Introduction to the Online Classroom

The Florida Tech online classroom is a web-based, multimedia environment accessed through a web browser. You use a user name and password to access it.

It is important to understand how each developed component relates to the online classroom. There are eight separate web pages making up the Weekly Course Outline.

Within each Weekly Course Outline page, assignments and media are placed into separate Modules (an instructional unit). Each module includes outcomes, lectures, reading assignments and discussions which include graded and non-graded assignments.

Modules are distributed across the eight weeks of instruction representing the appropriate steps taken in order for students to complete your course successfully.

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Navigation of the Online Classroom

The academic online elements of your course are accessed using three choices on each Weekly Course Outline page.

1. The Left/Right arrows and drop-down, moving between the eight weekly pages:
2. A **Course Navigation** drop-down:

With selections.

- **Course Home** - takes you to the current week of the **Weekly Course Outline** page.
- **Syllabi** - course document, which you will provide as part of course development.
- **Testing and Grading** - instructor assessment and grading tools.
- **Course Administration** - collection of instructor tools.
- **Digital Drop Box** - may be developed for delivery and transfer of course essays.
- **Calendar** - Instructor/student date/time messaging.
3. **Icons** for selective navigation:

- Email
- Discussion Boards
- Calendar
- Digital Drop Box
- Chat
- Class Roster

These provide ease of navigation for instructors and students within your course.
A Little More Detail - A Lot of Help

The Discussion Board

1. To access the Discussion Board editor, click on the “+” symbol next to the course name.

2. Main Board is one of two default boards created when the course is set up. Some professors leave this as the only Board in the discussion area, and create a separate Thread for each week of the class.

3. Off Topic Discussion Board is one of two default boards created when the course is set up. A common practice is to rename this as a “General Questions” or “Ask the Professor” board. A Board can be edited by clicking the pencil icon below the board name.

4. The Faculty Board is separate from the course Discussion Board area. It is reserved for faculty use only, and serves as a type of faculty lounge for you and your peers.

5. The Thread area for the default boards is blank; however there is a hidden thread that allows students to enter posts there. A common practice is to create additional prompt threads. Most professors create a single thread and use that throughout the course term. Advanced users often create a new thread for each week of the class.
1. Once in the Discussion Board editor, you can set the status, name the board and give it a description. From the outset, the Board status can be set to Active or Disabled. However, you can only make changes or add threads to a Board that is Active. This setting can be changed at your convenience. Most professors leave the default setting of Active. A Board that is in Disabled status is hidden from student view and cannot be accessed by them.

2. The Board Title can be entered here. Each Board must have a unique title. A common practice is to name the Board for the activity related to the Board’s expected usage. For example, “Week 1 Discussion Board – Graded” let’s students know this Board is to be used for the graded Discussion assignment for Week 1.

3. The Board description is a brief explanation of what the expectations are for this Board. This can be entered at a later date if you prefer to create the Board and then write up a more detailed description.

4. After the Board is created, the Thread area is still empty. You must click on the Board title to access the Thread editor to create the thread.
On the Thread editor, click “Create New Thread” to start a new Thread.

1. **Thread Title** is the specific name for the Thread. This is what will show to users. This can be a repeat of the Board name or some other distinguishing name. This field must be completed.

2. This section is an optional choice for advanced functions. It allows you to set a specific time lock for when the Board will be active. By default, the Active date is always the current date when you create the Thread. Some professors create multiple Threads for each week of the course and set them up to automatically close and open. If the Active date is set in the future, the Thread will not show to student users but will show on the professor view. If a Lock date has been entered and passed, students can still view the Thread but can no longer create new posts. Leaving the Lock field blank will allow the Thread to remain in Active status.
3. Post Title is a specific title given to a post. This is an optional field. If text is entered here, it will appear on the colored time/date bar for that specific post.

4. Post Text must be entered when creating the Thread. There are several common practices, including a copy/paste of the assignment instructions from the main course page, a description of the assignment and your expectations in your own words, a repeat of the Board description, or a simple “Post your responses here” sentence.

5. After entering your initial Post in the Text area, it is recommended to click the “Add copy to My Repository” button. This will save a copy of what you have written to the My Repository area, and allow you to import that specific post the next time you need to use it. For example, when teaching multiple sections of the same course, it allows you to quickly enter the detailed description across multiple Threads and Boards.
6. After clicking the Submit button, a green affirmation statement should appear at the top of the page, indicating the Thread and Post have been successfully created.

7. To quickly jump back to the Main Discussion Board page, click on the blue hyper text link. This “cookie crumb” trail is always available to help you navigate through the Discussion Board pages.

A Little More Detail - A Lot of Help

The Daily Digest

To quickly sort through multiple posts on the Discussion Board, the search function Daily Digest is available. To access, click the link that appears on the main Discussion Board page in the upper left corner, just above the Manage Boards selector.

Once on the Daily Digest page, there are a series of filters that allow you to sort through the posts.
The filters include options to select a specific Board, a specific Thread, a date range, all or a specific user, and how to order the results. Below is a sample of one of the most frequently used filters, which allows one to search for all student activity on a specific thread. My preference is to organize it by User Last Name, as that matches up with how the student names appear in the online Grade Book and I can quickly see how many posts that student entered and read what was written for content purposes.