Let’s Discuss How We Can Have Better “Discussions”

Please introduce yourself to 3 or 4 people sitting near you. They will be your learning community. Last name that starts closest to Z gets to be the spokesperson (or whoever you pick)!

Also, please remember to evaluate our session in the OLC mobile app!
At Yellowdig our vision is to help universities create engaged learning communities...
Rethinking Engagement
Rethinking Engagement

Week 1
Week 2
Week 3
Week 4
Week 5
Week 6
Week 7
Week 8
Week 9
Week 10
Week 11

Incoming Students
Programs/Cohorts
Classes
Employers
Alumni

Discussions
Communities

Yellowdig
How are we creating communities?

- Running case studies
- Providing data for peer-reviewed research
- Listening to our 2,000+ instructors & 200,000+ learners from 50+ institutions
- Digging into our data-rich platform
I am assuming you are here because...

“I need a discussion component for my course”
I am assuming you are here because...

“I need a discussion component for my course”

Why?
I am assuming you are here because...

“I need a discussion component for my course”

Why?
“I need a discussion component for my course”

- To engage students
- To connect class to the real world
- Exposure to cutting edge information
- Improve relevance
- Articulate and defend positions
- Synthesize and compromise
- To build communication skills
- Leverage different experiences & expertise
- More and different ideas
- Overcoming siloed thinking
- Networking
- Improve relevance
- Those bored by traditional instruction
- Friends helping with frustration
- Instructor presence
- More and different ideas
- Exposition to cutting edge information
What 4 things are required for any conversation?
What 4 things are required for any conversation?
What 4 things are required for any conversation?

- Listening
- Thinking
What 4 things are required for any conversation?

- Listening
- Thinking
- Responding
What 4 things are required for any conversation?

- Listening
- Thinking
- Responding
What 4 things are required for any conversation?
Yellowdig

Visual, modern, single-feed design

Automatic point system for tracking and modifying behavior

Data helps experts identify where and how to help

Robust search and topic tagging for organization
2 Main Behavioral Levers

- Grades
- Assignments
## 2 Main Behavioral Levers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditionally</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To motivate participation &amp; assess individual student work</td>
<td>To get students to generate course-relevant content that demonstrates <em>understanding</em> to the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 Main Behavioral Levers

Traditionally

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To motivate participation &amp; assess individual student work</td>
<td>To get students to generate focused, course-relevant content</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A Different Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To modify individual student work in ways that create group conversations</td>
<td>To give suggestions to students to help them post interesting, course-relevant content that generates conversation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Design Principles:

1. Encourage listening
2. Create time
3. Let the strong survive
1. Encourage Listening: Create a Focus on the Real Audience

- Points: “Does it engage other students?”
- Prompts: “Are people going to be excited to read responses?”

Community/Students  NOT  Instructor

Kena Ray and Marisa Ruiz
Regression predicting class grade:

\[ 69.8\% + 0.646(\text{Out-Degree connections}) \]

Out-Degree = Comments and Upvotes “given out”

“Popularity” or “centrality” was not related to grade

Out-Degree = reading and “listening”

*F(3,79) = 18.8, p<.01, R^2 = .42 from Martin, Martin, & Feldstein, 2017
What might your students hear if they listen to assignments?

“Create 1 post and comment on 2 other posts”

• “Don’t listen to responses to your own posts.”
• “Don’t listen to or think about more than 2 other posts.”
• “Don’t listen to anyone else’s comments at all.”
• “Work hard on 3 things and don’t come back until next week.”
2. Create Time

“Social Points”
Upvotes & Receiving Comments

Popularity Contest
2. Create Time

“Social Points”
Upvotes & Receiving Comments

Popularity Contest
Early Birds Get More Worms

“Social Points”
Upvotes & Receiving Comments

Popularity Contest
Conversation
Kickstarter
Procrastination
Punishment
Especially if They Work for Them

“Social Points”
Upvotes & Receiving Comments

Popularity Contest
Conversation Kickstarter
Procrastination Punishment

Quality Assurance
Create Time: Deadlines Matter

Sunday = least activity

Small sample, but Friday = most activity

Sunday ➔
“I’ll wait ‘til the weekend!”
+ “Oh no, the deadline is tonight!”
= Content dump and less conversation

Friday ➔
Weekend warriors \textit{start} conversation
+ nobody wants to work Friday night
= Activity throughout the week

Ideal?
Just before last class of week?
3. Let the strong survive...

- Single Board & Feed
- Active Conversations to Top
- Open ‘Assignments’
Let the strong survive...

Single Board & Feed

Active Conversations to Top

Open ‘Assignments’

Active Conversations Survive
Never A Ghost Town
Less Orphan Posts
Topic Integration
If *they* build it, they will come...

Many (most?) of these include manual grading.
...and then say a lot

On average posts are 2x longer than required

Caution:
- Longer word requirements = fewer ‘turns’
- Students hate them (and they might have a point)
What is an ideal prompt?
“As always, continue to talk about anything interesting and course-related. If you need an idea for something new to talk about, you could Pin a video clip from your favorite movie, tag it with the appropriate class Topic(s), and tell everyone why you think it is a good illustration of that Topic. Remember, you get points if people read and respond to what you post. Don’t forget to Comment and actually talk to each other, this is supposed to be a discussion! I’ll badge posts that start good conversations. Remember to Love and Like other people’s stuff. You’ll help them get points and I’ll know what interests you!”
An Assignment-Free World?

With configured points & communicated expectations:
- Set it and forget it! >>> Contrived & restrictive assignments
- Outcomes from classes with NO prompts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pins</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Point Values</th>
<th>Success Indicators</th>
<th>Success Composite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comment Value Relative to Pins</td>
<td>Comments on Pin</td>
<td>Comments per-Pin</td>
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<tr>
<td>'16 Spring</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'16 Summer</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>'16 Fall</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>2.75</td>
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<tr>
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<td>634</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.50</td>
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<tr>
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<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.02</td>
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<tr>
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<td>437</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'18 Spring</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'18 Summer</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'18 Fall</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.81</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Real Use Case: Business Class

Prompt style used for an Online Mid-Level Undergrad Course at a Large Private University (38 students)

“For #Week7, we will be discussing the topic 7. SERVICES MGMT. I'm sure that many of you have heard of the Start-Up giant #WeWork, who's fast growing co-working space business can be found in cities across the globe. As the company looks to continue to diversify its offerings and create new revenue streams, they have started 'dabbling' in interior design. Much like this landmark deal from UBS, companies are able to work with the "Powered by We" team to design a dream office experience for its employees [Link to article]. Please find other examples where concepts from this week's text and lecture are prevalent in service-oriented businesses that you use and are familiar with from your everyday life.”
"For #Week7, we will be discussing the topic 7. SERVICES MGMT.

I'm sure that many of you have heard of the Start-Up giant #WeWork, who's fast growing co-working space business can be found in cities across the globe. As the company looks to continue to diversify its offerings and create new revenue streams, they have started 'dabbling' in interior design. Much like this landmark deal from UBS, companies are able to work with the "Powered by We" team to design a dream office experience for its employees [Link to article].

Weekly assignments
BUT
a lot of flexibility

• 4 of 8 weeks
• find examples

Please find other examples where concepts from this week's text and lecture are prevalent in service-oriented businesses that you use and are familiar with from your everyday life.”
Real Use Case: Point Matrix

Goal: “I’d like students to do something close to the equivalent of 1 post and 2 comments on 4 of the 8 topics I’ll suggest each week”

Earning Points
- Creating a new Pin with a minimum of 40 words earns 50 points.
- Adding a new Comment with a minimum of 40 words earns 20 points.
- Upvoting a Comment or Pin (Like or Love) earns author 5 points.
- Receiving an Instructor Badge earns 0 points.
- Receiving a Comment on a Pin will earn Pin author 5 points.
- 100% participation achieved after earning 400 points (passed back to gradesbook if enabled).

Weekly Point Maximum
- Enable weekly maximum point setting

Weekly Maximum Points 100 (Min 4 week(s) to meet 400 points.)
Starts at 08:00 EST | GMT -05:00 | America/New_York On Tuesday
### Real Use Case: Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Votes Given</th>
<th>Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>660</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>77</td>
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<tr>
<td>650</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>660</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>440</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>430</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>430</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>420</td>
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<td>305</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost 1/3 ($N = 11$) had at least 100 more points than required.

Over half got 30+ more points than required.

Only 3 did not get more than 75% of requirement.

Almost all did goal (4 pins & 8 comments).
Real Use Case: Student Feedback

I strongly prefer Yellowdig for course discussions
45%

I prefer Yellowdig for course discussions.
41%

I am indifferent.
14%

I prefer Blackboard for course discussions.
0%

I strongly prefer Blackboard for course discussions.
0%

22 votes - Final Result

I loved Yellowdig!

Yellowdig provided a very positive experience for me this term, and I am so happy I was able to use it! The term "online discussions" always provides a daunting image of posting on BBLearn and feeling that you have to respond to get points and that no one is really reading your posts. With Yellowdig, it felt like a real online social media platform where you were able to post and people weren’t faking their responses. I loved it and felt it was very easy to learn how to use the site.

Loved this platform way more than Blackboard Discussions. I felt that I was less restrained to writing a certain way to please my professor, rather I am able to fully engage with my peers. I also like that I can keep track of my participation points and see where I stand academically.

Yellowdig is the bomb dot com

To me, Yellowdig provides a much more creative atmosphere than any other discussion technologies I’ve used, such as BBLearn. Yellowdig feels more free and open. It is enjoyable being able to like and comment on people’s posts without it feeling too formal. I noticed that people are much more relaxed on here. Yellowdig feels more conversational than simply having to answer questions on a discussion board for the grade and have no feedback or responses on your posts. Also, I liked seeing the percentage I had for each week and watching my points increase. I think it made me more motivated to participate. Who agrees? :)

I definitely agree with the points increase. It was fun to watch my points go up and made it like a competition with myself, or a game, to see how many points I could get and aim for the max possible. I also like the laid back atmosphere and how you can like and engage with posts as well. This has been an enjoyable experience and even though class only met once a week, Yellowdig made me feel more connected with the class and my classmates because of the features that Yellowdig enabled.

Hard to say without having a side by side, but I will say that typically with classes I take in , the majority of mandatory course discussions are done at the last minute, 10 minutes before midnight, with minimal interaction with other people’s posts. On the contrary, with Yellowdig, I saw my peers submitting the assignments earlier and with more attention to detail (and maybe even effort). I know personally that I tend to do the bare minimum when it comes to course discussions, but in this class I actually enjoyed doing more than I had to at times. However, my overall taste for the content and the ability to post about what I wanted in a given category instead of reply to a specific prompt definitely helped too.

I enjoyed using #Yellowdig much more than BB Learn. I thought the application was easy to navigate and my favorite part was that it resembles social media a lot. That aspect helped me get a lot more out of discussions and I felt like I was actually immersed in the content produced by others, whereas on Blackboard I always feel I’m just trying to reach a character minimum or earn a grade. The only minor improvement I think could be made on Yellowdig is making it a little easier to differentiate between different boards. Sometimes I couldn’t tell where one topic ended and the next began.
Thank You!

Brian Verdine, Ph.D.
Learning and Academic Support Manager

Tyler Rohrbaugh
Head of Client Partnerships

Links:
- Website: yellowdig.com
- Orientation Sessions: yellowdig.com/our-philosophy/events
- Knowledge Base: help.yellowdig.com
- 1-minute Intro Vid: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWa49KghK1A

Client Partnerships:
tyler@yellowdig.com

Success Team:
clientsuccess@yellowdig.com

Evaluate Sessions and Win!
- Download and open OLC Conferences mobile app
- Navigate to specific session to evaluate
- Select “Evaluate Session” on session details screen (located under session type and track)
- Complete session evaluation*

*Each session evaluation completed (limited to one per session) = one contest entry
Five (5) $25 gift cards will be awarded to five (5) individuals
Must submit evals using the OLC Conferences mobile app or website