A Quick-Start Canvas Guide for the EEE User

Is this guide for you?

This guide is for instructors who want...
...to get started with Canvas.
...to reset their approach with a new course.
...to host content within Canvas as they did with EEE, but to teach in the classroom.

This guide is not for instructors who...
...are very experienced with Canvas.
...want to improve an existing Canvas course.
...want to use quizzes or other interactive tools to teach from their Canvas course.

Canvas is a next-generation learning management system with a lot of advanced functionality, but many instructors want to use Canvas for the same things that they used EEE: hosting course information like a syllabus and some readings, and keeping a gradebook. If that sounds like you, jump right in!

1. Create and find your Canvas course

The very first thing you'll need to do is create your Canvas course. To do that, visit a tool called EEE+ GrandCentral at https://grandcentral.eee.uci.edu. Login if needed, then click the + Create Canvas course space button. Follow the prompts to designate which course codes will be part of your Canvas course. It will be available within an hour.

There are many differences between Canvas and the EEE tools you’re used to, perhaps none bigger than the paradigm shift involved in moving from EEE to Canvas. Where previously you might have created only an EasyWebsite and a DropBox on EEE, when you create a Canvas course space all the tools Canvas provides are activated for it. That means a lot of stuff is ready to be used right away — a dizzying amount of options that this guide will help you cut through. After you’ve followed this guide and gotten familiar with the basics of Canvas through it, we encourage you to explore other things that Canvas offers, like quizzes, discussions, and more.

Once your course is created, you’ll see the option to “Go to course space” in EEE+ GrandCentral. Do that now, then go to step 2.

Above: Use GrandCentral to create your Canvas course.
Get oriented

Canvas and EEE don’t look much alike, so if you’re a long-time EEE user your first visit to your Canvas course is going to be disorienting. Let’s talk about the interface before moving on to setting up your course.

The course navigation menu — the one that has “Home” at the top and “Settings” down at the bottom — lets you get around within a particular course. We’ll use a little of this menu today, but at the end we’re going hide most of it from your students.

The leftmost menu — the one with the blue background — is what you’ll use to get around all of Canvas. For example, eventually you’ll use it to switch to another course, or to view your calendar. We won’t worry about this today.

Finally, this page presents icons and options related to Modules — these aren’t related to what we’ll be doing today. Let’s ignore them.

Click Files in the course navigation menu, then move on to the next step.

Upload your course files

Let’s get your files into Canvas so your students can access them. These could be readings, study guides, lecture slides, or essay prompts — anything you’d like to make available.

What we’re about to do will be even easier if you take a little time now to make sure you know where these files are on your computer.

Click the blue Upload button.

Your web browser should open a window where you can move around on your computer to wherever your course files are. You can select multiple files.

Depending on the number of files, and their size, the upload may take some time.

Next, we’ll get your syllabus into Canvas.

Click Syllabus in the course navigation menu, then move on to step 4.
The Canvas course we’re building will host some standard items: course files, grades, and the syllabus. Most instructors have typed their syllabus as a Word document or PDF. We’re going to bring the text of your syllabus into Canvas. Later, we’ll make it the first thing students see when they visit the course.

Click the **Edit** button.

This will lead to an empty text box with lots of buttons along the top. Some of these may look familiar from word processors you’ve used.

On your computer, open your syllabus document. Select all of it, then copy it. Return to Canvas and paste your syllabus into the empty text box. Click **Update Syllabus**.

When the page reloads and your syllabus is displayed, look it over. In most cases, your syllabus will display with very little clean-up needed. Below we’ve highlighted a few ways to polish your syllabus.

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**Want to call attention to key areas of your syllabus?** Return to the Edit area. Then you can select any text in your syllabus and change its size, make it bold, and so on.

**Does your syllabus mention any of the files you added in Step 2?** You can turn those mentions into links with just a few clicks. See below.

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**Course Syllabus**

- **Course readings:**
  - Thursday, Sept 23: Introduction: What is an empire?
  - Week 1: The American Thinker: The Empire Returns?
  - Week 2: Tuesday, October 5: Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.

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**Left:** In the edit area, highlight any text, then click the Files tab in the **content selector** on the right. Click any file name to automatically change that text into a link to that file!
5 Make your syllabus the home page

If your students were to look at your Canvas course right now (they can’t yet), they’d see the empty Modules area you saw back when we got oriented in Step 2. Let’s change that so that your syllabus is the first thing they’ll see instead.

Click **Home** in the course navigation menu. You’ll notice that you’re now back in the Modules area — that’s because Modules is the home page of any new Canvas course space by default.

Click **Choose Home Page** on the right side.

A pop-up box will ask what you’d like to designate as the home page. Click the radio button to the left of **Syllabus**, then click the blue **Save** button.

Now, when you click **Home** you’ll see the syllabus.

6 Create gradebook columns

If you want to give students grades in Canvas, this is for you. If not, skip to step 7.

In the EEE GradeBook, you created columns directly inside the tool. Not in Canvas. To add columns, just add graded items to your course.

We’ll go with adding a few **Assignments**, so click that item in the course navigation menu. Click **+ Assignment**, then give your new assignment a name (e.g., Exam or even something like Participation), a description in the big text box, a Points value, and a due date way down at the bottom.

If you want students to be able to submit this through Canvas — sort of like EEE DropBox — keep the **Submission Type** as Online. Otherwise, change it to On Paper. For now you can ignore the other configuration options. Click the **Save & Publish** button so that students will be able to see the assignment.

Repeat the above for as many columns as you want in the gradebook. Once done, click **Grades** again.

Finally, in EEE GradeBook, students didn’t receive scores until you distributed them, but in Canvas scores are distributed to students automatically unless you mute the assignment before you start entering grades. The inset above shows how to do that.
When students view your Canvas course, they'll see a lot of what you can see. Students have their own course navigation menu, for example, though it will have fewer items because they won't see the items that are in gray text. As an aside, if you're ever curious about exactly how your course looks to students, click **Settings** and then **View as Student**.

Our first clean-up item is to hide more things from students’ view so that it’s clear to them which areas they should be visiting. Then we’ll publish your course so students can see it, and you’ll be done!

Click **Settings** in the course navigation menu, then click the **Navigation** tab. Here, you'll notice that all the course navigation menu items are replicated in a grid. You can click and drag them to change their order if you’d like, but importantly you can also drag them to the grid below to hide them from students. Try this now — drag everything but Home, Assignments, Grades, and Files to the bottom section. Then click **Save**.

Next, let’s check for any broken links in your course. It’s unlikely that there are any, but it’s a good practice to check, and Canvas makes that very easy. Click **Settings**, then **Validate Links in Content** on the right side, then the blue **Validate Links** button. When the process finishes, you’ll hopefully be told “No unresponsive links found.” If not, and you’re unsure what to do, contact eee-support@uci.edu.

Finally, if this Canvas space meets your needs for this course in this quarter, it’s time to publish it so students can access it. Click **Home**, then locate the **Publish** button on the right. Click it, and you’re done — students will immediately get a link to this Canvas course space in the EEE course portal.

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**Interested in a one-on-one Canvas teaching consultation?**
Contact the Division of Teaching Excellence and Innovation at DTEIsupport@uci.edu

**Having trouble?**
Contact the Office of Information Technology’s EEE Support team for help at eee-support@uci.edu