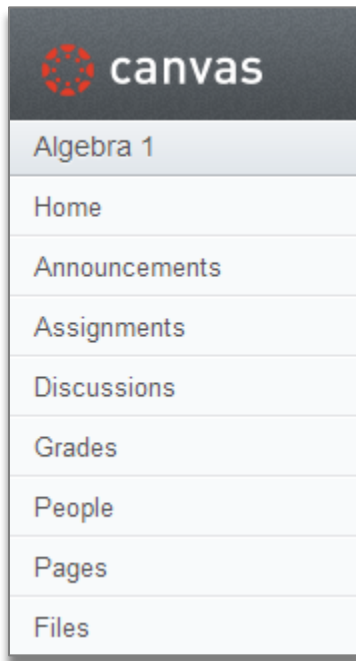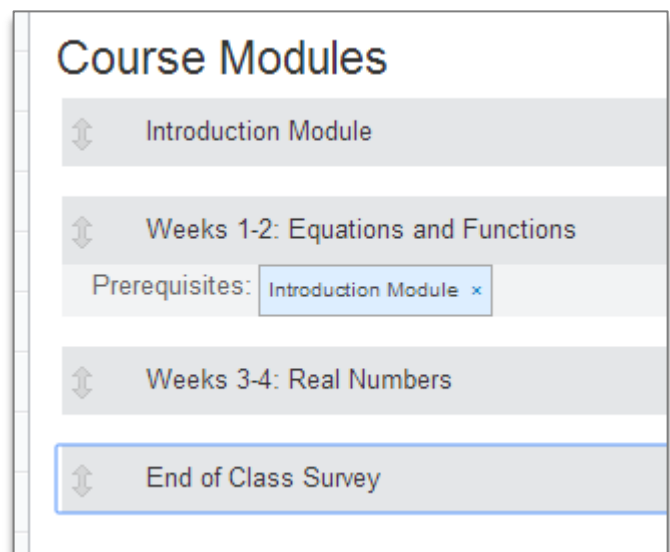# 5 Things for Instructors to Know About Canvas

Oregon State University is evaluating Canvas as a potential Learning Management System during Spring term 2014. Are you curious about Canvas? Here are five things to know:

1. **Canvas menu items are all visible by default**. It's a good idea to hide menu items if you won't have content in those areas. It simplifies the view and navigation for your students. Note that Canvas menu items cannot be renamed:
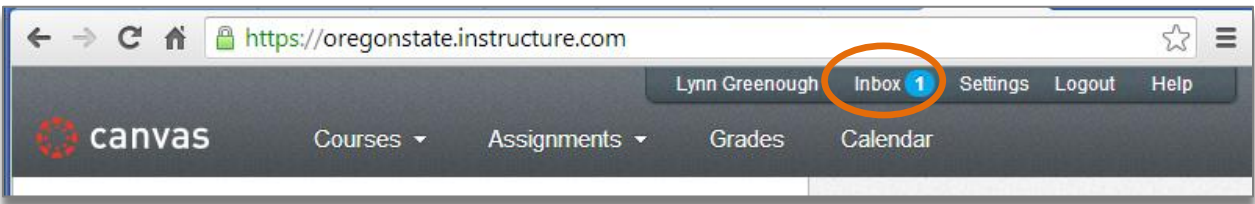

2. **Canvas uses modules to organize course content**. Instructors can create modules to organize course content into a sequence, or logical groupings, or types of resources – very much like creating a folder. Any type of learning item can be included in a module, including videos, assignments, documents, quizzes, discussion boards, and more. Learn more about modules here.

3. **All gradable items start as Assignments**. If you want to record grades in Canvas, start by creating an Assignment, even if students won't submit anything to Canvas. I.e., you may have created manual columns in Blackboard to track attendance, participation, extra credit, etc. In Canvas you will create an Assignment which will then enter a column in the Gradebook. [Learn more about Assignments here](#).

4. **Check your Inbox to see messages**. Canvas uses a messaging system called Conversations, which is located in the Inbox. Instructors and students can send messages other people in their courses.
   a. Access your Canvas Inbox from the link in the upper right corner any time you are logged in:

   b. You can set up your inbox to connect to a preferred email address. Until then, be sure to check the Inbox to see messages from students
   c. You can manage conversations (including archiving, deleting and subscribing to group conversations), and set your notification preferences. [Find out more here about options for handling communication in Canvas](#).

5. **Upload once; link often**. Whether you import course content from Blackboard or build up a Canvas course "from scratch," Canvas works on the principle of having "containers" for specific content types. Once you have created or uploaded files, images, tests assignments, discussions, etc. you can then add links to any of these items as you build modules.