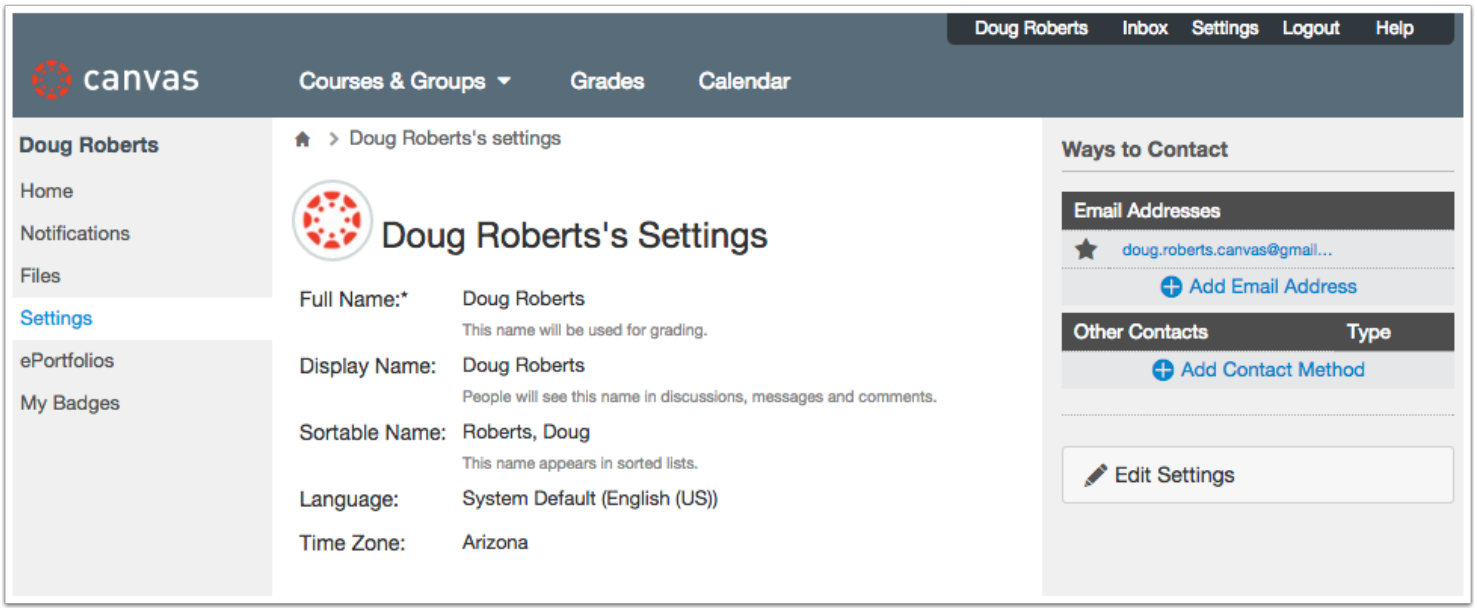
What are my Profile and User Settings?

Profile and User Settings let you control your personal information in Canvas. You can control this information in the Help Corner.

If you want to view a video about personal settings, you can watch the User Settings and Profile Picture video.

Note: Your institution may restrict one or more settings options.

When would I use my profile and user settings?



You can use your profile and user settings to:

- View and edit your user settings, such as display name, language preference, and time zone
- View or add a profile picture
- Set Notifications for your favorite communication channels
- Upload personal Files
- Create and manage ePortfolios of your course work
- Manage new user features

If your institution has enabled profiles, you can also edit your profile information.

Note: Your institution may restrict one or more of these options.

How do I set my Notification Preferences?

Canvas includes a set of default notification preferences for your account. However, you can set your own Canvas notification preferences that connect with your linked web services and other contact methods in in your Profile and User Settings.

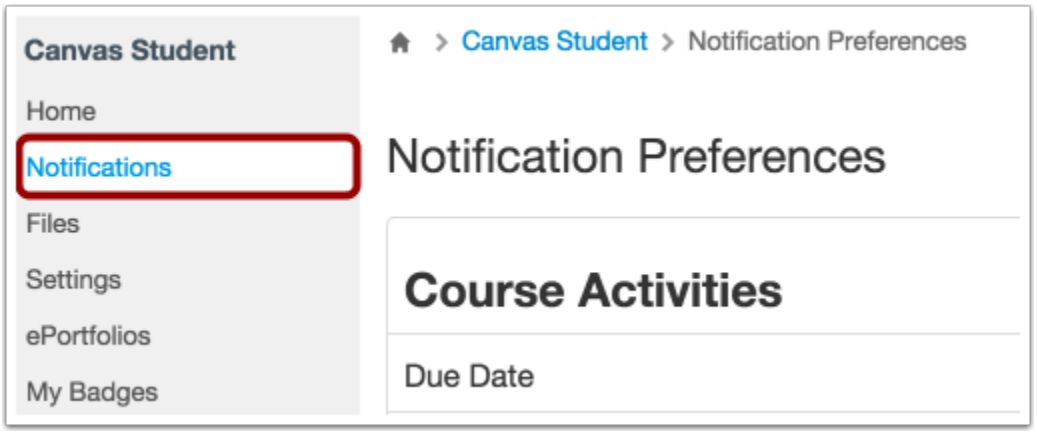
Notes:

- These settings apply to all of your courses; you cannot change settings for individual courses.
- The Canvas by Instructure Android app supports setting notification preferences. However, setting preferences inside the app will override preferences in the browser version of Canvas, and some preferences are not supported. Learn about setting preferences in the Canvas app for Android phones and Android tablets.

Open Personal Settings

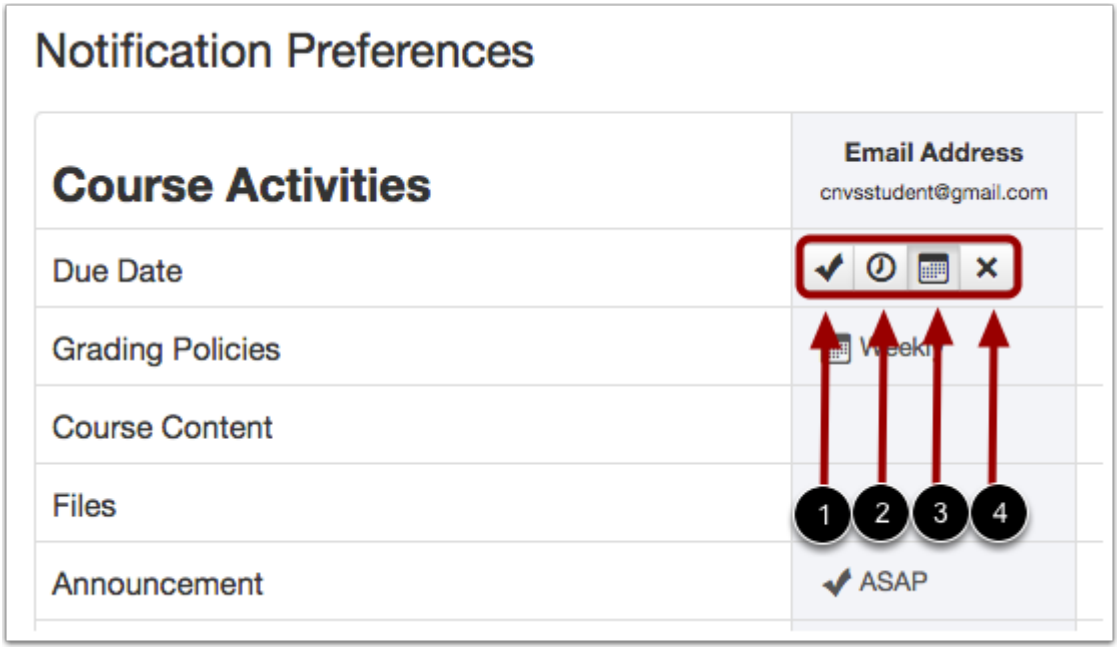
In the Help Corner, click the **Settings** link.

Open Notifications



You can view and set notification preferences within your course. In User Navigation menu, click the **Notifications** link.

Edit Notification Preferences



To change a notification for a contact method, hover over the notification type you want to change. Select one of four options.

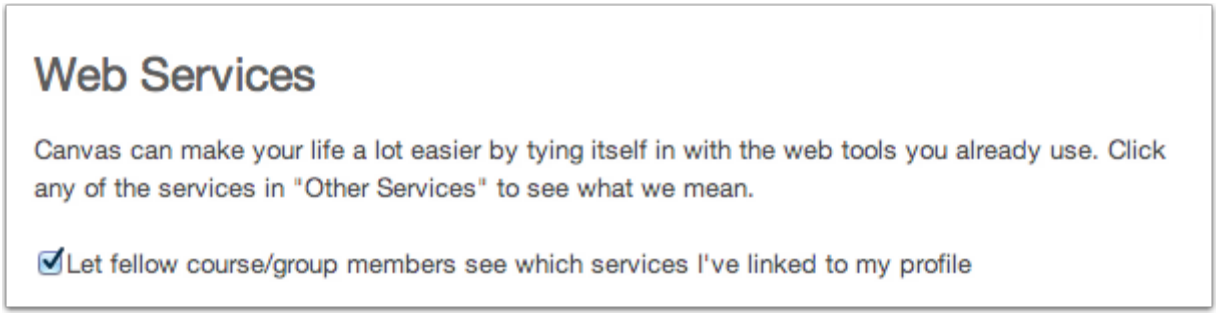
1. Select the **Check mark** icon to be notified immediately of any change for the activity.
2. Select the **Clock** icon to be notified daily of any change for the activity.
3. Select the **Calendar** icon to be notified weekly of any change for the activity.
4. Select the **X** icon to remove the notification preference so you won't be notified of any change for the activity.

Note: Each set notification preference will automatically apply to all of your courses. They cannot be set individually.

How do I connect to web services outside of Canvas?

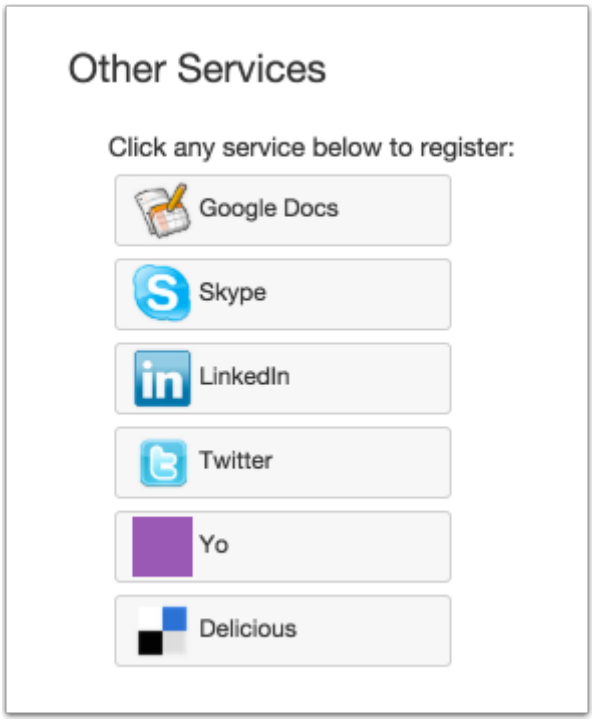
Canvas is integrated with a number of third party web services. Most of these services can be configured from the user settings page.

Integrate Web Services With Canvas



By registering other web services with Canvas, you create different ways to be contacted. By default we do not disclose this information to other users within the system unless you give us your consent.

Integrate Web Services with Canvas



Integrated web services include:

- Google Docs
- Etherpad (Typewith.me)
- Twitter
- Document Previewer
- Skype
- LinkedIn
- Delicious

Integrated education-centric web services include:

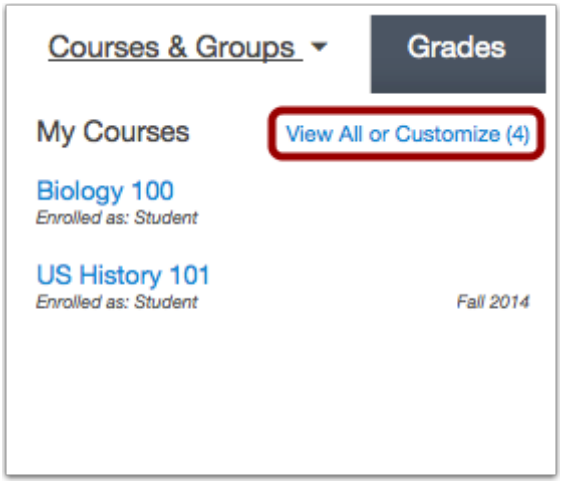
- Diigo
- Turnitin
- Respondus
- Wimba

How do I customize my Courses drop-down menu?

You can customize the courses you want to show in your Courses drop-down menu.

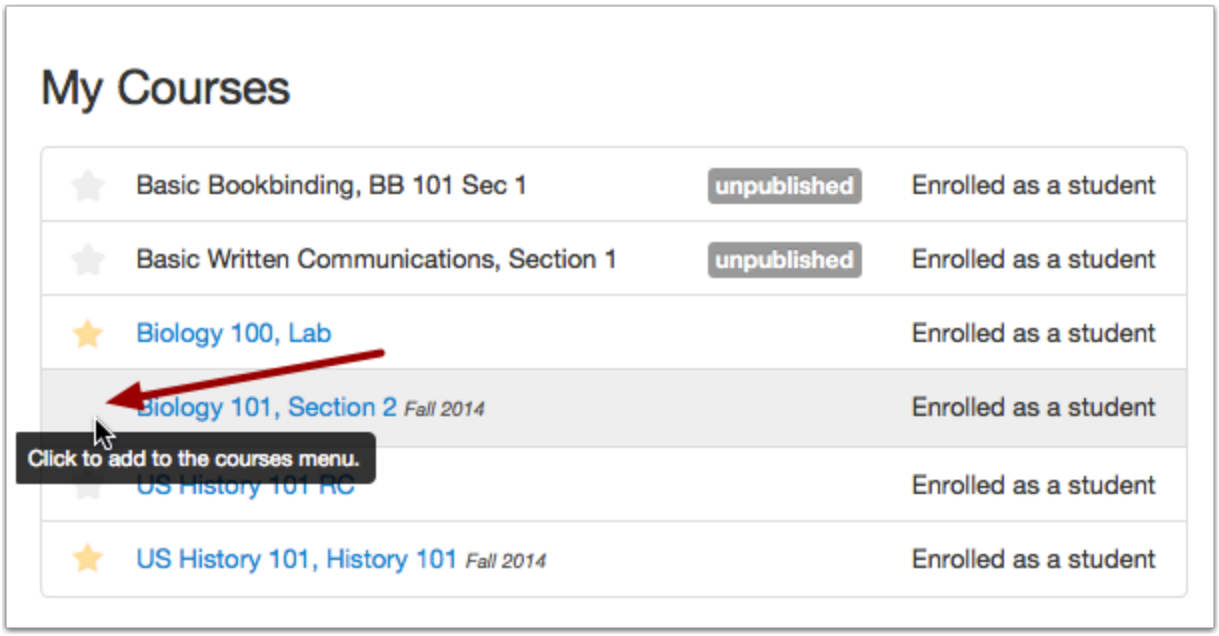
Note: Courses are always listed alphabetically; you cannot reorder your courses manually.

Select Courses from the Global Navigation



In the Courses drop-down menu, click the **View All or Customize** link.

Choose Courses

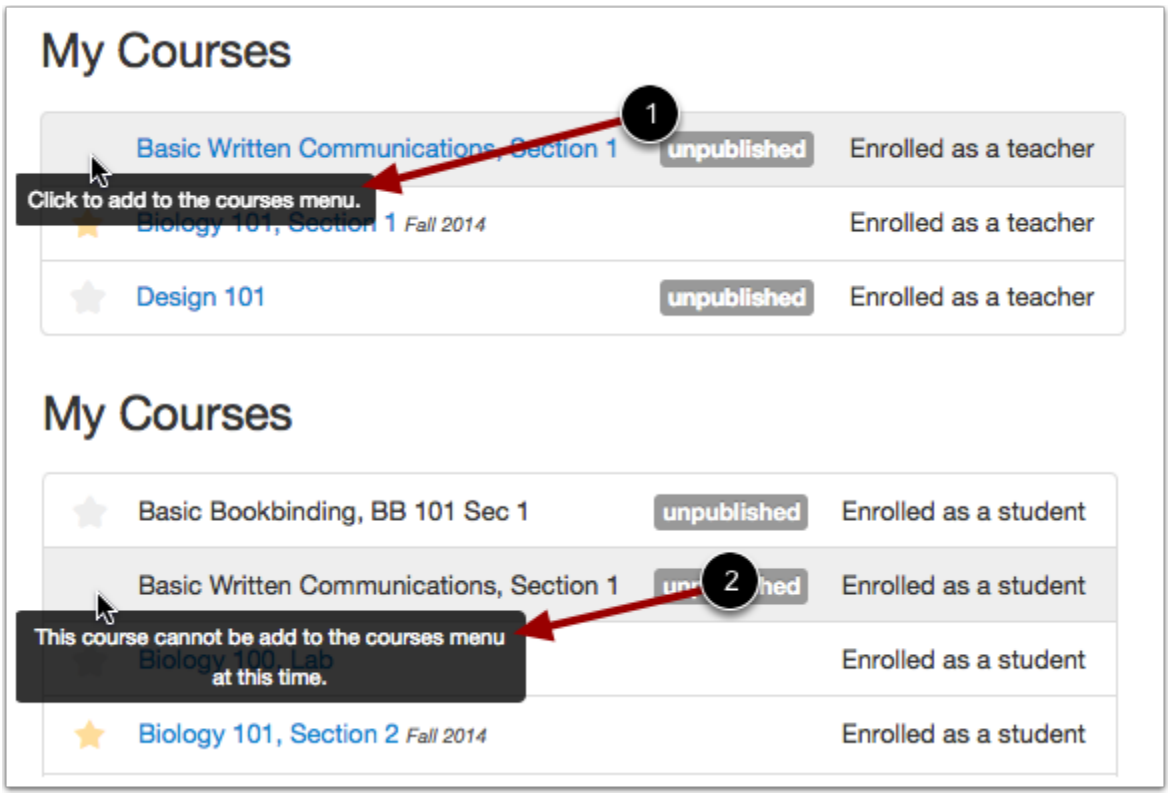


Click the star next to a course to add or remove the course from the Courses drop-down menu. Courses with yellow stars indicate a favorite course and are included in the Courses and Groups drop-down menu. You can toggle the stars to favorite or unfavorite a course. You can only favorite current courses.

Your favorite courses will appear in your Courses and Groups drop-down menu after you make your selection(s).

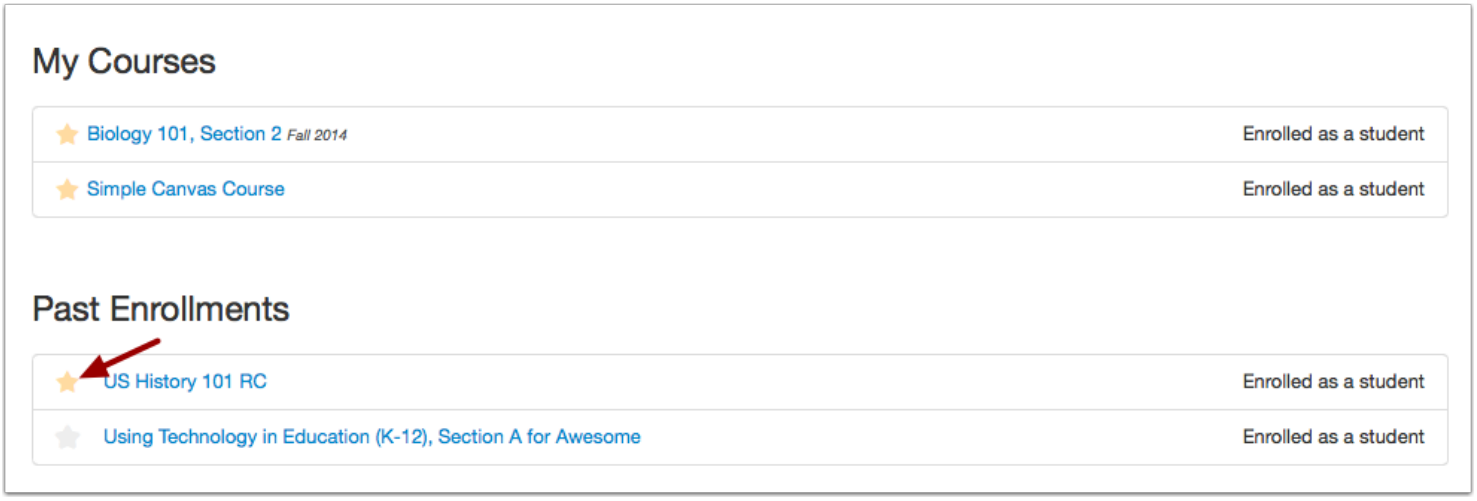
Note: You can see all your present, past, and future courses by clicking the **View All or Customize** link [3]. You will only see future courses if the start date is in the future and you have been enrolled in the course.

Unpublished Courses



Only instructors can favorite unpublished courses [1]. Students can hover over a star icon for an unpublished or concluded course and view a message indicating that the course cannot be added as a favorite [2].

Past Enrollments



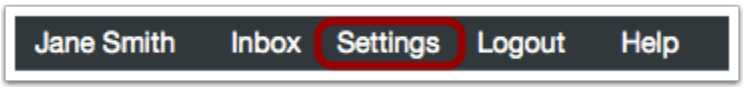
Depending on course configuration, some favorited courses may still display the favorite icon even after the course has ended. If a past enrollment course shows the favorite icon, users can unfavorite the course by toggling the star icon.

How do I change the language preference in my user account?

English is Canvas' language default, but you can choose to view the Canvas interface in another language.

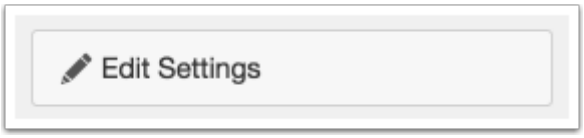
Note: Instructors have the option to change the language preference for their courses. If you enroll in a course where the instructor has made this change (most often for a foreign language course), the course language will override the language in your user settings.

Open Settings



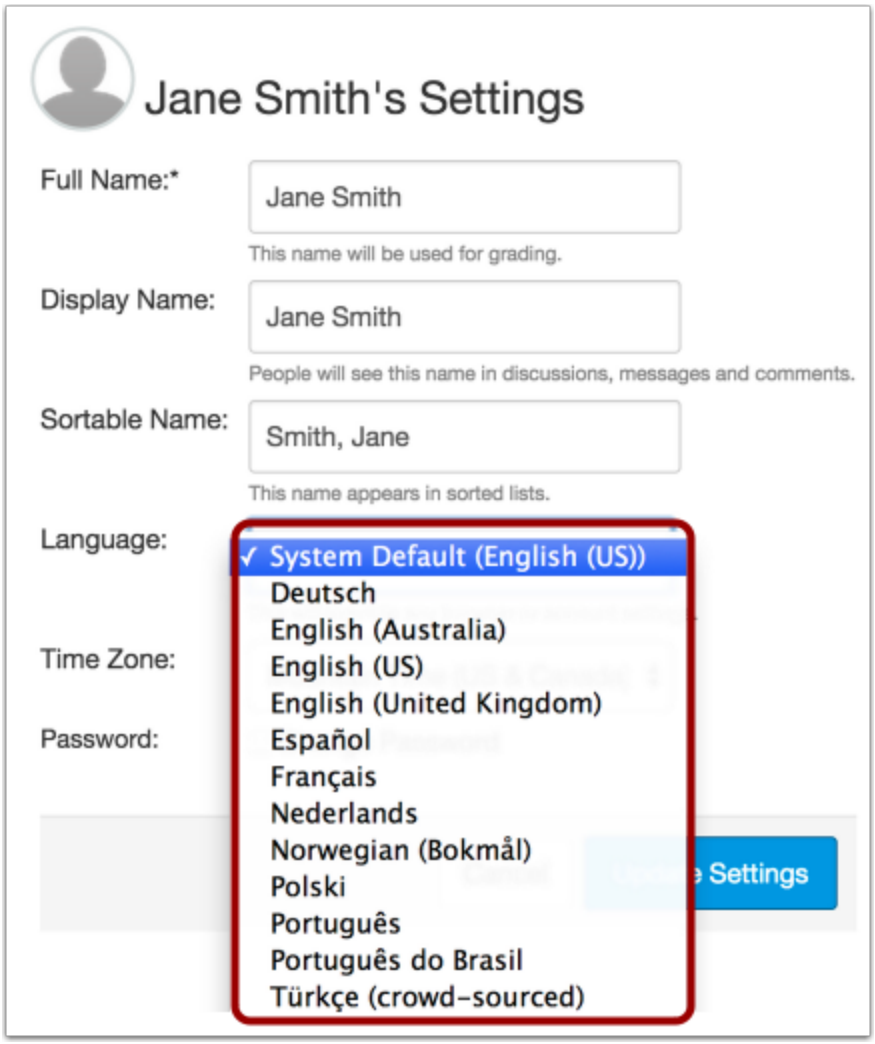
In the Help Corner, click the **Settings** link.

Edit Settings



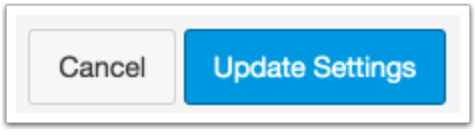
Click the **Edit Settings** button.

Select Language



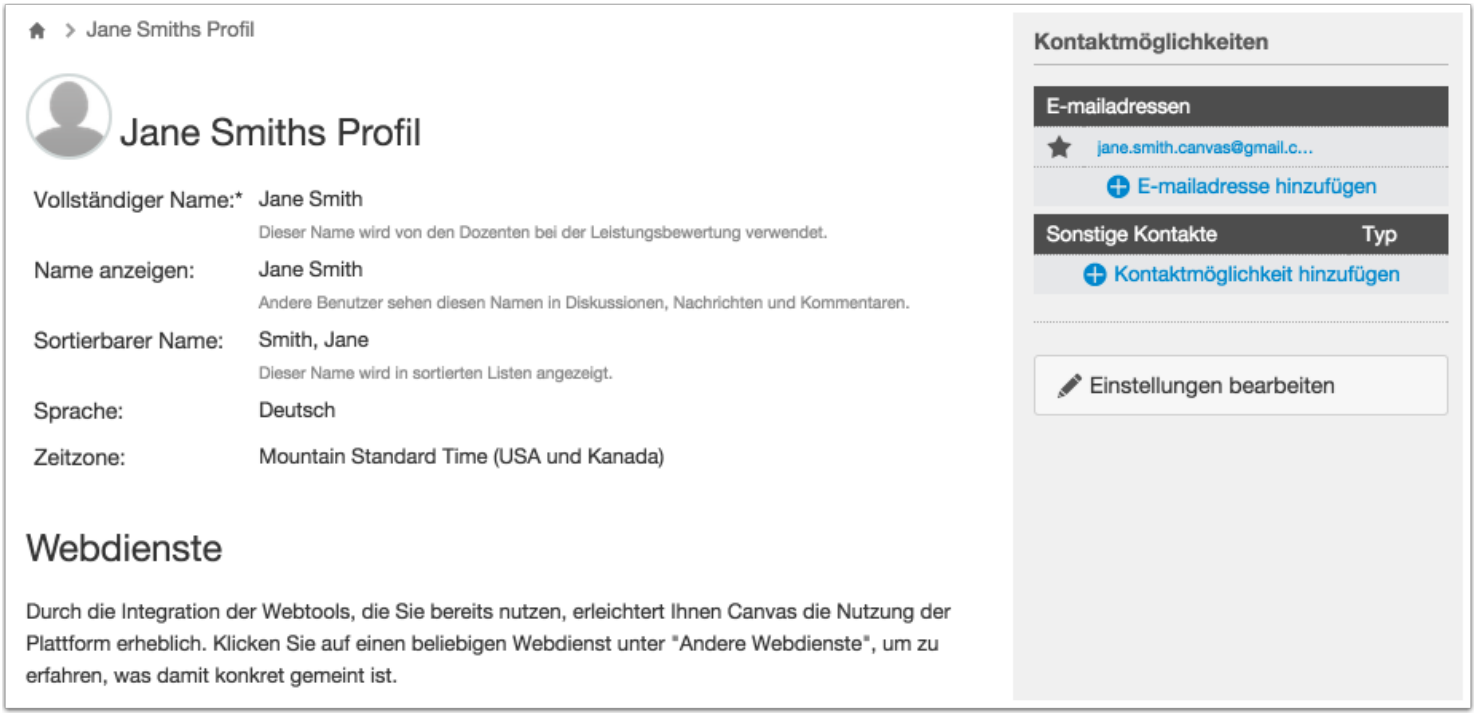
Choose your preferred language in the Language drop-down menu.

Update Settings



Click the **Update Settings** button.

View Preferred Language



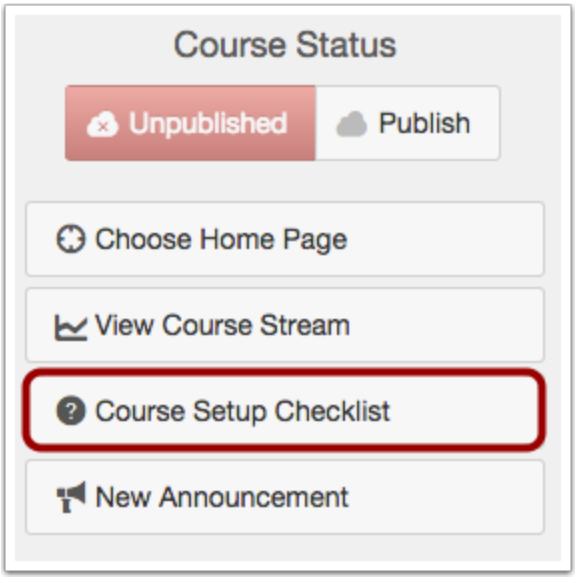
View Canvas in your preferred language.

Organize a Course

What is the Course Setup Checklist?

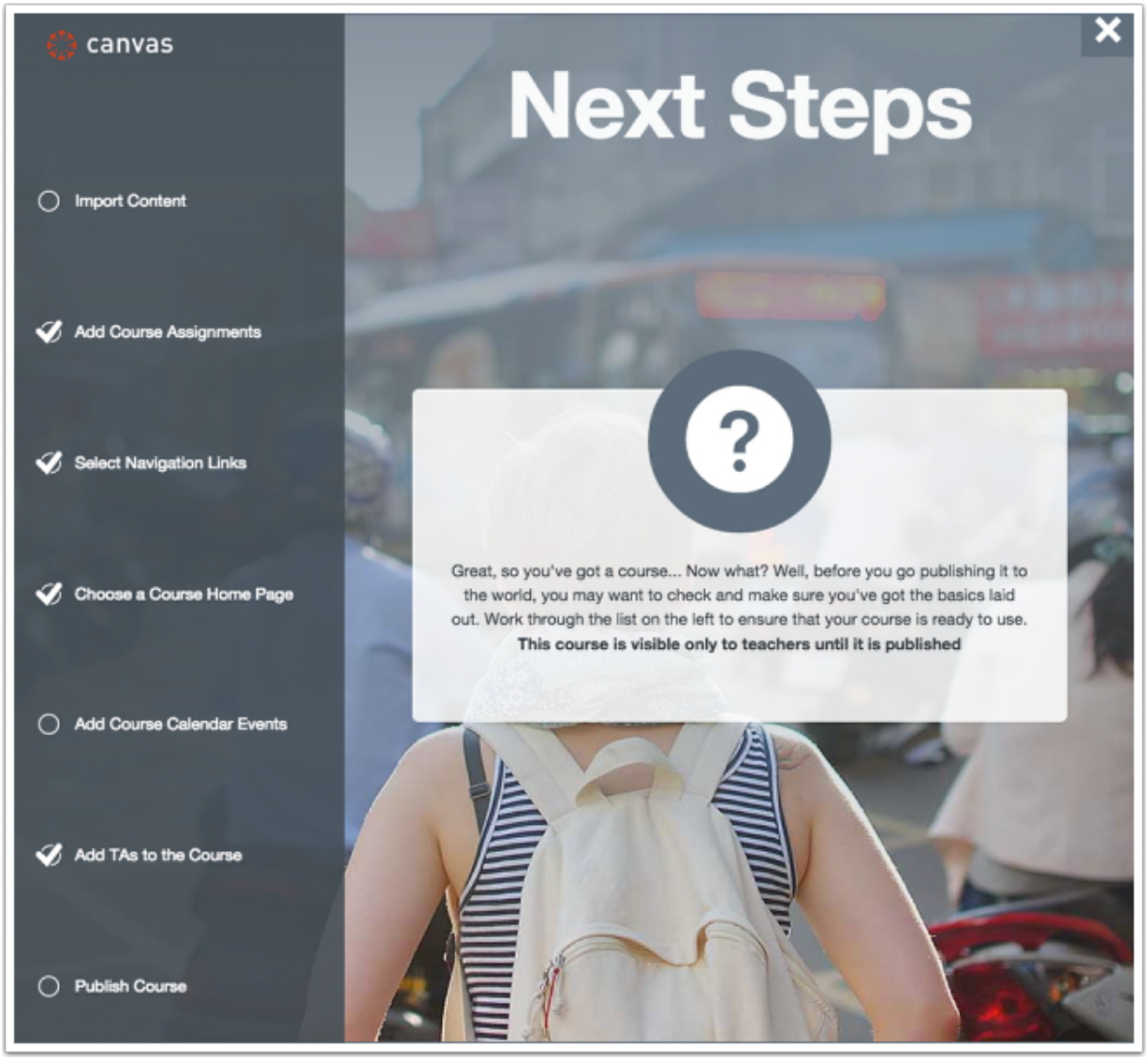
The first few times you create a new course in Canvas, it's a challenge to remember all of the steps required. The Course Setup Checklist exists to help you remember to cover all your bases before the course goes live.

View Course



A course originally starts in an unpublished state allowing instructors to set up your course and ready the content while concealing it from students. Instructors, designers, and admins can add students, teachers, and TAs to the course. As soon as you're ready then you can publish your course and make it available to the students.

When would I use the Course Setup Checklist?



The Course Setup Checklist will help you create a new course in Canvas. Open the checklist by clicking the Course Setup Checklist button. The checklist reminds you to:

- Import content using the Course Import Tool
- Add assignments or assignment shells on the Assignments page
- Add Students to the course via the People page
- Select the links you wish to display in the Course Navigation under the Navigation tab in Settings
- Choose a layout for your Course Home Page
- Add events and Assignments to your course Calendar
- Add TAs to the course via the People page

- Publish the course, which will automatically send invitation emails to any students you have already added to the course

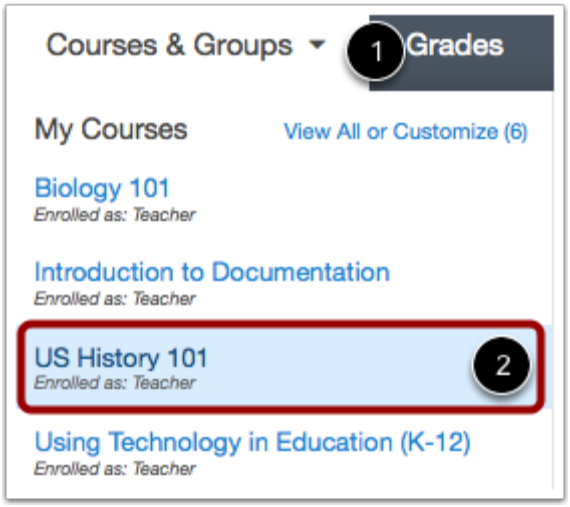
Note: Once your course contains a graded submission, you cannot unpublish your course.

How do I change the Course Home Page?

You can change your Course Home Page to reflect one of five layout options: the Recent Activity Dashboard, Pages Front Page, the Course Modules, the Assignment List, or the Syllabus. Learn about Course Home Page options.

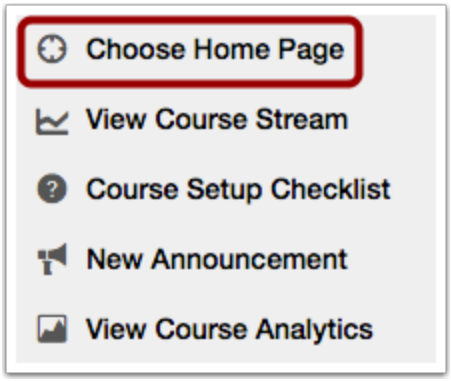
Note: You must set a Front Page before selecting the Pages Front Page option. Additionally, only Published pages can be set as the Front Page.

Open Course



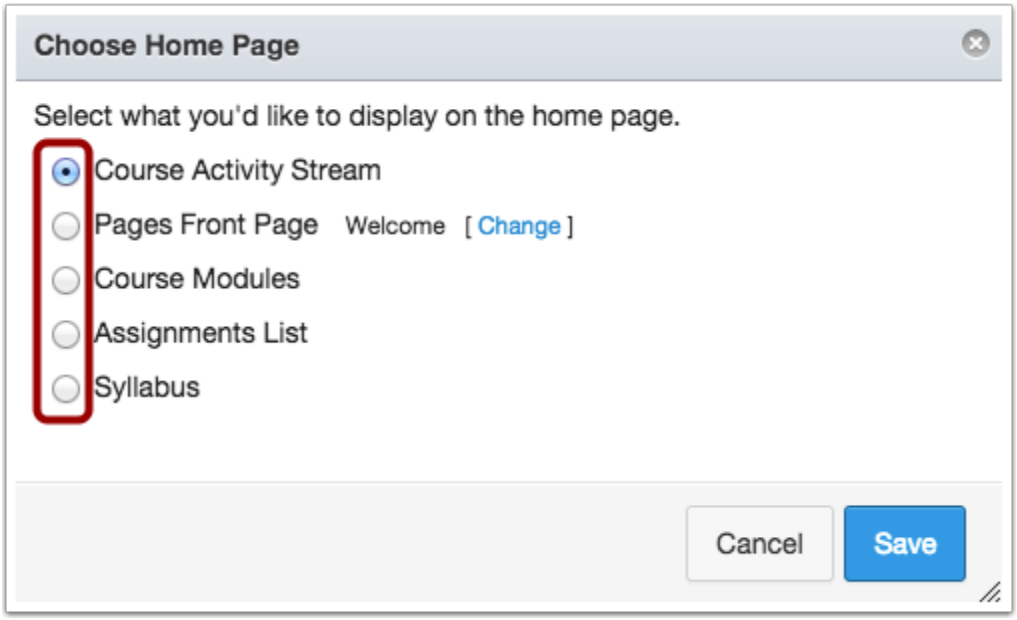
In the Courses drop-down menu [1], click the name of the course [2].

Choose Home Page



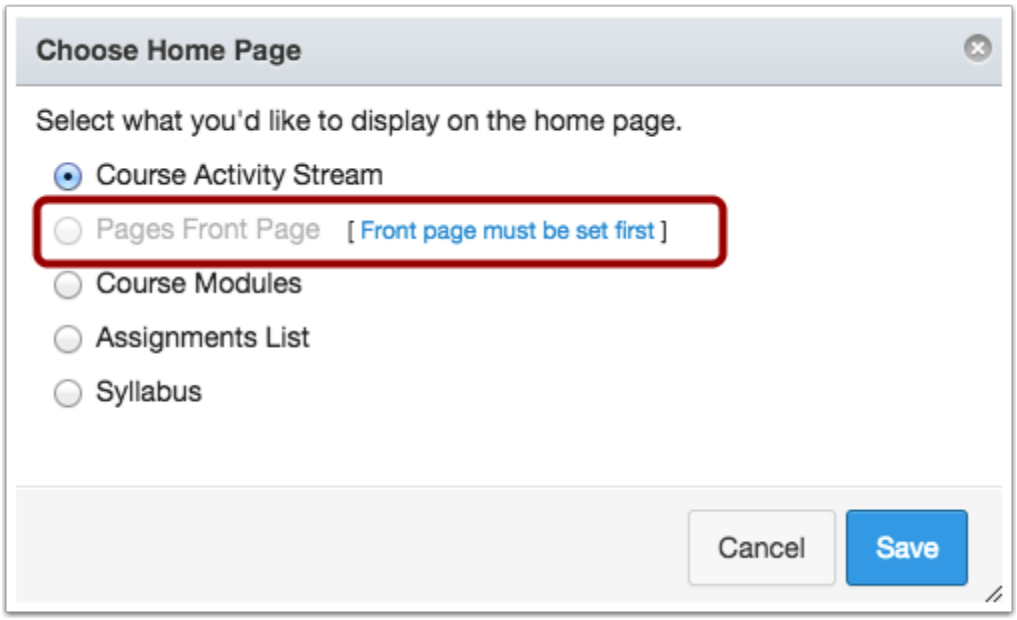
In the Home Page sidebar, click the **Choose Home Page** link.

Select Home Page Layout



Click the radio button next to the Home Page layout you prefer.

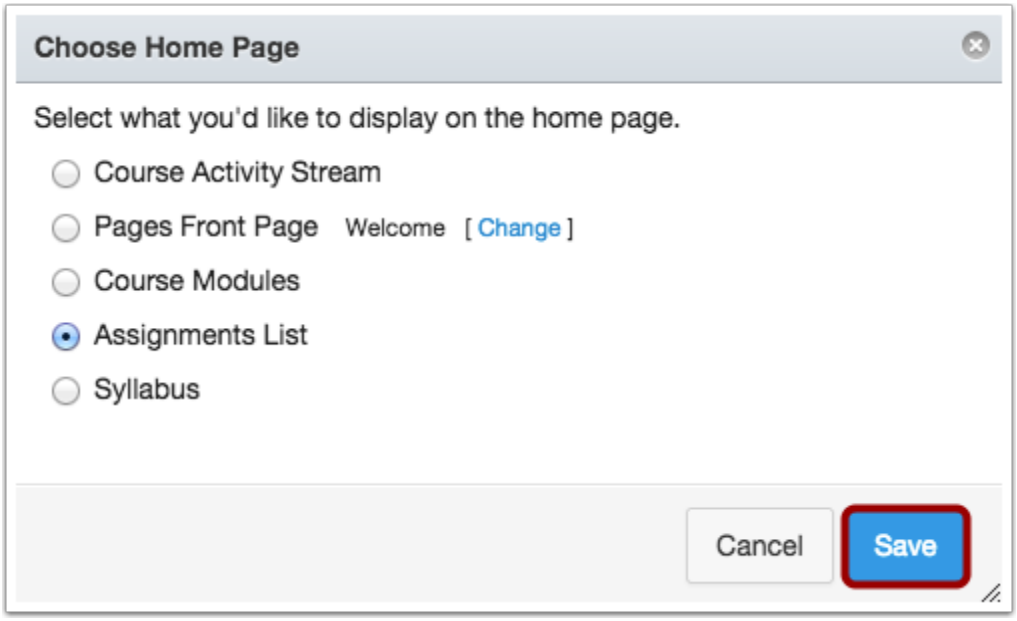
Set Front Page



If you want to select a Pages Front Page but have not set a Front Page, you must set a Front page before choosing this option.

Note: Only Published pages can be set as the Front Page. Make sure the page you want to set as the Front Page is published.

Update Layout



Click the **Save** button to save the changes made to the Course Home Page.

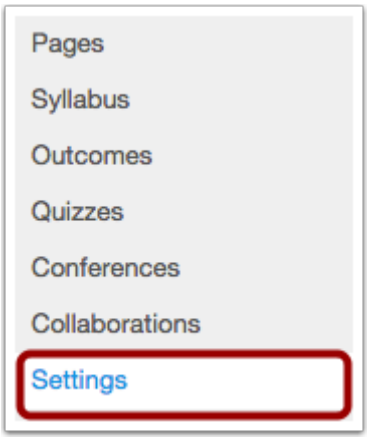
How do I reorder and hide Course Navigation links?

By default, all links are enabled for all courses. Please note that links cannot be renamed.

Links to sections that don't have any content and that students cannot create content for will not be shown to students and will be "grayed" for your view. For example, if there are no learning outcomes set for the course, you will see the "Outcomes" link in gray, but students will not see the link at all. You can also hide and reorder links in the left navigation for your course.

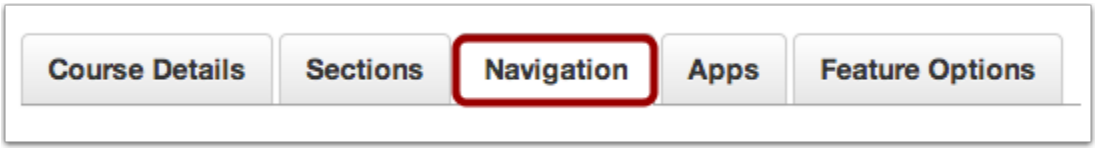
Note: Configured External Apps may create additional Course Navigation links. You can also select, navigate, and drop navigation links using a keyboard. To view the keyboard shortcuts, press the **comma key**. Links will always be placed below the link where you drop it. To replace a link at the beginning of the navigation menu, drop the link at the top. By default the link will appear as the second link in the list. Then move the top link down below your preferred link.

Open Settings



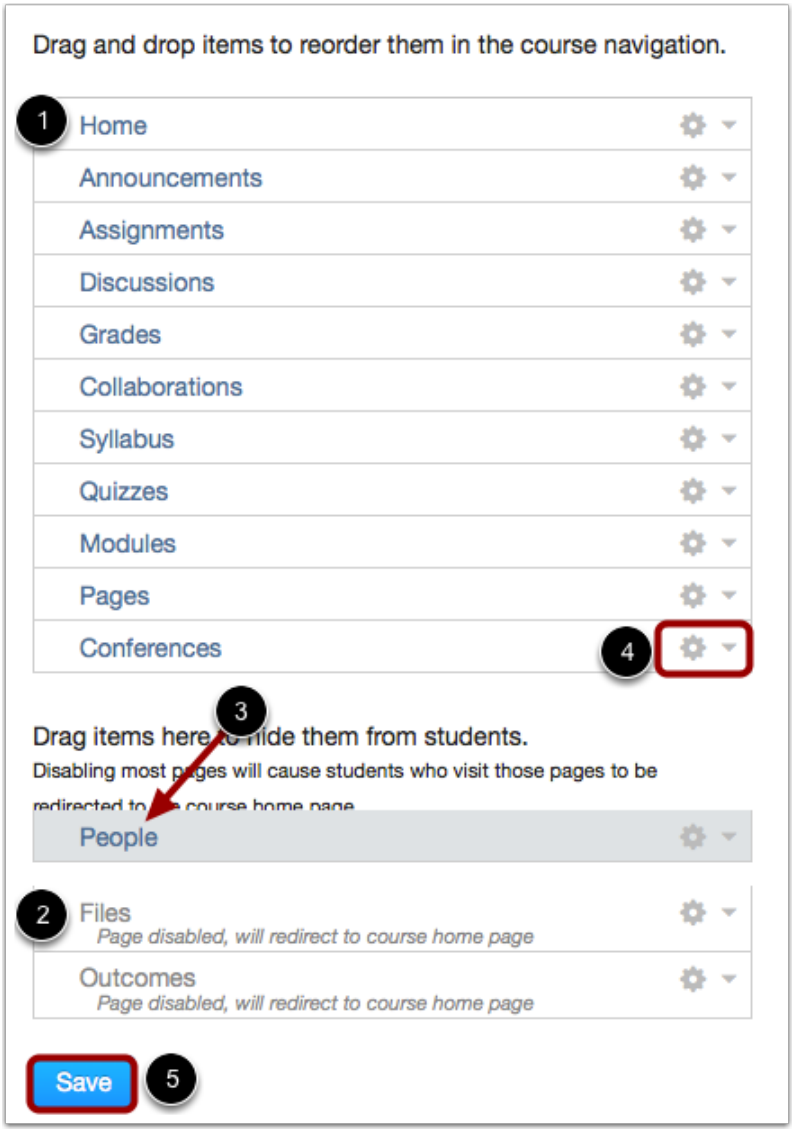
In Course Navigation, click the **Settings** link.

Open Navigation



Click the **Navigation** tab.

Reorder Navigation Links



Navigation links in blue text [1] are displayed to students. Navigation links in gray text [2] are hidden from students. Course Navigation links cannot be renamed.

Drag and drop items to reorder them in the Course Navigation. You can drag and drop course navigation links from each section—to hide them from or show them to students [3]. You can also use the **Settings** icon [4] to disable/enable and move course navigation links. This is useful for keyboard users. Click the **Save** button [5] when you are finished reordering everything.

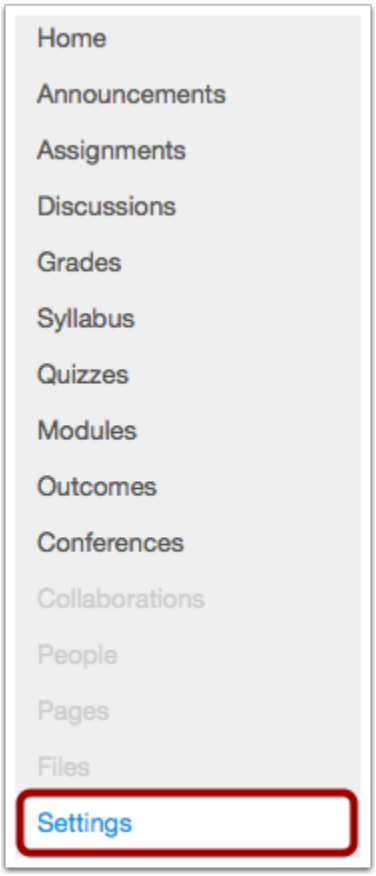
Note: You can also select, navigate, and drop navigation links using a keyboard. To view the keyboard shortcuts, press the **comma key**. Links will always be placed below the link where you drop it. To replace a link at the beginning of the navigation

menu, drop the link at the top. By default the link will appear as the second link in the list. Then move the top link down below your preferred link.

What are the Canvas settings at the course level?

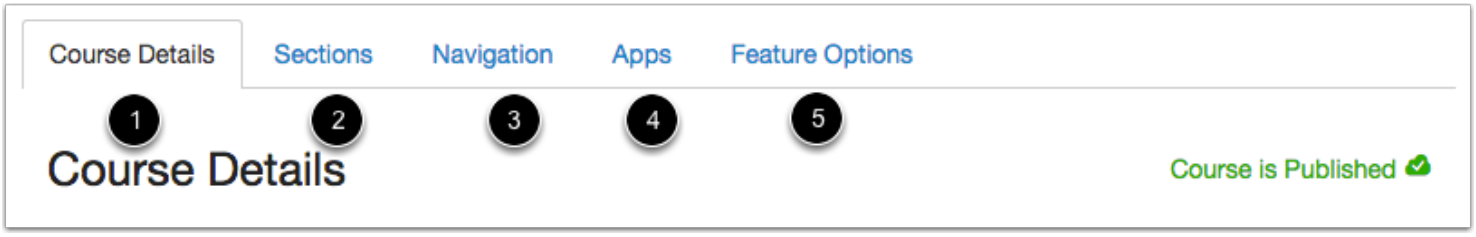
The Settings navigation link is where you can easily update and see the different users and sections, and you can also modify the navigation of your course.

Open Settings



The settings portion of your course is only available to teachers. Students won't be seeing this link so this is where we put in the different reports just for the teachers themselves.

View Settings



Depending on your permissions, you can edit differing levels of the course settings.

1. In the **Course Details** tab, you can view the details of your course, its name, what your quota is, and what license that you've attached to this content inside of your course. You can also view the course status. If the course cannot be unpublished, the hover text will notify you accordingly.
2. In the **Sections** tab, you can manage the different sections of students and see all the people associated with your course according to role.
3. In the **Navigation** tab, you can modify the Content Navigation links listed in your course. You can drag and drop to change the order of of the links. You can also hide specific links from students. Any configured External Apps (LTI Toolsthat appear in Course Navigation also appear here as well.
4. The **Apps** tab allows you to view installed apps and link apps enabled by your institution to your course.
5. The **Feature Options** tab allows you to enable and disable Canvas features within your course as made available by your account admin.

Add Course Content

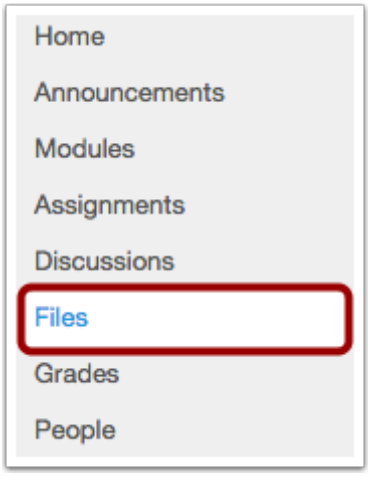
How do I add a file to my course?

You can add a file to your course by uploading a file. You can also import files using the course import tool.

Note: Video and audio uploads to Canvas through the media tool can be up to 500 MB in size.

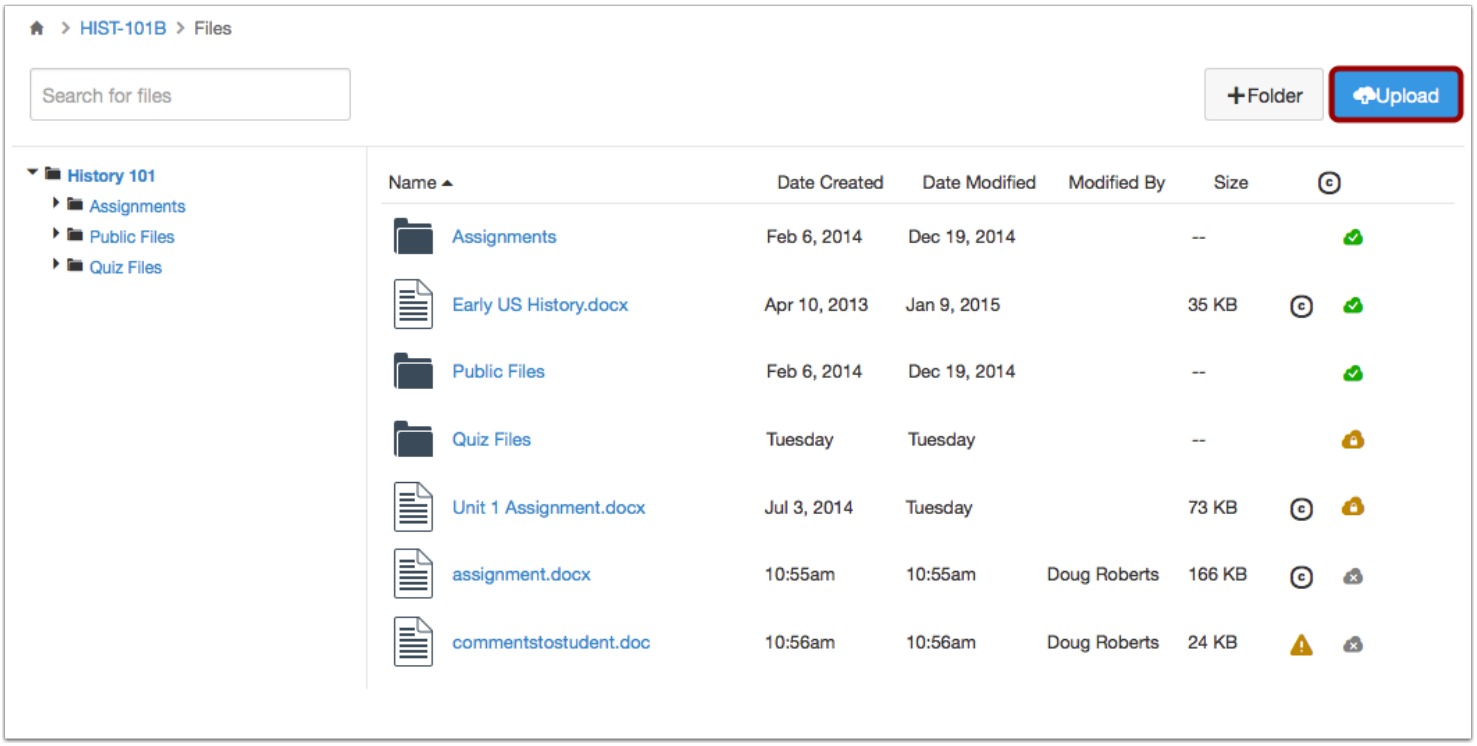
If you are not using the Usage Rights feature option (part of the New Files feature option), please view the New Files version of this lesson. If you are not using the New Files feature option, please view the archived version of this lesson.

Open Files



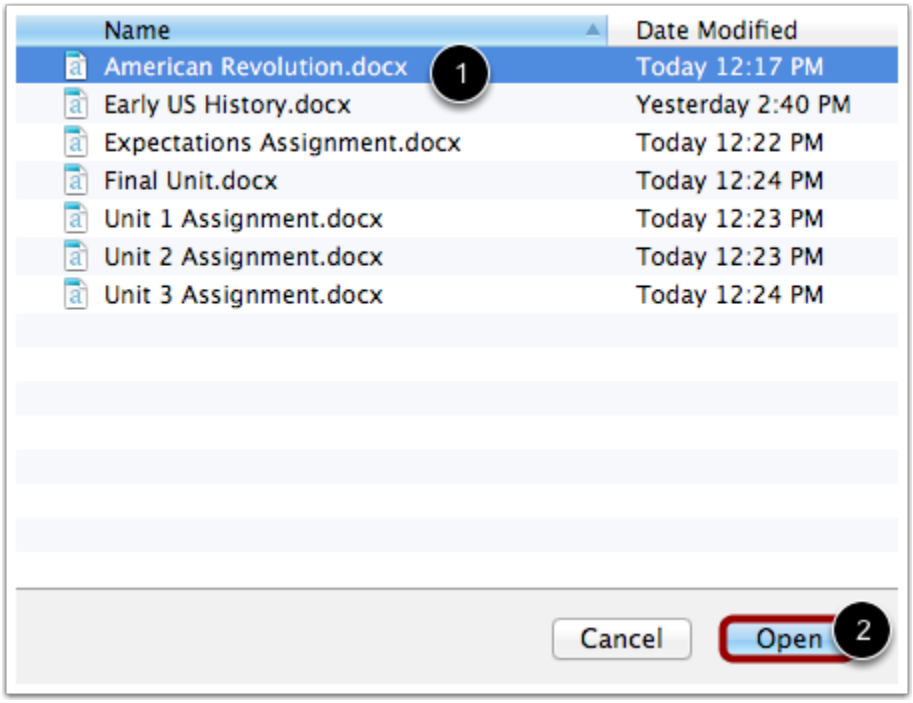
In Course Navigation, click the **Files** link.

Add Files



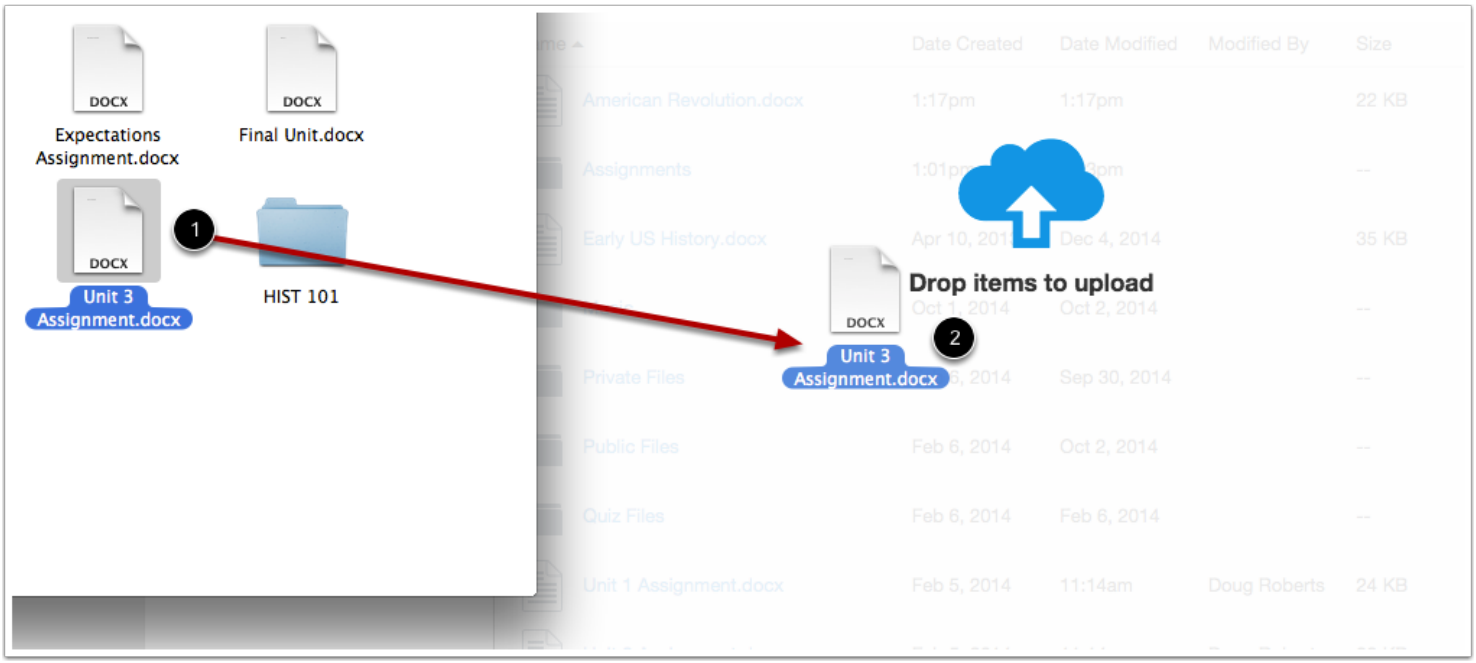
Click the **Upload** button.

Select Files



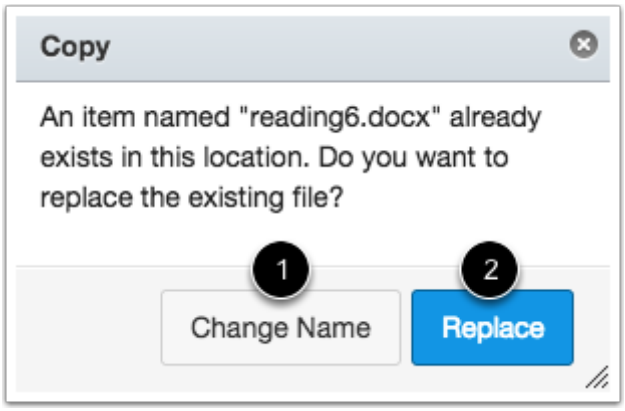
Click the title of the file you wish to upload [1] and click the **Open** button [2] to upload the file.

Add Files via Drag and Drop



Some web browsers contain a unique feature that allows the user to add to files by simply dragging and dropping the files from a file window directly into the Canvas file repository. Click the title of the file you wish to add [1] and drag the file to your open browser [2]. Your file will automatically upload.

Replace Duplicate File

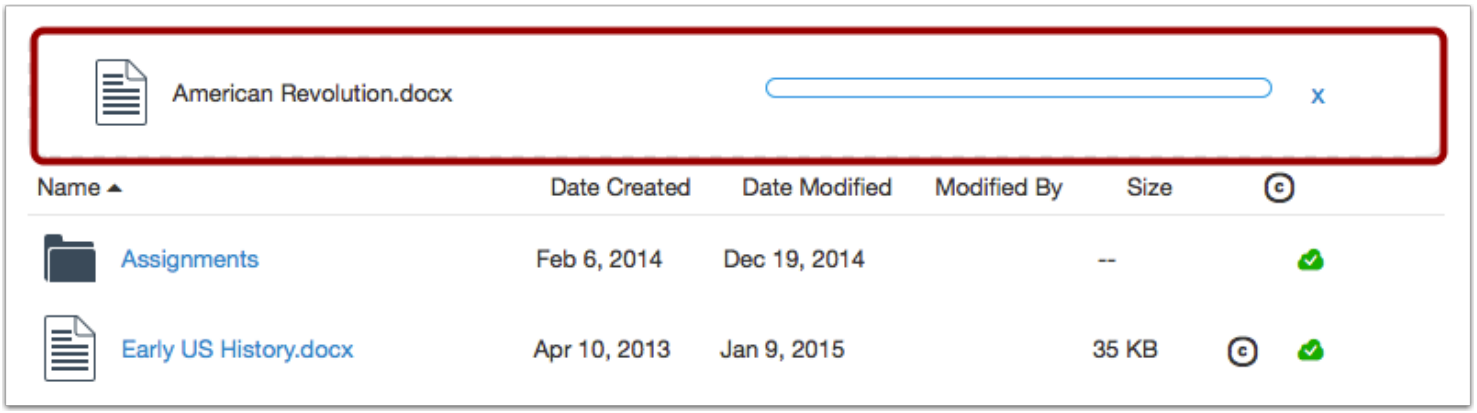


If a file with the same name already exists in the folder where you are uploading your file, you will be asked if you want to replace or rename it.

To rename the file, click **Change Name** button [1].

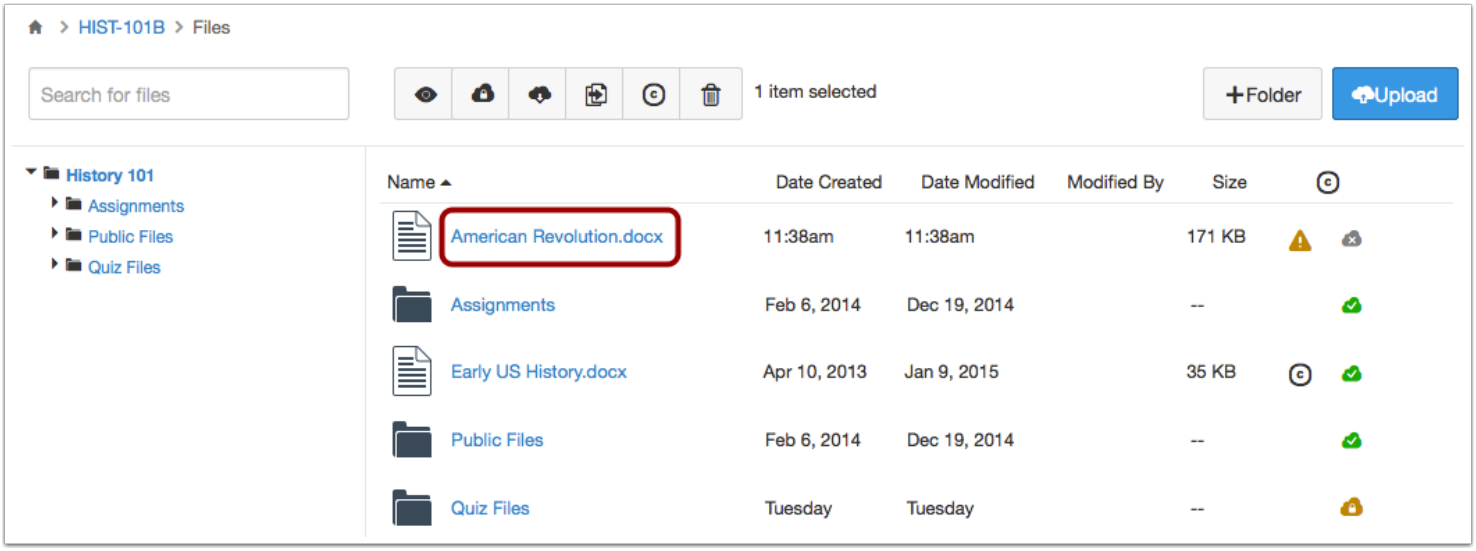
To replace the file, click the **Replace** button [2].

Monitor Uploads



A progress bar will appear at the top of screen tracking the progress of your file upload.

View Files



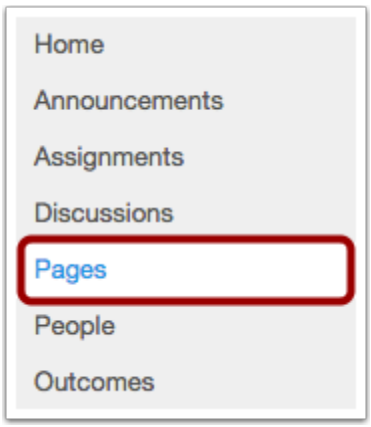
View your new file in the course.

How do I create a new page in my course?

As an instructor, you can create a new page to add to your course.

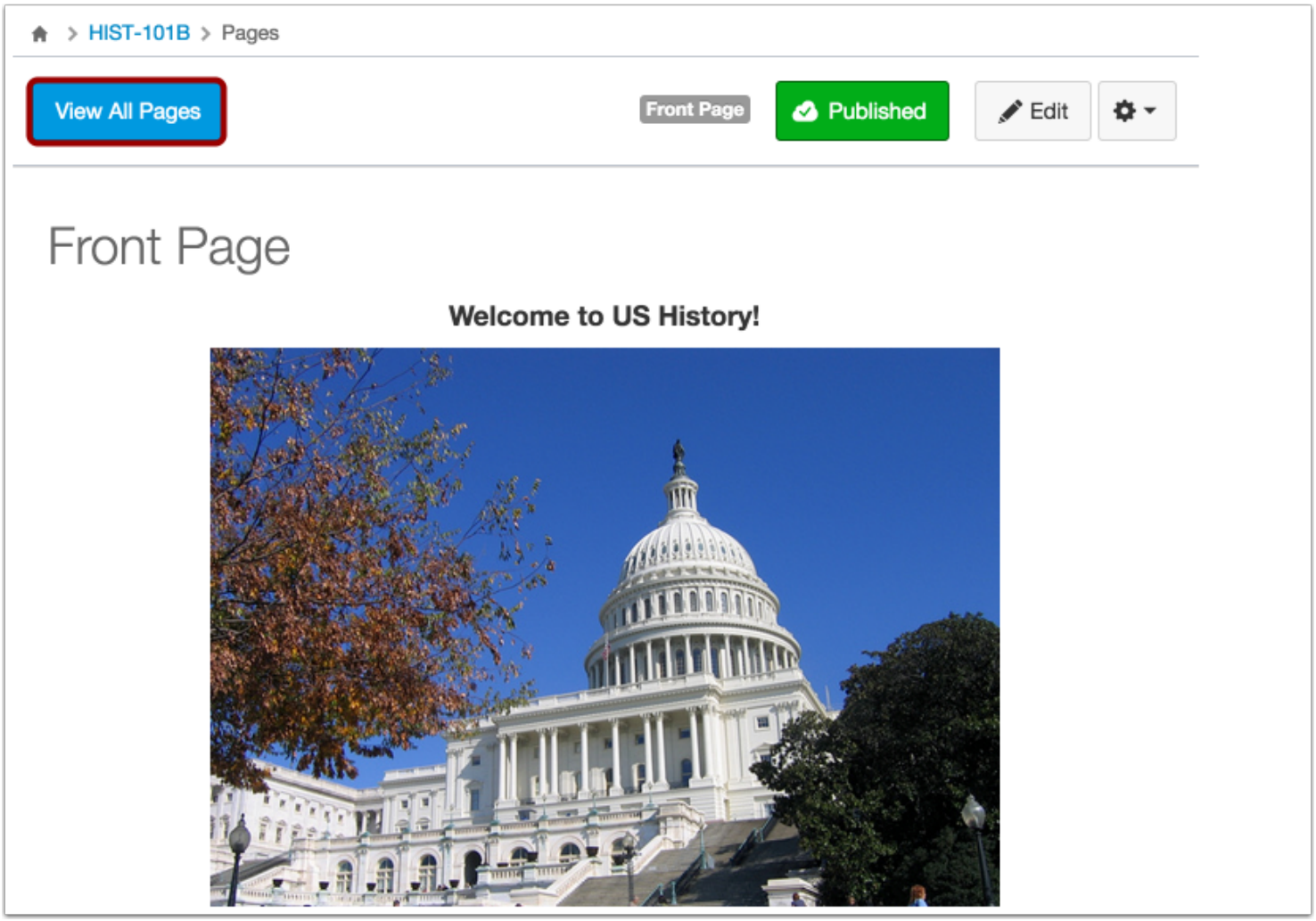
When creating pages, you can set page permissions as to who can edit the page: instructors (teachers), instructors and students, or anyone.

Open Pages



In Course Navigation, click the **Pages** link.

View Pages

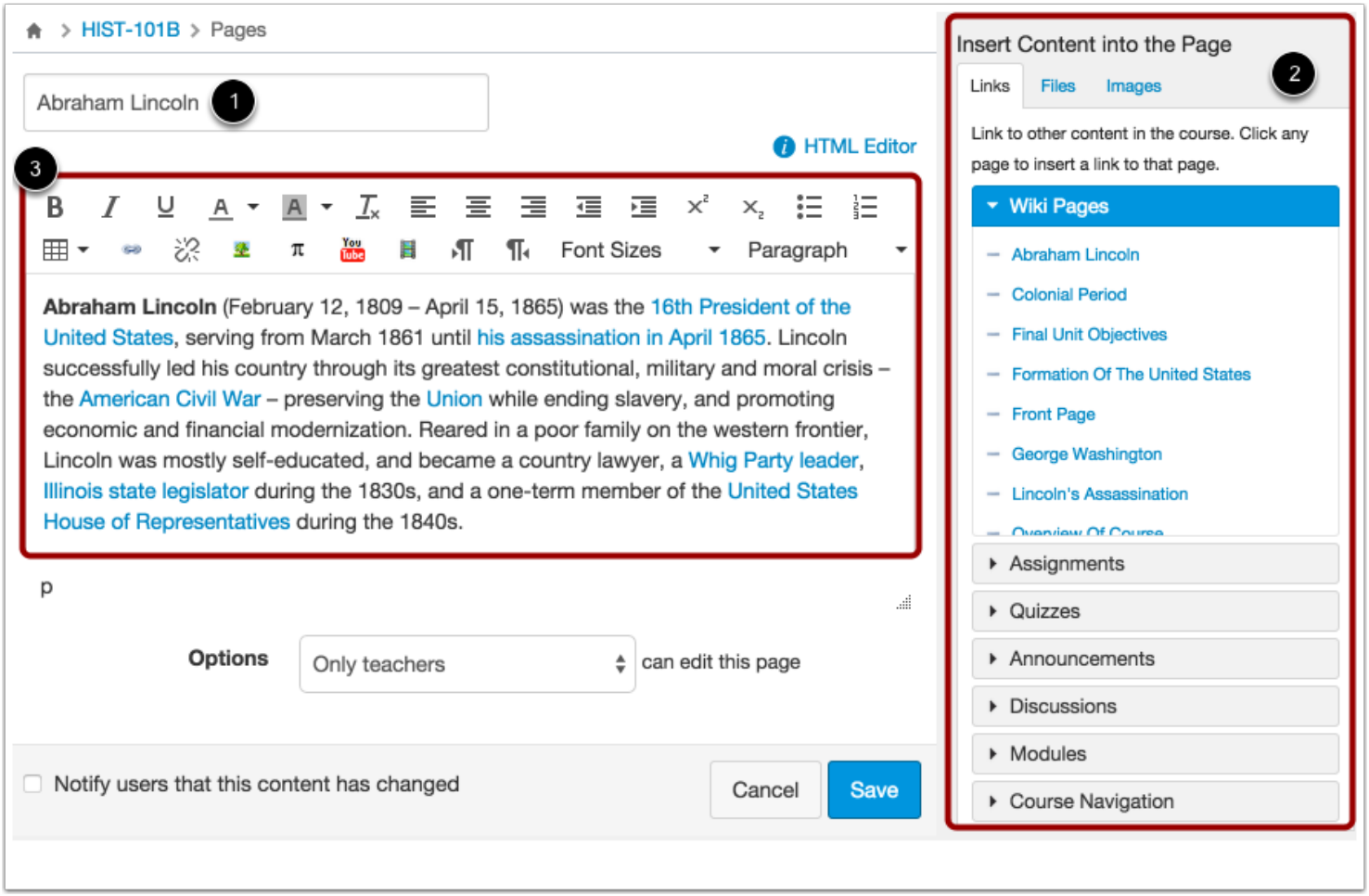


Pages is designed to open to the front page for the course, if there is a front page selected. Click the **View All Pages** button to select a page from the Pages Index.

Create a New Page

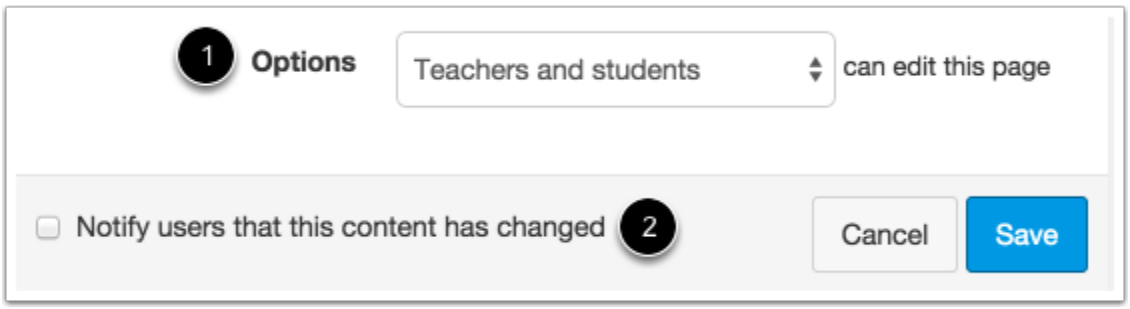
Click the **Add Page** button.

Add Content



Type a name for your page [1]. Add content to your page using the Content Selector [2]. Edit the content and add links and media using the Rich Content Editor [3] or switch to the HTML Editor.

Edit Page Settings



You can decide who can edit the page by selecting the **Who can edit this page** drop down menu [1]. Options include only teachers, teachers and students, or anyone.

You can also notify users that content has changed by selecting the **Notify users that this content has changed** checkbox [2].

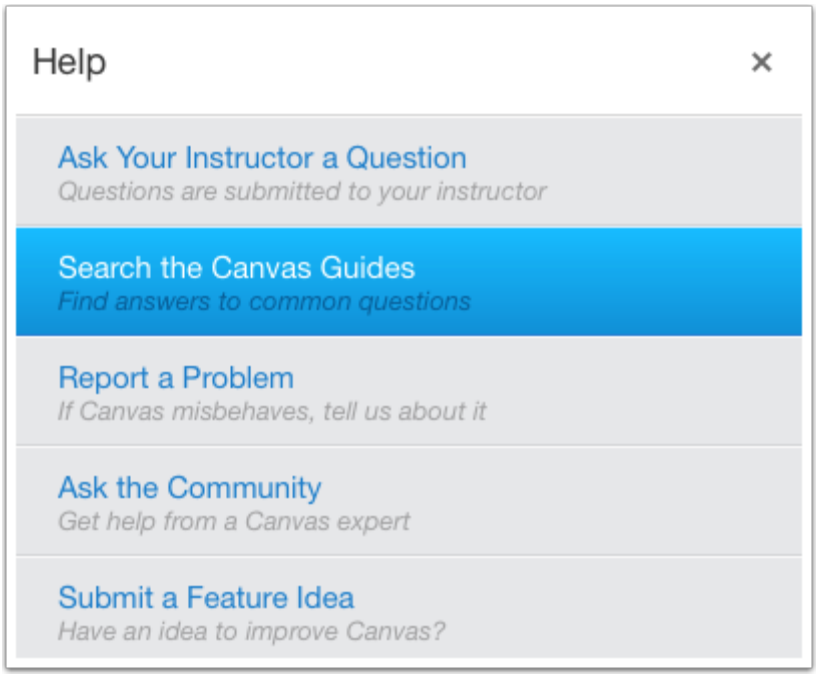
Save and Publish

If you are ready to publish your page, click the **Save & Publish** button [1]. If you want to create a draft of your page, click the **Save** button [2].

Note: If you try to navigate away from a page without saving, you will generate a pop-up warning.

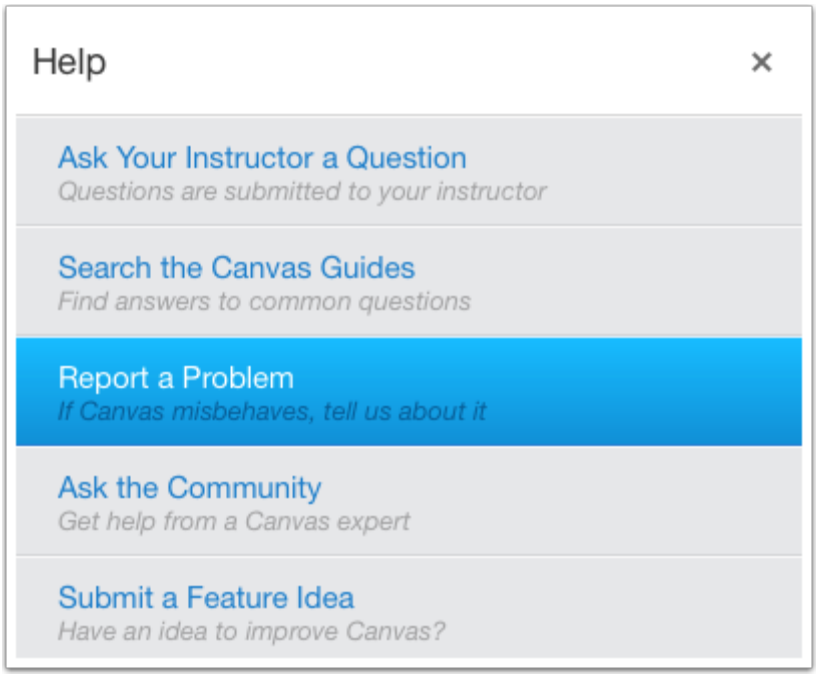
When your page is saved in a draft state, you can return to the page and publish it at any time by clicking the **Publish** button [1]. The button will change from gray to green [2].

Search Canvas Guides



To find an answer to a question about a Canvas feature, click the **Search Canvas Guides** link. This link will take you to Canvas Guides where you can search Canvas documentation for information about features inside of Canvas.

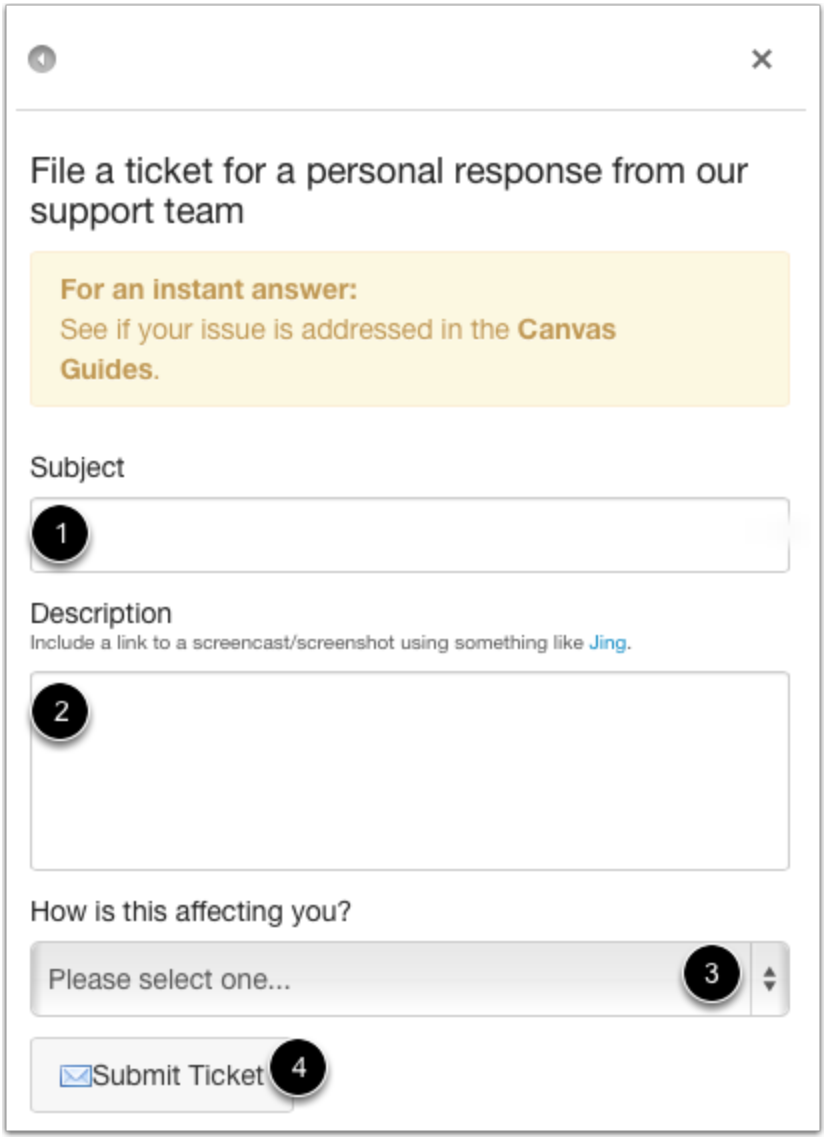
Report a Problem



To report a problem with Canvas, click the **Report a Problem** link.

Note: Before reporting a problem with Canvas, please Ask the Canvas Community or search the Canvas Guides for help.

Submit Ticket



In the subject field [1], create a subject for your ticket.

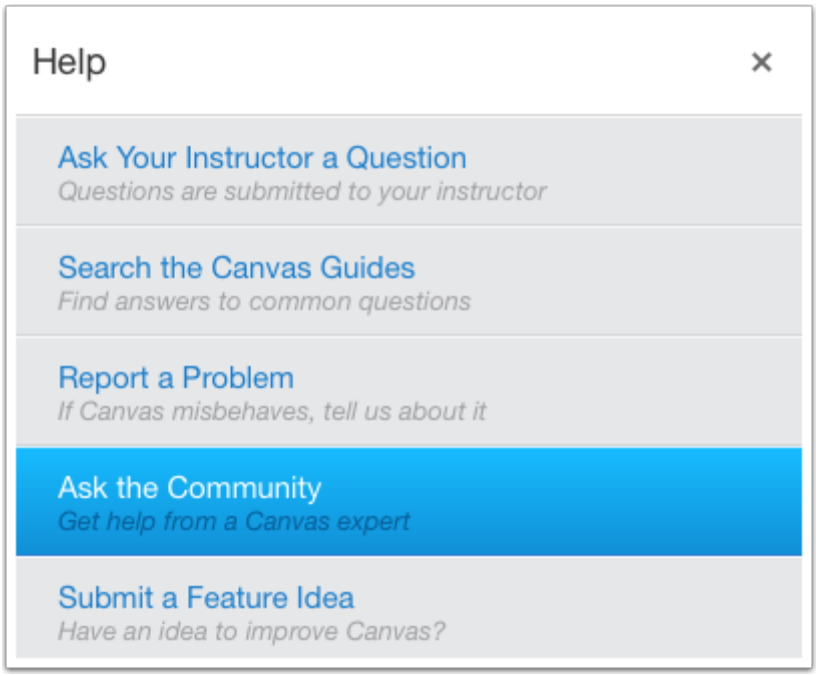
In the description field [2], describe the problem your are experiencing in Canvas. Please be as detailed as possible to help troubleshoot the problem.

In the drop-down menu [3], select the statement that best describes how the problem is affecting you:

- Just a casual question, comment, idea, suggestion
- I need some help but it's not urgent
- Something's broken but I can work around it for now
- I can't get things done until I hear back from you
- EXTREMELY CRITICAL EMERGENCY

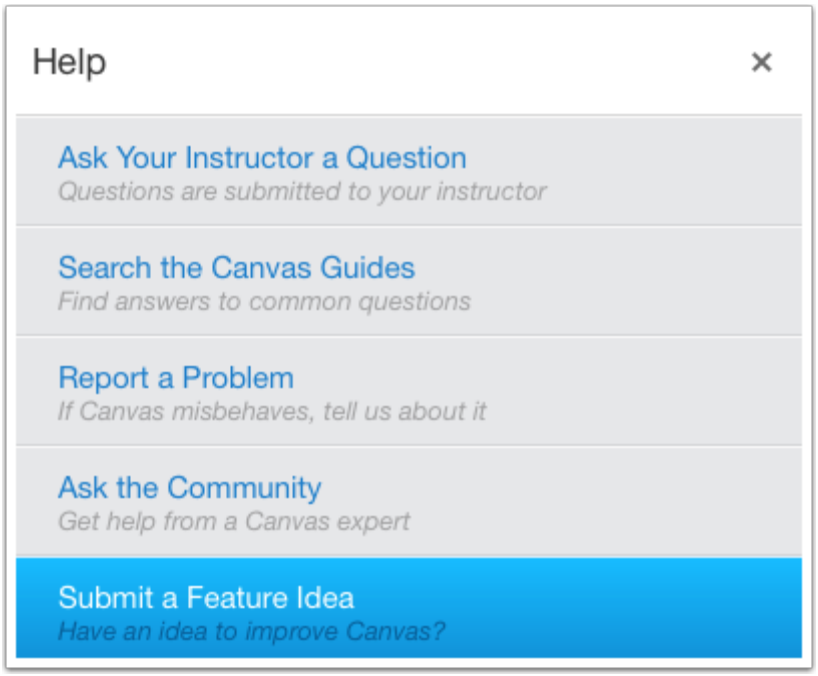
When you're done, click the **Submit Ticket** button [4].

Ask the Community



To ask a question or get feedback about Canvas from a community of experts, click the **Ask the Community** link. This link will take to you Find Answers and allow you to ask questions and get feedback from Canvas users like you.

Request a Feature



Click the **Request a Feature** link. You can submit your ideas about how to make Canvas even better by clicking this link or by visiting Canvas Feature Ideas.