Discussions

Quick Start

In the Discussions area, you can post messages and read and reply to messages posted by others. You can use the Discussions area to share thoughts about your course material, ask questions, share files, or work together with your peers on assignments and homework.

Sections

Accessing Discussions

Click the **Discussions** link on your course navigation bar.

The main discussions page lists the topics available to you, organized into forums. Click a topic name to enter the topic and join in the discussion.

Reading messages

There are two ways of viewing the messages inside a topic—using the **Grid Style** message list or the **Reading Style** message list. See *Changing your settings* on page 8 to learn how to change your view.

In the **Grid Style** message list, a list of messages appears at the top of the page, showing the subject, author, and date for each message. Click a message's subject to read the message; the full

message appears either at the bottom of the screen or in a new window, depending on your personal settings.
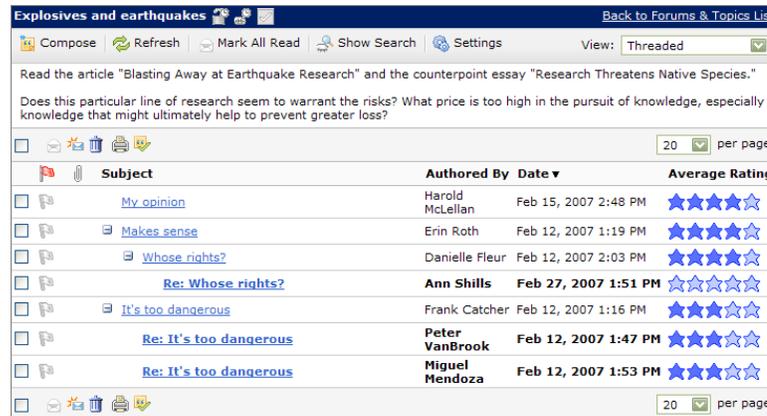
The Grid Style message list

In the **Reading Style** message list, the full text of every message is always displayed. Click the **Mark Read** link below a message's header to tell the system when you've read a message.
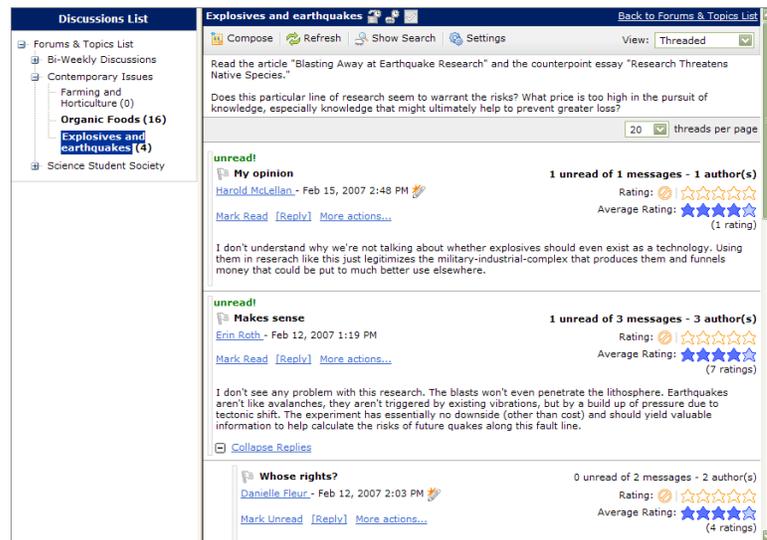

The Reading Style message list

In either style, use the **View** drop-down list at the top right of the page to switch between Threaded view, where messages are grouped with their replies, and one of the Unthreaded views (All Messages, Unread Only, Flagged Only) where you can sort messages any way you like.

Finding new messages

Once a discussion gets going, new messages can come in very quickly. To help you keep on top of things, new messages are identified in a number of places.

On your course homepage, the **Updates** widget lists the total number of unread messages for all discussion topics in your course.
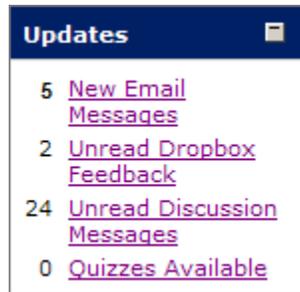
Look for the Updates widget on your course's homepage

On the main discussions page, the number of unread messages appears beneath each topic. To see only topics with new messages, select "Topics with Unread" from the **Display** drop-down list at the top of the page.
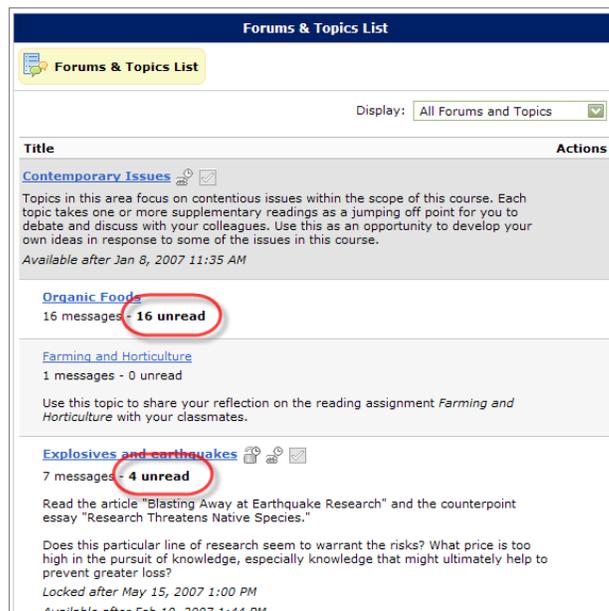
Unread messages are listed beneath each discussion topic

Inside a topic's message list, the **Discussions List** at the left of the screen displays topics with unread messages in bold.

Posting a message

1   Enter the topic where you want to post a message.

2   Click 🖼 **Compose** at the top of the message list.

3   Type a **Subject**.

4   Type your **Message**.

5   Set any other message options you want. (These options may not be available, depending on the course and the topic.)

| To	Do this
Attach a file	In the **Attachments** area, click **Add a File** and locate the file you want to attach. You can attach as many files as you want.
Post your message anonymously	Select **Author anonymously**.

6   Click **Post**.

If the topic is moderated, your message does not appear until it is approved. Moderated topics are indicated by the ☑ **Messages Require Approval** icon beside the topic name at the top of the message list.

Saving a draft

You can save your message as a draft instead of posting it right away. Saving a draft lets you return to the message later to edit it before posting it to the topic.

To save a draft, click the **Save as Draft** button instead of the **Post** button when writing a message.

To find a saved draft, view the message list for the topic where you created the draft and select "Drafts" from the **View** drop-down list in the top right corner of the page.
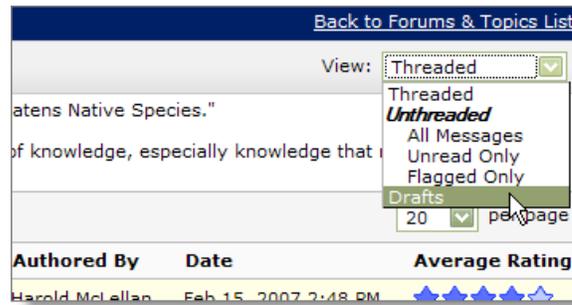
To reopen a draft message, choose Drafts from the View drop-down list inside the topic

Replying to a message

1   Locate the message you want to reply to.

2   Do one of the following:

- If you're using the **Grid Style** message list, click the subject of the message you want to reply to, and then click 💬 **Reply** at the top of the message.

- If you're using the **Reading Style** message list, click the **Reply** link below the header of the message you want to reply to.

3   Type your reply in the **Message** field. To include the original message's text in your reply, click the **Add Original Message Text** link.

4   Set any other message options you want. (These options may not be available, depending on the course and the topic.)

To	Do this
Attach a file	In the **Attachments** area, click **Add a File** and locate the file you want to attach. You can attach as many files as you want.
Make the message anonymous	Select **Author anonymously**.

5   Click **Post**.

Rating messages

Some of your courses may use message ratings. If you can rate messages, when you view a message a row of five orange stars is displayed above the message.

Click the number of stars you think the message deserves. Your rating is anonymous.

Each message's **Average Rating** is displayed as a row of five blue stars. The filled-in stars indicate the average rating.

Average Rating: ★★★☆☆
(7 ratings)

Tip   You can search by average rating to find the highest rated messages. In a big discussion, this is a good way to find the best messages.

Searching for messages

1   Enter the topic you want to search.

2   If the **Search For** field is not visible at the top of the message list, click 🔍 **Show Search** at the top of the page.

3   Enter the terms you want to find in the **Search For** field and click **Search**.

4   To perform an advanced search:

    a)   Click the **Show Search Options** link to the right of the **Search** button.

    b)   Specify additional search criteria from the options displayed beneath the **Search For** field.

    c)   Click the **Search** button.

To see all messages again, click **Clear Search** at the top or bottom of the message list.

Printing messages

If you are using the Grid Style message list, you can view messages in a printable format and send the messages to your printer.

1   In the Grid Style message list, select the messages you want to print.

2   Click the 🖨 **View Selected Messages as Printable** icon at the top or bottom of the list.

3   Click the **Print** button.

Flagging a message

Flagging messages is a good way to mark a message if you want to read it again later or monitor replies.

To flag or unflag a message, click the 🏳 **Not Flagged – Click to Flag this item** or 🚩 **Flagged – Click to Unflag this item** icon next to the message's subject.

You can quickly find your flagged messages by selecting "Flagged Only" from the **View** drop-down list at the top right of the message list.

Changing your settings

Personal settings let you customize the appearance of the Discussions tool to suit your reading style and screen resolution.

To modify your settings, do one of the following:

- Click the ⚙ **Settings** link at the left of the main discussions page or the top of the message list within a topic.

- From the **Welcome Widget** on My Home (your login launch page), click **Preferences** and then click the **Discussions** tab.

Settings you may want to customize include:

- **Show the discussion topics list** Use this setting to show or hide the list of topics at the left of the screen when you're reading messages. Hide it to save space or show it to switch between topics quickly.

- **Message List Style** Select either **Reading Style**, where you can see the full text of all messages, or **Grid Style**, where the subject and author are listed in a grid and you select messages to read their full text. Try both to see which one you prefer. (If you are using a slow connection, Grid Style will load faster than Reading Style.)

- **Show the preview pane** If you're using the **Grid Style** message list, you can read messages in a preview pane at the bottom of the screen by turning this setting on. Turn it off to read messages in a pop-up window.

- **Reply Settings** Select this option to automatically quote the original message when you reply to another user's message.