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Don't Yuck Anyone's Yum*: Using Google Drive and Moodle for Courses

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February 28, 2017March 2, 2017   Ariella Rotramel

In 2017, many faculty use an online platform to provide their students with course content and engage with them in or outside of the classroom. At Conn, we have two major ways to organize such work – Moodle and Google Drive. As I started to use Google Drive to organize my work from job applications and budgets to collaborating on conference proposals with colleagues across the country, I was drawn to it as a potential course platform. Its limits could serve my need for simplicity, and while there have been updates to Google Docs or Forms, I was able to get my approach to using these tools locked down quickly. For this post, I have been in conversation with colleagues to identify and share some key elements of Google Drive and Moodle, sharing what draws us to one option over another when considering 1) student communication, 2) organizing content, and 3) grading.

Student Communication
Online professor-student contact has become a regular part of class-related work, from updating students about an assignment or snowday plans to fielding questions about a reading. Sending out messages efficiently is easily handled by Moodle's quickmail function that sends a message to the entire class. Working with Google requires more set-up initially, but provides further flexibility. At the start of the semester, I set up a student e-mail list through Groups. One cheat is to use the mail students function on Camelweb to grab the set of e-mails. Once set up, I can have the ability to use Boomerang (http://www.boomeranggmail.com/) to send a message to students later or have a repeat message sent

their way. Other functions to explore on Moodle and Google Drive include chat functions, including chatting on a Google Document as students work through an assignment or collaborate on in-class research.

Organizing Content

With the advent of LMSs and websites, faculty now have the opportunity to organize course content in much more complex manner than a syllabus, texts or reader. With Moodle's sections, it is simple to create a readings section so students can easily find upcoming readings and download or print them easily. With Google Drive, it is possible to move or copy a folder's worth of readings for students to similarly access. I appreciate the ability to link readings in my syllabus (a shared Google Doc) either to a reading in a Google Folder or to the library's site to support the tracking of usage of our online journals. tudents or I set up folders and documents for collaboration or individual work throughout the course.

Grading

Moodle and Google offer distinctly different opportunities for grading-related work. Moodle's Assignment activity includes the ability to create rubrics for grading and the gradebook has a wide array of grade calculation functions, it also has a marking guide that you can use to set categories and provide comments. I prefer using a paper rubric that I either upload from my desktop or edit online for paper assessment. For exams, I create a spreadsheet rubric that I similarly edit and upload to my students' folders. These methods are more or less the same ones that I have used for ten years, allowing me to document and back up my grading process in case there are any points of contention. Moreover, if I find that I am spending too much time staring at my computer screen, I can print out rubrics and/or papers and grade by hand easily. For the semester's-worth of grading, I keep a spreadsheet with an attendance page and a total grade page that simply calculates the percentages I have given to different assignments. The limitation of this approach is that students are not able to keep tabs on what grades and attendance have been recorded for them over the course of the semester through the platform. The Moodle gradebook and Attendance modules offer functionality for those faculty who prefer for their grade records to be more transparent to students, including attendance, rather than asking students to track and calculate the value of their own assignments. Through Google, a professor could also use a shared grading spreadsheet with students that is updated throughout the semester if they wanted to provide similar transparency.

Overall, both platforms have something to offer faculty seeking to streamline their online engagement with students. A final factor that has drawn me to Google Drive is that it has value for students embarking on internships or post-graduation jobs, as they will have at least navigated for a semester this platform and learned how to use some of its key components. Meanwhile, as Moodle is our College-wide Learning Management System (LMS), utilizing this platform ensures that students have more ease accessing all materials from the first day of classes.

*"<u>I think it's a beautiful edict, on par at least with the Golden Rule, and it simply means that no one in that safe space should attack or tear down what brings joy to someone else and which also doesn't hurt anyone else. (http://www.dailykos.com/story/2013/9/15/1239015/-Don-t-Yuck-Our-Yum</u>)"

Thank you for input from Diane Creede, Jessica McCullough, Anthony Graesch, and Lyndsay Bratton!

<u>Google</u>, <u>Moodle</u>, <u>Productivity</u>, <u>Technology Fellows</u>, <u>Tools</u>

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