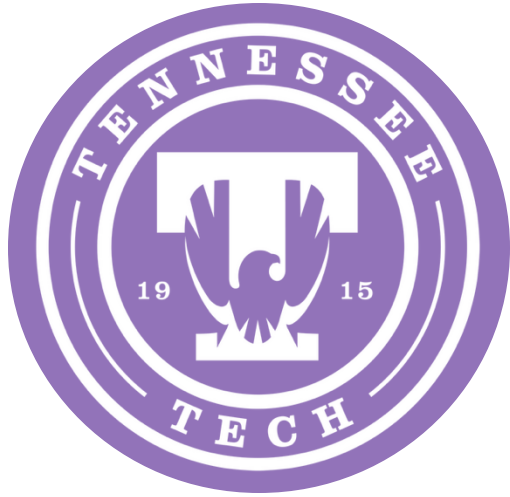




Make your Discussion Posts More Engaging

Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning
Tech Tuesday Workshop

Meet the Team



Heather Rippetoe

College of Education &
Human Sciences

Whitson-Hester School of
Nursing

College of Fine Arts



Mallory Matthews

College of Agriculture &
Human Ecology

College of Business

College of Emerging &
Integrative Studies



Lacy Means

College of
Arts & Sciences

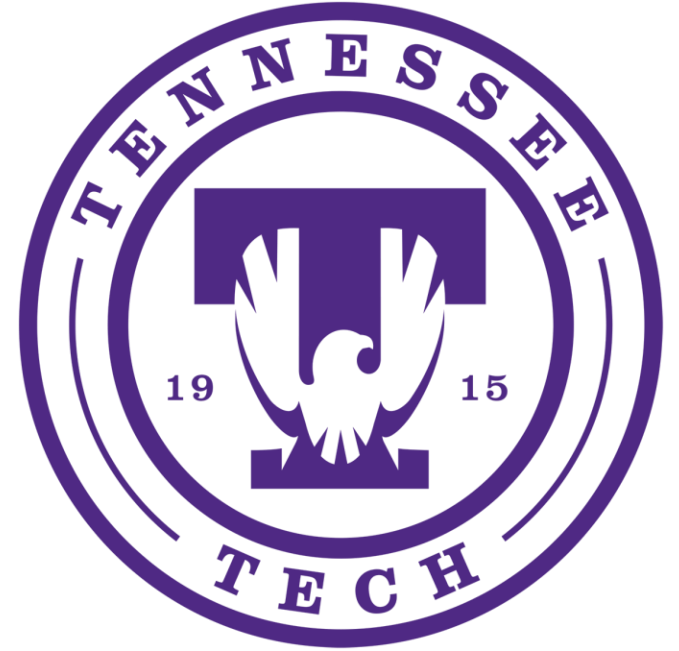


Carrie Roberson

College of
Engineering

Session Resources

- Session will be recorded.
- Slide deck will be shared.
- We will be in the chat to answer any questions.
- Book a consultation with a CITL member!



Agenda



Why Discussions?



Discussion vs Assignments



What Makes a Great Discussion Prompt?



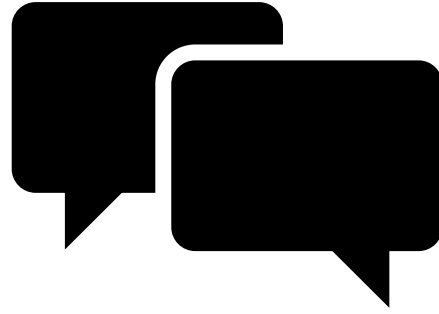
Examples



How AI Can Help

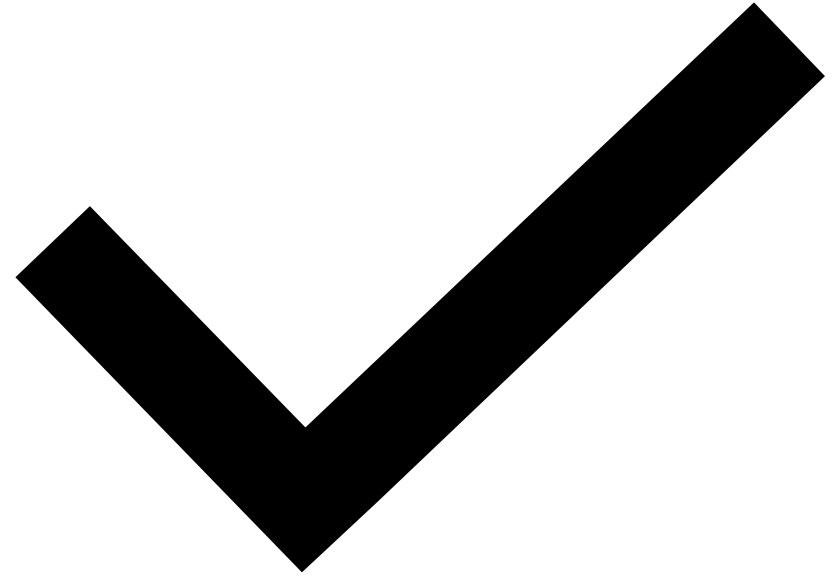


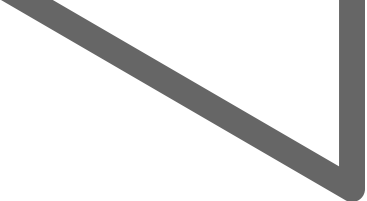
Key Takeaways



Poll Question:
Do you use Discussions, and if so, how do you
use them in your course?

Why
discussions?



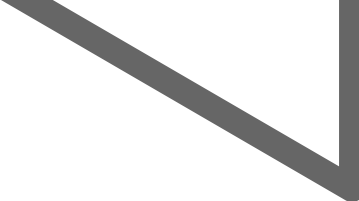


Benefits of Discussions

- Foster student-student interaction (Moore, 1989)
- Support co-creation of knowledge
- Build on previous knowledge; create new understandings and connections
- Avoid solitary course experience (correspondence course feeling)

Why not
discussions?





Common Pitfalls in Online Discussions

- Prompts that don't spark thinking
- No clear expectations for quality or interaction
- Poor timing or deadlines
- Discussions treated as homework, not dialogue
- Minimal or delayed instructor presence
- Everyone answering the same question
- Discussions are not aligned with learning objectives
- Lack of variety in format
- No feedback loop or closure
- Technical barriers / not visible in LMS

Characteristics of Effective Discussion Prompts

Characteristic	Description
Open-Ended	Invites multiple valid responses (no single “right” answer).
Relevant	Tied to current events, real-world practice, or student experiences.
Specific	Focused enough to guide responses and prevent vague answers.
Challenging, but Achievable	Requires application, comparison, or synthesis – not simple recall.
Interactive	Builds in a reason to read or respond to peers.
Link to Learning Objectives	Clearly aligns with what the module is teaching.

Discussion vs. Assignment

Assignment

- **Audience:** Instructor
- **Tone:** Formal / Academic
- **Goal:** Product
- **Feedback:** Summative
- **Instructor Role:** Assess

Discussion

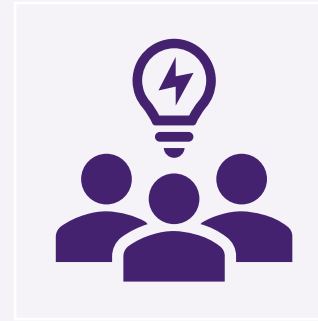
- **Audience:** Peers
- **Tone:** Conversational
- **Goal:** Process / Conversation
- **Feedback:** Formative
- **Instructor Role:** Facilitate

Ask: Is it an Assignment or a Discussion?



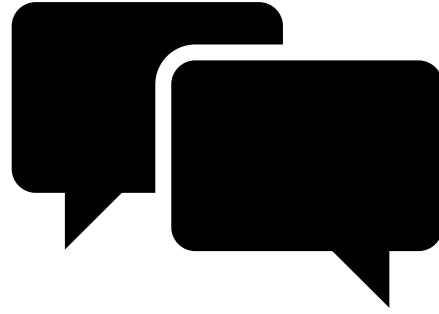
It's an assignment if...

There's only one post or product
It's read solely by the instructor
It doesn't require interaction



It's a discussion if...

Students engage with each other's ideas
It's conversational or reflective in tone
The prompt invites multiple valid responses



Poll Question:

What role do you play in your course's discussions—facilitator, participant, observer, or other?

What Makes a Good Discussion Prompt?

Purpose

- Define why students are responding (apply a concept, compare perspectives, etc.)
- What learning goal or concept do you want students to explore?
- Gives direction

Connection

- Link the task to something authentic—students' experiences, media, or case studies
- How can students connect the concept to something meaningful or familiar?
- Gives meaning

Action

- What should students do in the discussion?
- How should they respond to peers or extend the idea?
- Drives interaction

Content Example

Topic	Threads	Posts		
Anemia  				
<u>Ends October 7</u>				
 Includes assessment.				
Nutritional anemias encompass a spectrum of pathophysiological mechanisms and micronutrient deficiencies, each with distinct biochemical profiles. The four primary types include iron-deficiency anemia, anemia of inflammation (also known as anemia of chronic disease), megaloblastic anemia, and pernicious anemia. For this discussion, craft a concise yet informative “elevator speech” (approximately 4--5 sentences per type) that synthesizes the key clinical features, underlying nutritional etiology, diagnostic markers, and implications for nutritional intervention for each anemia. Your response should reflect an integrative understanding of nutrient metabolism, systemic inflammation, and hematologic function.				
 Deadline: Friday, October 3, 2025				

★ Make sure to refer to the attached rubric to view points possible!

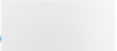
Graduate-level discussion posts should demonstrate critical thinking, evidence-based reasoning, and integration of course concepts. Use appropriate academic language, include citations (APA format), and maintain professional tone and grammar.

 Each discussion post should be at least one well-developed paragraph (approximately 10 or more sentences), and replies should further the conversation with original insight or thoughtful inquiry (at least 6 sentences).

- Original posts are due Fridays by 11:59 p.m.
- At least one peer reply is due by the following Tuesday at 11:59 p.m.

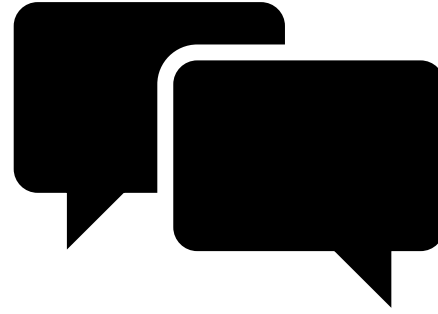
 **After You Post:** In your reply to a peer, I encourage you to use the **3C's and a Q** model. When responding, include at least one **compliment**, one **comment** about content, one **connection** to the course content, and one **question**.

Open-Ended Example

Topic	Threads
Support Forum   Hello,  Please use this discussion post to ask any course related questions you may have as you navigate through your modules. Also, if you see a question, you can help with, please feel free to do so. I will check in periodically to make sure that help is given, but the primary focus of this discussion post is for your class to have a place to give and receive help as needed.	13

Things to Consider

- Learning objective
- Ask yourself... is this really just an assignment?
- AI... keeping it relevant to students' lives helps cut back on unethical AI use.
- Whether to select that students should post before seeing?
- Discussion "traditions" - You must reply to two people, and post on Thursday and reply on Sunday.
- How to keep the emphasis on discussion
- Would a two-week turnaround increase the amount of time and effort students put into a discussion (and the amount of time you have to respond)?

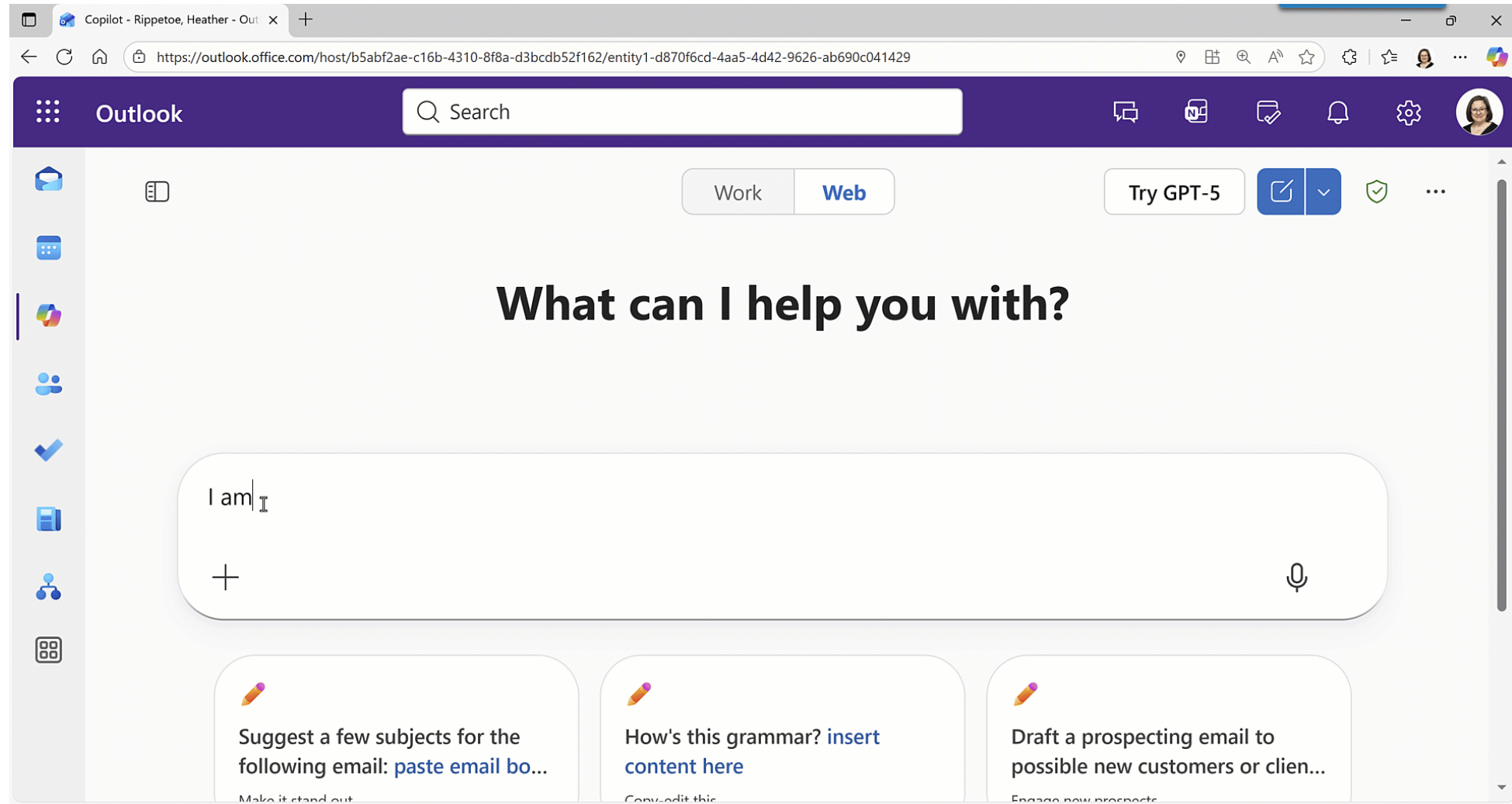


Poll Question:
Have you use AI to help with Discussion
activities?

How Can AI Help?

- Brainstorm suggestions
- Modify existing prompts
- Create case examples with detail
- Add real-world element(s)
- Clarify instructions and learning goals for students
- Generate rubrics to evaluate posts

More on AI –Live Demonstration



Key Takeaways

- A **discussion** is a shared space where learning happens through interaction.
- The best discussions feel like a **classroom conversation**, not a homework drop box.
- Consider **breaking traditional discussion** rules.
- Explore how AI can **level up your discussion game**.



Discussion Resources

- [Creating Discussions](#)
- [Grading Discussions](#)
- [iLearn Faculty Resources](#)



Thank
you!

Questions,
Comments,
Concerns?

[Feedback Survey](#)

Next Week's Session:
Get Your Ducks (& Turkeys) in a Row:
Prepping for Next Semester

[Register](#)