



Paul J. Gutman Library

# Instructional Technology @ PhilaU

A Guide For Using Technology  
In The Classroom

## Bb Collaboration Tools Blackboard 6.3



Handout Created By:  
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## **Engaging Students in Group Discussion**

### **Require Participation**

When teaching an online course, the instructor should make participation a percentage of the grade. Set participation parameters by requiring students participate in a specific number of discussions and by letting them know what kind of content is expected (i.e. personal experiences, analysis, etc.). This will encourage students to be active and participate. The Instructor should grade on the quality of the students' participation in the discussion as well as quantity.

### **Form Learning Teams**

Divide the students into groups and ask them to introduce themselves in a discussion forum. This will substitute for the initial opportunity of meeting other students in a traditional classroom setting. They could share interests with each other as well as pictures of themselves. Ideally the students will bond encouraging each student do his or her share and engage in online discussions.

### **Make the Activity Interesting**

In a discussion forum spark students' interest by creating assignments that complement their interests and ambitions. If you have mature learners, allow them the freedom to pick their topic for projects and research assignments. If your students need more direction, have them choose from a list of topics or assign topics directly. Encourage group members to collaborate about ideas.

### **Don't Settle for Just an Opinion**

Have students justify why they feel strongly about their opinions by having them support their thoughts with sufficient data and explanation.

### **Structure the Activity**

Structure the conversation to be academically beneficial by giving students clear guidance on what is acceptable and what is not. Choose topics wisely. Topics should be organized around an academic theme that complements course objectives.

### **Optional a Hand-In Assignment**

Use written assignments to encourage application of knowledge. If needed, allow students to turn in a written assignment such as a case study, research

paper, problem solution or portfolio to demonstrate their understanding of course material. This gives students the opportunity to integrate and apply their knowledge from participation in group discussions.

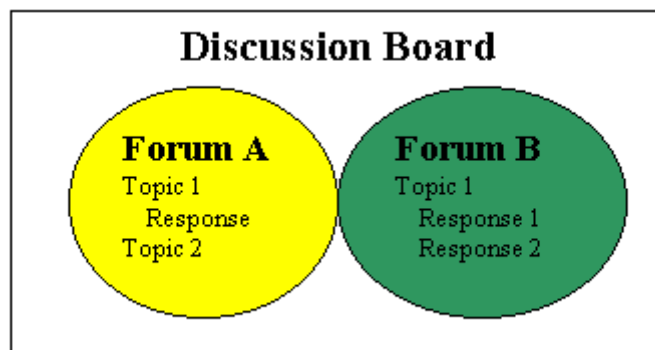
## Peer Grading

Let students know at the beginning of the course that their peers will help evaluate their participation. Have each student evaluate other group members as an incentive for each member to contribute to all group discussions. If students do not want to grade each other individually, then have them grade contributions made by other groups. This will enhance the learning experience for all of participants. Another possibility would be to have each student acknowledge one student from the group whose contributions they considered to be most helpful. This will encourage all students to provide comments.

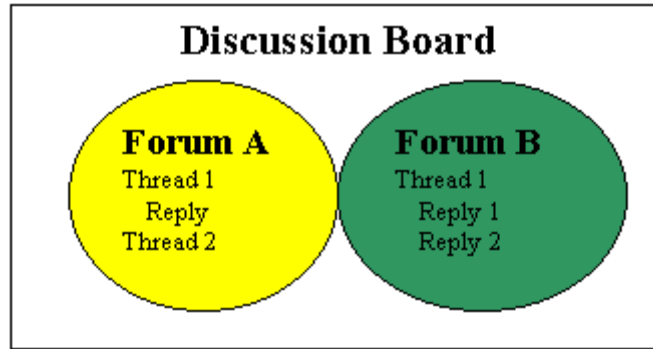
## Using the Discussion Boards

The Discussion Board is the area where whole class discussions will take place. Every member of the class will be able to read and respond to messages posted to the main discussion board. This feature is designed for asynchronous use. This means everyone does not have to be available at the same time to have a conversation. As the course proceeds, many different conversations will take place and they need to be organized so you can keep track of what's been said (and what needs to be said!)

Conversations are grouped and organized within a Forum. A forum can be thought of as an area or arena which holds the entire dialog surrounding a certain topic. Forums are created and posted to the discussion board by the instructor.



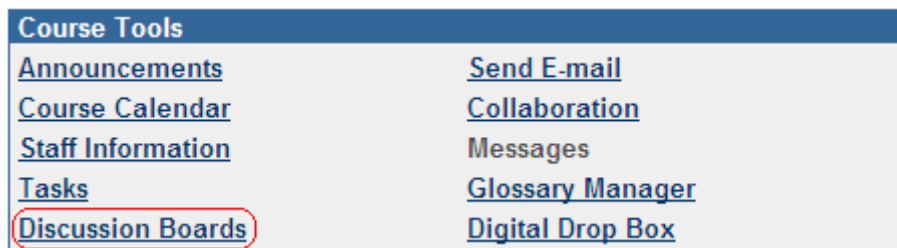
Within each forum, conversations are organized into topics or Threads and responses or Replies



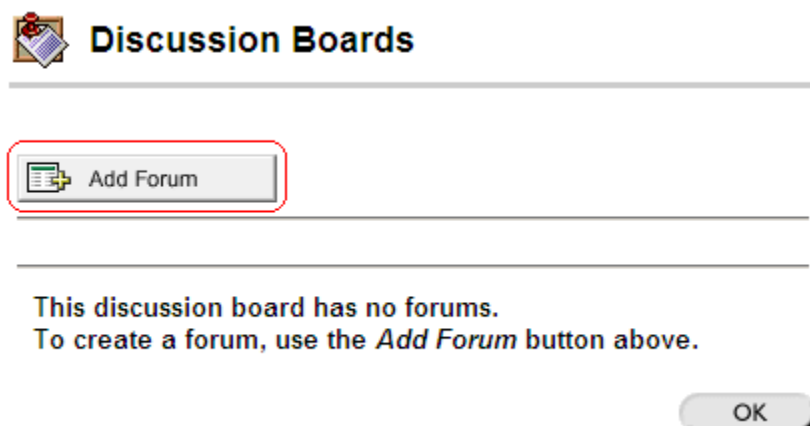
Notice the structure of the conversation in the diagram above. This hierarchical or threaded structure provides you with a visual representation of how each conversation has proceeded. For example in Forum A, Thread 1 was started before Thread 2. At this point, 1 reply has been posted to Thread 1 and no replies have been posted to Thread 2. In forum B, only one thread has been started but two replies have been posted.

## Setting up a discussion board on your Blackboard course

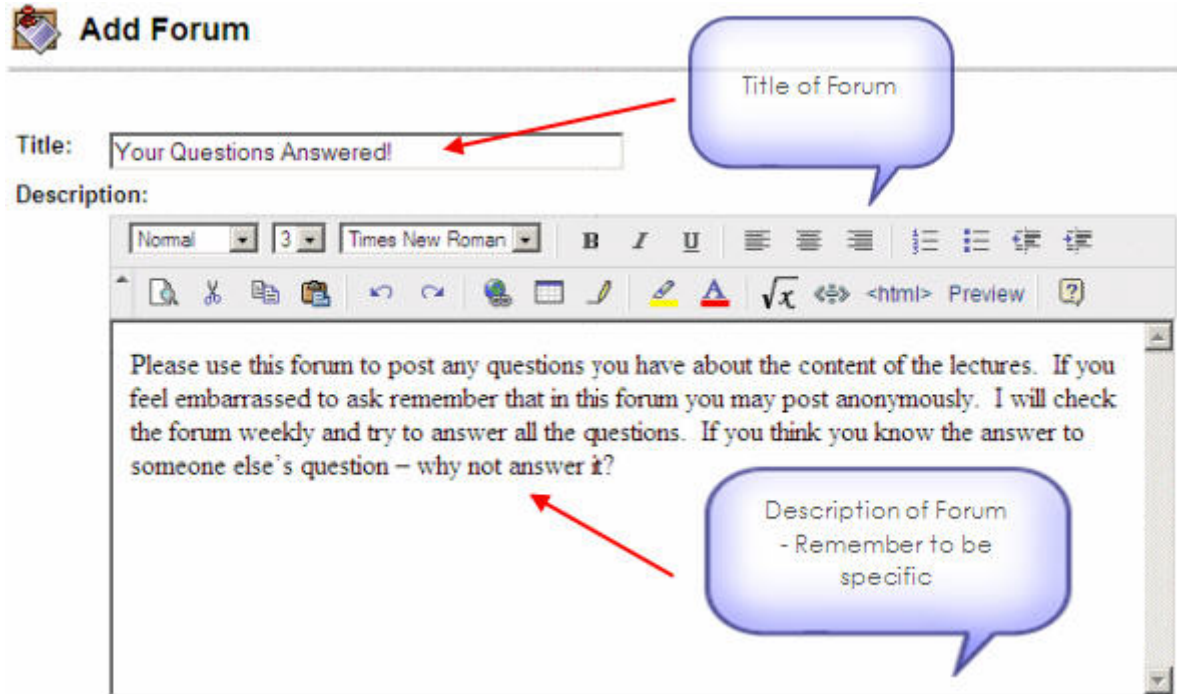
1. From your course's **Control Panel**, click on **Discussion Boards**.



2. You will arrive at the Discussion Boards page, usually this page lists any forums that you have created. When you first access it the page will be empty. Click on **Add Forum** to add a forum.



3. Enter a title for the forum. This should quickly convey what topic the forum will be used to discuss.
4. Enter a description for the forum. It is helpful to explain how the forum should be used, how regularly you yourself will check it and so on.



Next set the options according to your preference:

### Allow anonymous posts

Ticking this box will allow your students to choose to post anonymously if they wish.

### Allow author to edit message after posting

This allows the author of a message to go back and edit it later.

#### Forum Settings:

- Allow anonymous posts
- Allow author to edit message after posting
- Allow author to remove own posted messages
- Allow file attachments
- Allow new threads

### Allow author to remove own messages

This allows the author to remove their message later on. It is not recommended to select this option because if a post is removed the flow of a the thread will be disturbed. **If a user deletes their message any**

**messages which were in reply to the deleted message will also be deleted.**

### Allow file attachments

Setting this option will allow students to add attachments to their messages.

### Allow new threads

Turning on this setting allows students to start new threads (i.e. start new topics of conversation). It is recommended that you set this option otherwise your students will only be able to reply to threads that you create.

The forum user settings can be used to give students administrator rights to your forum. This is not recommended. Below is a description of the settings, taken from the Blackboard instructor manual.

**Normal**

Users are automatically assigned Normal settings. Changing a Forum Administrator's privileges to Normal will revoke their administrator settings.

**Admin**

Assigns forum administrator privileges to a selected user.

Permanent Forum Administrator – the person creating the forum, no one can take away these privileges.

**Forum User Settings:**

- m = Forum moderator privileges
- M = Permanent forum moderator
- b = Blocked Users

Forum Administrator privileges – assigned by the Permanent Forum Administrator. Instructors can create a forum and then enable another user to manage the forum through the Forum Administrator privileges.

**Block**

Blocks a user from posting to the Discussion Board forum. Only the Forum Administrator or the Permanent Forum Administrator can block a user.

**Unblock**

Unblocks a user that was formerly blocked from posting to the Discussion Board forum.

5. Click on **Submit** to create your Forum.
6. You will see your forum, note that you can change the order in which forums appear by clicking on the

drop down menu with the number within it to the left of the folder

description. You can go back and change the setup of the forum by clicking on the **Modify** button.

7. To enter the forum click on its name, this works in the same way as entering a content folder.

## Using Groups in Blackboard

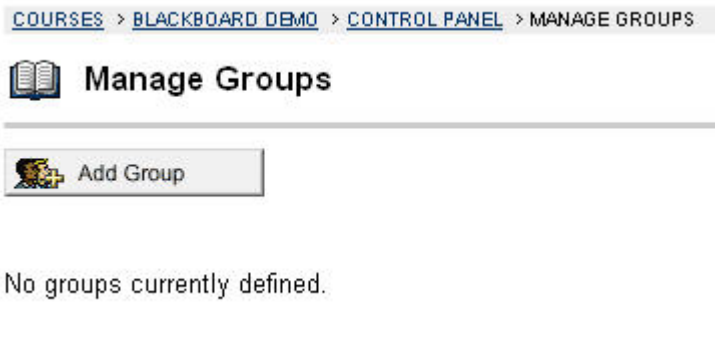
To support peer collaboration, instructors can use the Groups tool to form multiple groups of students. Each group can be given its own file exchange area, Discussion Board, Virtual Classroom and a Group Email tool to send messages to all group members. Students can belong to multiple groups simultaneously, so an instructor might assign different groups for different assignments.

### Enabling Groups in Your Course

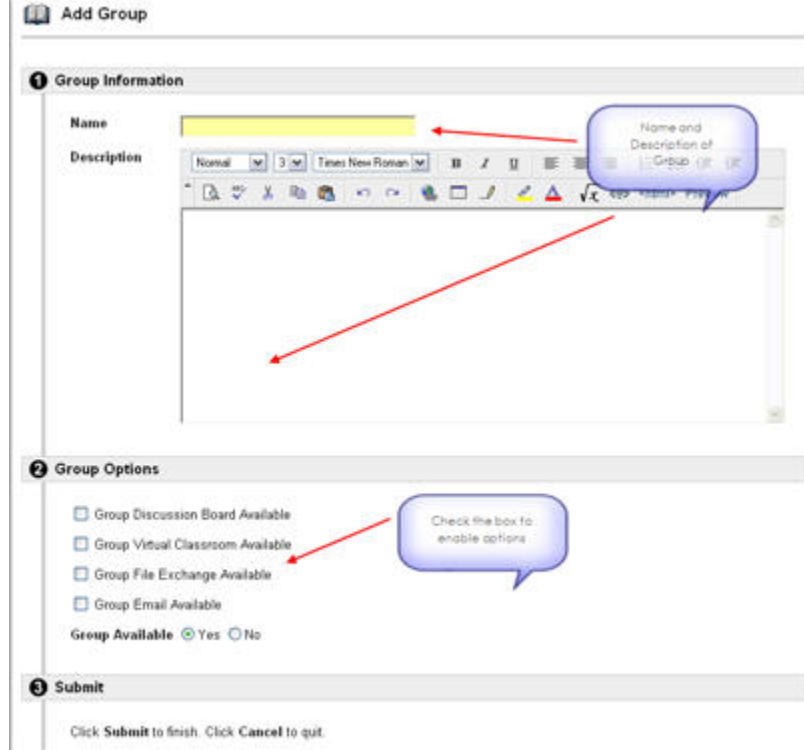
1. Begin by making sure you have access to the **Groups** area in Bb. To do so follow the directions below.
2. Click on **Control Panel**.
3. Under **Course Options** click on **Manage Tools**.
4. Click **Tool Availability**.
  - a. Make sure that GROUPS is enabled by clicking in the **Available** checkbox.

### Developing a Group in Blackboard

1. Click on the CONTROL PANEL to create a Group.
2. Under USER MANAGEMENT, select **Manage Groups**.
3. Select **Add Group**.



4. Type in a **Group Name and Description**. Be sure to select all that apply under **Group Options**.
5. Click **Submit**. Then click OK for your receipt.



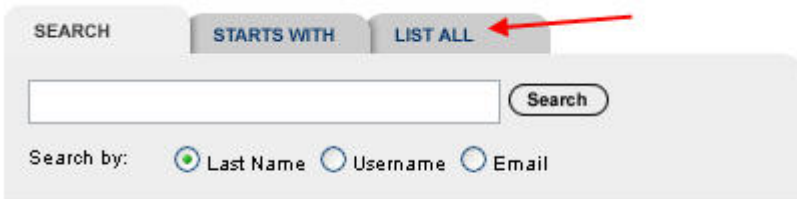
### Adding Users to a Group

1. You have now created a group. You will now need to enter users into the group.
2. Select **Modify**.



3. Select **Add Users to Group**.
4. Select the **List All** tab and then select **List All** again under the **Note**.

- ▶ **Group Properties**  
Set options for this Group.
- ▶ **Add Users to Group**  
Add users to the Group.
- ▶ **List Users in Group**  
List all the users in the Group.
- ▶ **Remove Users from Group**  
Remove users from the Group.



5. Select the users you would like to add to this group by clicking on the boxes next to their names.

6. Click **Submit**.

## Adding Discussion Forums and Other Tools to a Group

### Group Page: Group 1

Group Only Access  
For Each Option

▶ **Group Discussion Board**  
Use the Group Discussion Board for debates and conversations.

▶ **Collaboration**  
Participate in Collaboration Sessions.

▶ **File Exchange**  
Exchange files with group members.

▶ **Send Email**  
Send email to one or more group members.

▶ **Group Members**

Name	Email
Test Test	

1. Go back to the course in order to add Discussion Forums for each group.
2. Click on the **Groups** button and a group that you just created.
  - a. Click on **Group Discussion Board**.
  - b. Select **Add Forum**.
  - c. Type in the title of

the discussion forum with a description.

d. Select the **properties** appropriate for your course and click **Submit**.

*Note: The discussion board works the same as the "whole-class" discussion board.*

*Note: The other options, **Collaboration**, **File Exchange (Digital Dropbox)** and **Email**, work the same as in "full class mode." If you have any questions, let me know.*

## Managing Collaboration Sessions

The Collaboration tools let you create and participate in real-time lessons and discussions with your students. There are two versions of the collaboration tool: the Virtual Classroom and the Lightweight Chat. The Virtual Classroom lets instructors and students browse the web, participate in question and answer sessions, and participate in chats. The Lightweight Chat only features the Chat tool. Both collaboration tools give you the ability to record archives that can be made available to students.

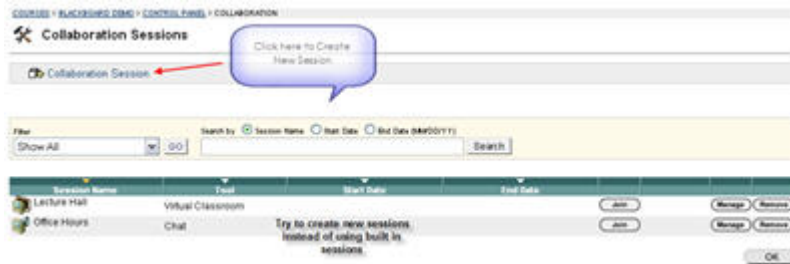
## Creating Collaboration Sessions

Unlike past versions of Blackboard, the collaboration tools are no longer only available in a fixed area of the classroom. Instead, they are organized in sessions that you create, and can have names and dates of availability. By default, two

collaboration sessions are created when your course is created—one is the “Lecture Hall” session, which uses the Virtual Classroom tool, and the other is the “Office Hours” session, which uses the Lightweight Chat tool. To create more sessions:

From the Control Panel:

1. Click the **Collaboration** link in the **Course Tools** box on the left.
2. Click the **Create Collaboration Session** button.



3. Enter a name for your session in the **Session Name** field.
4. In the **Schedule Availability** area, select the dates of availability for your session.
5. In the Collaboration Tool area, select either Virtual Classroom or Lightweight Chat.
6. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the Submit button.

**Add Collaboration Session**

Type the Name of your Session.

**1 Session Name**  
 Session Name

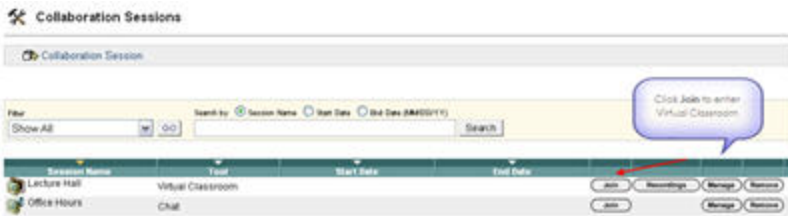
**2 Schedule Availability**  
 Select Dates of Availability  Start After  End After  
 Jun 12 2006 02:30 PM Jun 12 2006 02:30 PM  
 Available  Yes  No  
 Availability should be in place for just time you need session

**3 Collaboration Tool**  
 Choose tool for this Session  Virtual Classroom (more interactive) or Lightweight

**4 Submit**  
 Click **Submit** to finish. Click **Cancel** to quit.

## Using the Virtual Classroom

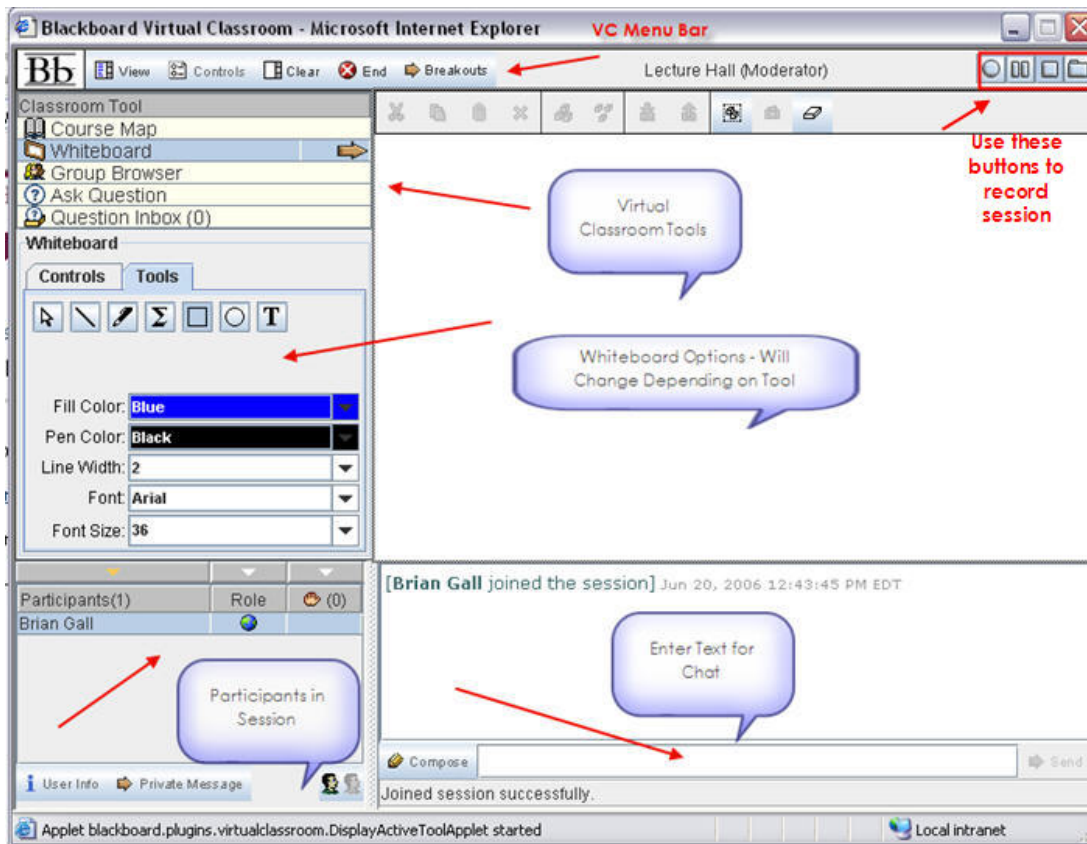
1. In the **Control Panel** area, on the left under **Course Tools**, select the **Collaboration** link.
2. On the **Collaboration Sessions** page, to the right of the Session Name, click on the **Join** button to enter the **Virtual Classroom** chat session.



*Note: You need to have Java 1.5 installed on your system to properly run the Virtual Classroom. If you do not, go to <http://www.java.com> for the free download.*

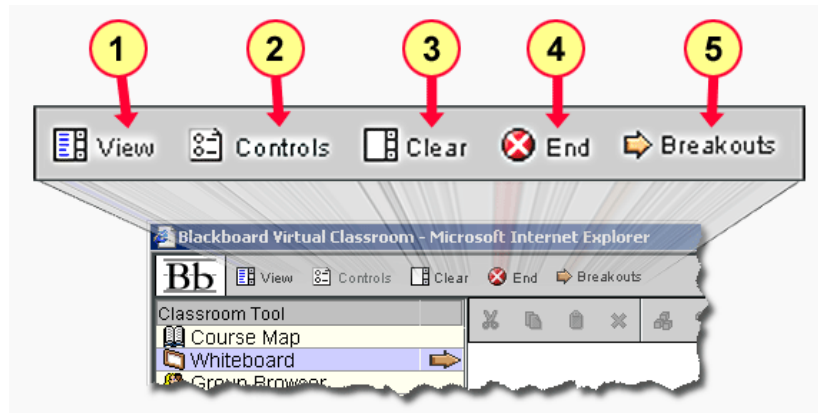
*Also, if you have a pop-up blocker installed in your system, hold the **Ctrl** button down when you click to **Join** the session.*

You will see this screen when you join the Virtual Classroom:



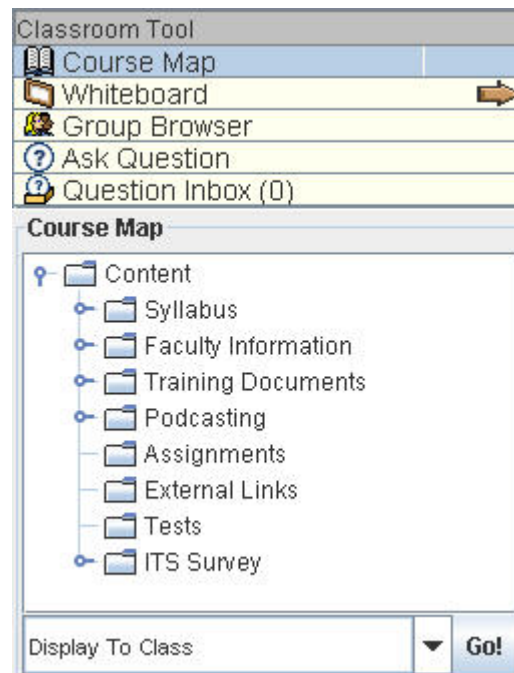
## Virtual Classroom Menu Bar

1. **View** - Choose an option for viewing personal messages in the Virtual Classroom.
2. **Controls** - Select the features that are accessible to users during a session. There are two types of users:
  - o Active Users: Have access to almost all features.
  - o Passive Users: Have access to the Question feature.
3. **Clear** - Clear all information in the session display area.
4. **End** - End the session and expels all users.
5. **Breakouts** - Create a breakout room for a group of participants. Breakout sessions are not available from the Lightweight Chat.



## Virtual Classroom Tools

1. **Course Map** - Enables participants to browse and view the Course Contents while they are in a session.
2. **Whiteboard** - Enables participants to present several different types of material to the Virtual Classroom participants.
3. **Group Browser** - Enables participants to collaboratively browse the Web during a session.
4. **Ask Questions** - Enables participants to ask questions.
5. **Question Inbox** - Enables the Instructor to manage questions from the participants during a session.



*More screen shots on next page:*

Classroom Tool

- Course Map
- Whiteboard
- Group Browser
- Ask Question
- Question Inbox (0)

**Whiteboard**

Controls Tools

Fill Color: **Blue**

Pen Color: **Black**

Line Width: 2

Font: **Arial**

Font Size: **36**

Classroom Tool

- Course Map
- Whiteboard
- Group Browser
- Ask Question
- Question Inbox (0)

**Group Browser**

Enter Address:

Display To Class

Classroom Tool

- Course Map
- Whiteboard
- Group Browser
- Ask Question
- Question Inbox (0)

**Ask Question**

Enter Question:

Classroom Tool

- Course Map
- Whiteboard
- Group Browser
- Ask Question
- Question Inbox (1)

**Question Inbox**

Show unanswered only

From	
Brian Gall	<input type="button" value="Reply"/>

Question:

How do you use VC?

## Other Features of Virtual Classroom

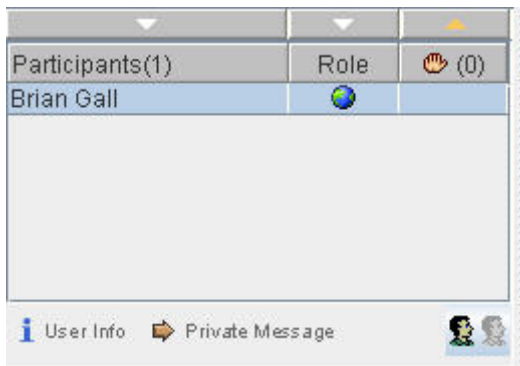
### Chat

1. To enter text, click in the text field beside **Compose**.
2. Enter your text.
3. Click **Send** to send the text to the rest of the people participating in the chat.



### Hand-Up and Private Message

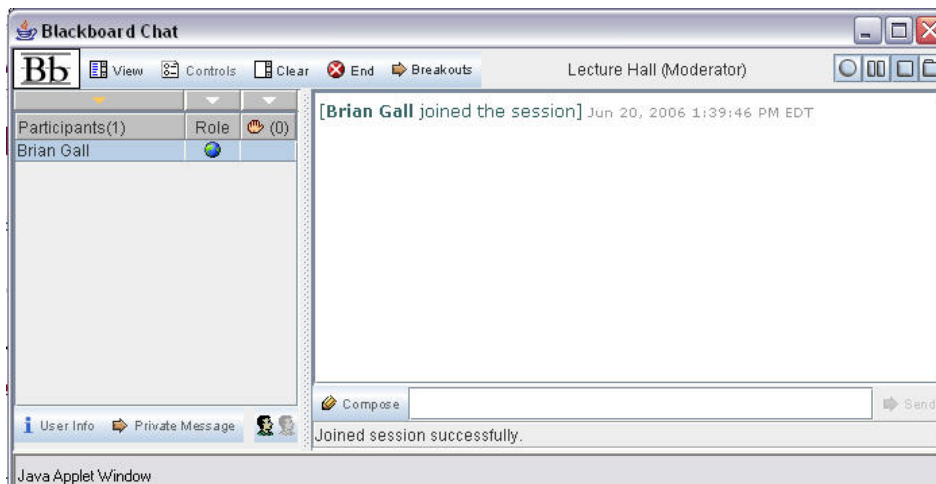
On the left hand side of the screen, you will see an area where you can private message students in the class and see who is asking you a question.



*Note: Disable this feature if you do not want your students "IM'ing" each other.*

### Lightweight Chat

This feature is the same type of program as the Virtual Classroom, but its sole purpose is to use as a class chat room. You can record these sessions just like a Virtual Classroom session, but you do not have access to the variety of tools.



## Filtering Collaboration Sessions

You can filter your view of collaboration sessions to see all collaboration sessions, collaboration sessions that are currently open (can be joined), collaboration sessions that have archives, or collaboration sessions that will be available in the future.

From the Control Panel:

1. Click the **Collaboration** link in the **Course Tools** box on the left.
2. In the **Filter** area, select the appropriate choice from the drop-down menu:
  - a. **Show All**: displays all collaboration sessions.
  - b. **Open Rooms**: displays collaboration sessions that are currently available to join.

Filter

Search by  Session Name  Start Date  End Date (MM/DD/YY)

Show All

Show All  
Available Sessions  
Sessions with Recordings  
Future Sessions

Virtual Classroom

Office Hours Chat

- c. **Rooms With Archives**: displays all collaboration sessions for which you have recorded an archive.
  - d. **Rooms Available in the Future**: displays all collaboration sessions which have an availability date in the future.
3. Click the **Go** button.

**Q:** I set up a session to for the future, but students say they can't access it.

*Note: The Rooms Available in the Future option displays all collaboration sessions which have an availability date in the future, but does not check to see if they have been manually made unavailable. Thus, a session may appear in the Rooms Available in the Future list but not be automatically made available when the availability date is reached. By the same token, the Open Rooms filter looks only at availability dates. A session that is set to unavailable will be listed by the Open Rooms filter even though students may not access it (or even see that it exists). Oddly enough, you can only see whether a session is available from the "Manage Session" area (or by checking the Student View to see if the session appears for students).*