


6. GETTING STARTED WITH ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

Other Moodle guides can be found under 'Information / IT Support / IT Information' on the main menu, then under 'Using Moodle'.

6.1 Identifying Discussion Forums

Once you have logged into Moodle and entered your course's Moodle site, you will see different topic areas and many different options. All discussion areas are represented by the  image; you can see clusters of these in the screenshot below, from an actual Moodle site (see number 1). To add a message to an online discussion, you must first click on the relevant title of the discussion area. Discussion forums are typically named after a particular exercise that appears in your study guide, or are else clearly linked to particular lessons.

In the screenshot below you can see the menu option "This course" (see number 2). Selecting this will allow you to choose the option "Forums" which will take you to a list of *all* discussion forums used in that course.



Home My courses Campus/School Information Library My Email This course

Laidlaw College Moodle

Dashboard Courses Distance Learning Semester 2 (DL) 2015 115 Biblical Theology (DL) S2 2015

115 Biblical Theology (DL) S2 2015



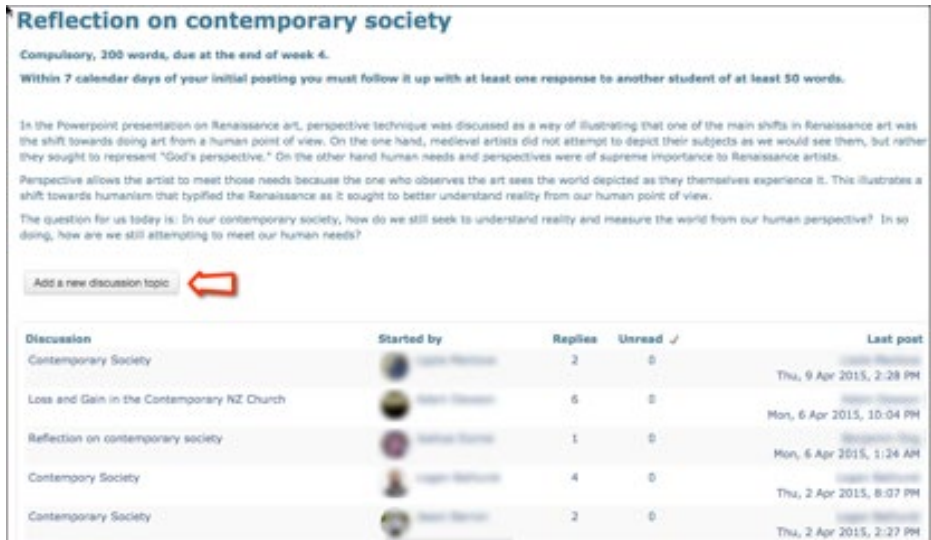
115.515 Biblical Theology

There are many ways to practice theology, that is, to deliberately formulate thoughts and words about God. Biblical Theology is an approach that seeks to work closely with the contents and forms of the biblical texts in their relationship with one another. This course is an introduction to Biblical Theology. It explores the unity, diversity and central themes of God's written word, the Bible. In doing so, it introduces students to critical discussions concerning the relationship of theology to the Bible. It also looks at the relationship between Biblical Theology and other theological methods such as Systematic Theology. Finally, it assists students to begin making sense of the relationship between the Bible, theology and all of life.

1 News forum 1 unread post
Introductions

6.2 Reading Discussion Threads

A discussion 'thread' is a separate line of messages within a discussion forum. In the example below, you can see that there are many threads in the discussion forum. Moodle helpfully tells you how many replies there are in each thread, and informs you as to who posted the latest message and when.



Reflection on contemporary society

Compulsory, 200 words, due at the end of week 4.

Within 7 calendar days of your initial posting you must follow it up with at least one response to another student of at least 50 words.

In the Powerpoint presentation on Renaissance art, perspective technique was discussed as a way of illustrating that one of the main shifts in Renaissance art was the shift towards doing art from a human point of view. On the one hand, medieval artists did not attempt to depict their subjects as we would see them, but rather they sought to represent "God's perspective." On the other hand human needs and perspectives were of supreme importance to Renaissance artists.

Perspective allows the artist to meet those needs because the one who observes the art sees the world depicted as they themselves experience it. This illustrates a shift towards humanism that typified the Renaissance as it sought to better understand reality from our human point of view.

The question for us today is: In our contemporary society, how do we still seek to understand reality and measure the world from our human perspective? In so doing, how are we still attempting to meet our human needs?

[Add a new discussion topic](#)

Discussion	Started by	Replies	Unread	Last post
Contemporary Society	Logan Matthews	2	0	Thu, 9 Apr 2015, 2:28 PM
Loss and Gain in the Contemporary NZ Church	Logan Matthews	6	0	Mon, 6 Apr 2015, 10:04 PM
Reflection on contemporary society	Logan Matthews	1	0	Mon, 6 Apr 2015, 1:24 AM
Contemporary Society	Logan Matthews	4	0	Thu, 2 Apr 2015, 8:07 PM
Contemporary Society	Logan Matthews	2	0	Thu, 2 Apr 2015, 2:27 PM

To start a new discussion, click on the 'Add a new discussion topic'. To read a discussion thread, click on the title of the discussion. Clicking on a person's name will show their Moodle profile, not the message they have added!

It is possible to read multiple threads at once by opening each thread in a new browser tab. To do this, right-click the title of the discussion you want to access then select "Open in new tab".

By returning to the tab with the list of discussion threads, you can right-click on each thread in turn to open them in new tabs.



6.3 Adding your Say

There are two ways in which you can contribute to an online discussion.

1. By starting a new discussion topic, or
2. By responding to an existing message.

Both options work very similarly. To start a new discussion topic, make sure you are in the first page of the forum, the one that lists all of the threads. Click the “Add new discussion topic” button.

You will be taken to a screen that enables you to write your own message. At the top of the screen you will see the introduction to the forum. Beneath that introduction is an area where you actually write your message.

To add your message, follow the steps below:

1. Type in a **subject** for your message. Try to be imaginative and descriptive.
2. Type the **actual message** itself. If you are planning to spend some time drafting the message, we suggest you create the message in Notepad (or another simple editor), save it, and then copy and paste your message from there into Moodle. This prevents internet and Moodle connection timeouts from making you lose your work.

You can use the toolbar (like that found in most word processors) to format your message, and add images, hyperlinks and smileys (see below) as you wish. You can change the font, font size, add italics and bold effects, create numbered or bulleted lists, etc. by using the buttons above where you type your message. Hovering the mouse over the button will provide brief help on features of the button.

▼ Your new discussion topic

Subject* 1

Message*

2

Discussion subscription 4

Attachment Maximum size for new files: 5MB, maximum attachments: 9

Files

3

You can drag and drop files here to add them.

Group 302_Ol_6

4

There are required fields in this form marked *.

When posting messages to Moodle, please ensure that your message has a logical structure to it, it is free from grammatical and spelling errors, you have made your point clearly, and the subject line is appropriate.

3. If you want to **add an attachment**, do so as you would for an email.
4. Click “Post to forum” to add your message.

Once your message has been posted, you have 30 minutes to edit it *before it is emailed out to all subscribers* (usually all staff and students in the course).

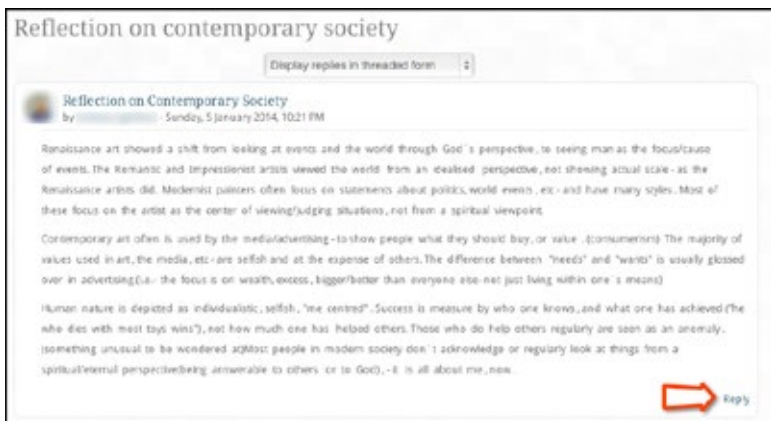
The blue number 4 on the above diagram shows where you can choose to be subscribed to the discussion or not. If you are subscribed to a discussion, then all posts to the discussion will be emailed to you. We suggest you uncheck this.

Here is an overview of the toolbar with some of the less obvious but useful features:



1. Word counter. Note that it is primitive, and will count anything separated by a space as a different word.
2. Full screen.
3. Add a hyperlink.
4. Insert a picture.
5. Clear formatting. *This is very useful, especially if you are pasting text in from another word processor such as Word. Remember to select the text first.*
6. Add emoticon.

To respond to an existing message, you can either click the “Reply” button that appears in an email notification of the message or else respond to it in Moodle itself by clicking the “reply” button that appears at the bottom right of the message.



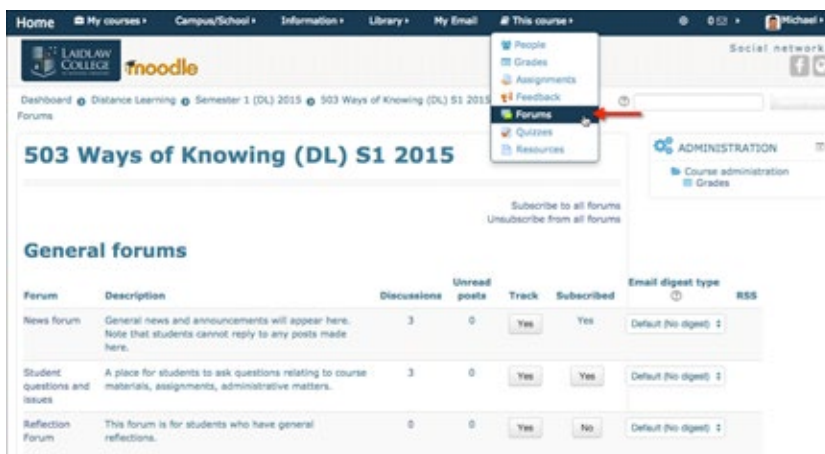
Once you have clicked “Reply”, a screen like the one for starting a new discussion topic will appear beneath the message you are replying to.

6.4 Email Notification of New Posts

Moodle will automatically email you a copy of all posts made to a discussion area that you are subscribed to. This means that you can read all messages added to discussion forums as people add them, directly from your email. These will be ordered by time rather than by subject.

Unless a forum has compulsory subscription (generally only news forums will) you may choose to be subscribed to it or not. You may find yourself overwhelmed with numerous emails if you are in a large course. If you wish to be subscribed to the forum, but want to reduce the volume of emails you receive, you are able to change your settings so that your emails are compacted into a *daily digest*: one email containing all the posts, or all the subject lines.

1. Go into the Forums area of the course (menu: This course / forums)
2. For each forum you wish to change, toggle the yes/no button for 'Subscribed'.
3. For each forum you wish to change, set the 'Email digest type' to determine how you will received notifications of new posts.



The screenshot shows the Moodle interface for a course titled "503 Ways of Knowing (DL) S1 2015". A navigation menu is open, highlighting "Forums". Below the menu, there are options to "Subscribe to all forums" and "Unsubscribe from all forums". The main content area displays a table of forums with columns for Forum, Description, Discussions, Unread posts, Track, Subscribed, Email digest type, and RSS.

Forum	Description	Discussions	Unread posts	Track	Subscribed	Email digest type	RSS
News forum	General news and announcements will appear here. Note that students cannot reply to any posts made here.	3	0	Yes	Yes	Default (No digest)	
Student questions and issues	A place for students to ask questions relating to course materials, assignments, administrative matters.	3	0	Yes	Yes	Default (No digest)	
Reflection Forum	This forum is for students who have general reflections.	0	0	Yes	No	Default (No digest)	

6.5 Getting Help

If you need assistance in using Moodle or Email, then please contact IT Services.

- By phone – 09 836 7816 or from on campus dial ext: 816
- By email – ithelpdesk@laidlaw.ac.nz
- Or the online helpdesk – <http://helpdesk.laidlaw.ac.nz>