E-Racer – what is it?

Faculty Orientation

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About e-Racer

- e-Racer is a web-based learning management system, or LMS.
- e-Racer is a component of Jenzabar's Internet Campus Solution, which is a product used to generate a web site where members of a school's community — teachers, students, and others — can log in, communicate, and collaborate.

Key concepts

- For every course section that you teach, e-Racer contains a series of pages known collectively as a **course context.** The course context is a place where you can prepare materials for your students, and where students can interact with you and with one another. Students also use the course context to complete online assignments and review their grades.
- A course context is made up of **pages,** which host portlets. Each type of portlet is associated with a specific type of content or activity. For example, the Announcements portlet lets you post announcements, the Handouts portlet lets you upload handouts, and so on. e-Racer comes with several portlets designed to facilitate the learning process.
- The ability of a user to display pages and use portlets will vary depending on the **roles** to which that user is assigned. Each role is associated with different privileges, and you have the opportunity to fine-tune these privileges each time you manage permissions for a particular page or portlet.

How a teacher uses the course context

In general, you can use a course context to complete tasks such as the following:

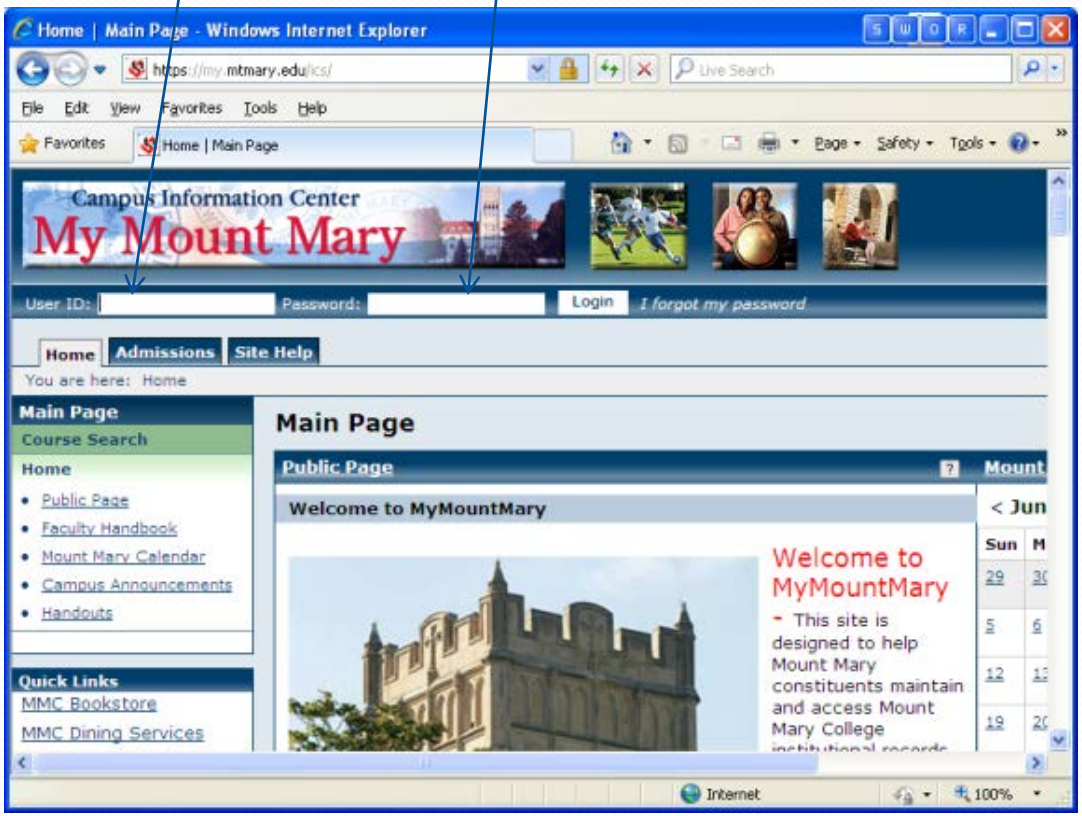
- **• Track students' attendance.**
- **• Configure the system to send warnings to students who are habitually late.**
- **• Assign a value to attendance that is automatically factored into students' midterm and final grades.**
- **• Post a list of readings.**
- **• Distribute handouts.**
- **• Start, participate in, and monitor discussions in forums and chatrooms.**
- **• Create assignments and tests for students to complete online.**
- **• Assign a value to assignments that students complete outside of the portal — such as giving an oral presentation or completing a lab.**
- **• Enter values for other criteria, such as participation and leadership, that you want to affect students' grades.**
- **• Post useful links.**
- **• Send e-mail to the entire course, or to selected students.**
- **• Review students' midterm and final grades and submit them to the your school's ERP system**

How to find my class in E-Racer?

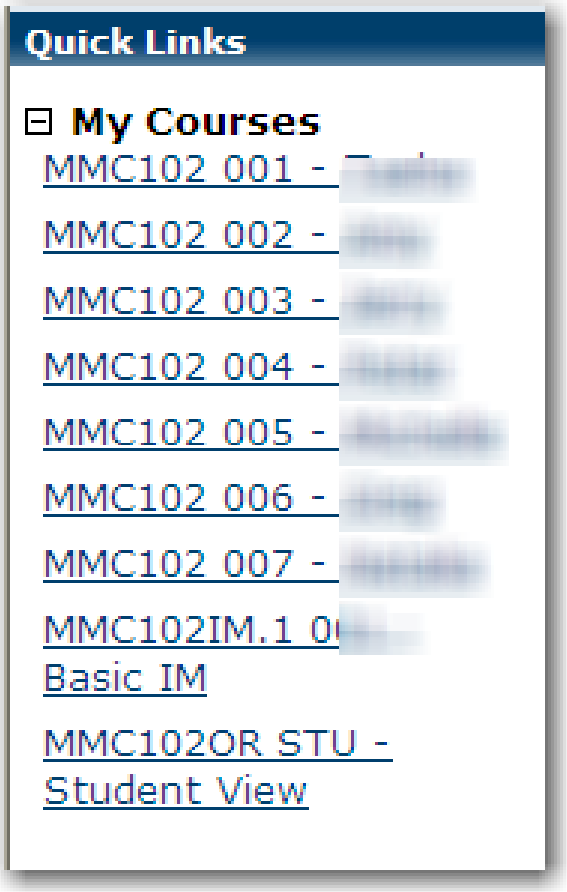
1. Connect to Mount Mary home page and click on My Mount Mary link

How to find my class in E-Racer?

2. Enter your ID and Password and click Login



Navigating to a course context



There are a few ways to navigate to the context for a course section

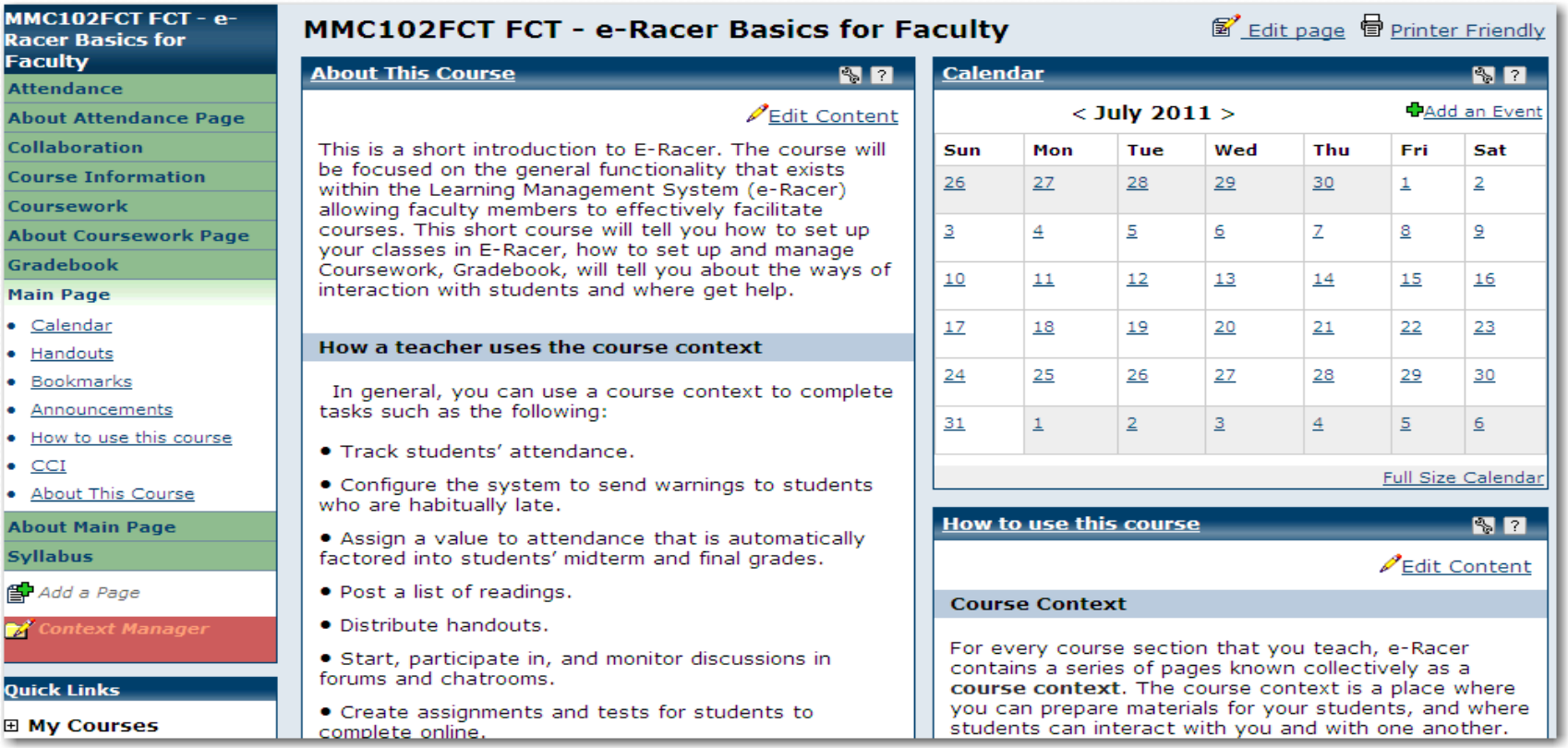
The simplest is through the Quick Links sidebar:

- Log in to the portal.
- In the **Quick Links** area of the sidebar at the left, expand the link labeled My Courses.
- The area expands to show links to all of your course sections.
- Click the section whose course context you want to display

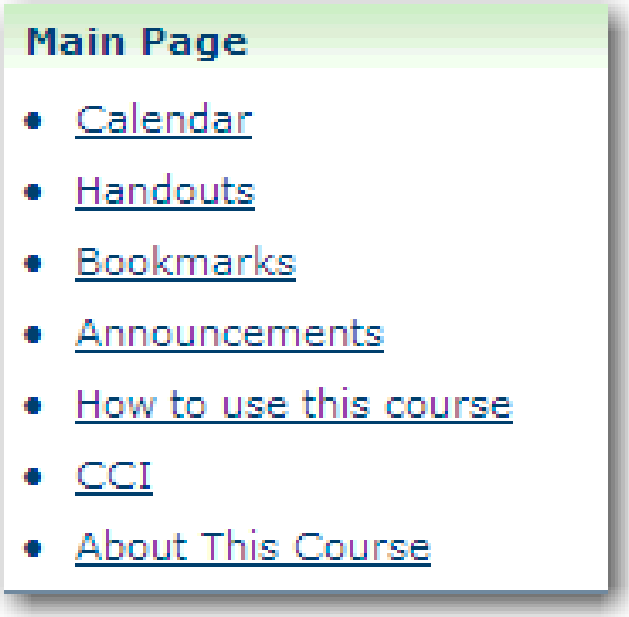
Understanding your course context

Main page

In the default layout, every course context has a **Main page,** which is the page that is automatically displayed when you first navigate to the context.



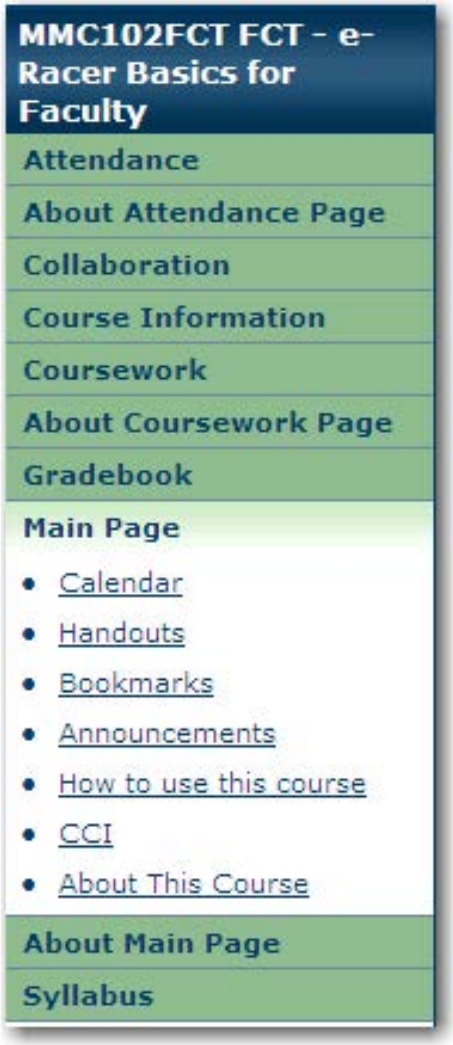
Portlets on the Main page



- • About This Course — where you can see the details about the course.
- • Announcements — where you will see your Announcements
- • Bookmarks — URLs, or bookmarks, that might be useful.
- • Calendar — the system creates a calendar for each of your course sections. Each course calendar automatically lists regularly scheduled meetings of the class. It may also has events added to the calendar and, when configured, dates when assignments are due.
- • Handouts — You can use the Handouts portlet to download files instructor posted for you

There might be other porlets on the Main page – see the screenshot

Other pages in the context



From the Main page — and from any page in the context — you can navigate to other pages using the sidebar on the left side of the screen. By default, the other pages in the context include the following:

- **Attendance**
- **Collaboration**
- **Course Information**
- **Coursework**
- **Gradebook**
- **Syllabus**

Each of these pages is listed in the sidebar on the left side of the screen. When you select one of the pages in the sidebar, the system displays that page and expands the sidebar to include a bulleted list of the portlets on that page.

You can modify your own context, and have different pages in your course context. However, the behavior of the portlets is always the same no matter what pages or tabs they are associated with.

Tools for maintaining your course context (1)

- **Tools for previewing your course context**

e-Racer includes a feature for previewing your entire course context as a member of any other role.

This feature, called **Student Emulation,** also lets you display and complete an online assignment as a student.

- **Navigational tools**

To assist you with navigating among all of your school's course contexts, e-Racer includes the following portlets:

- **Course Search** — You can use this portlet to search for details about any course sections that exist in the portal and to navigate to their contexts. This might be useful if you want to review details about sections taught by other faculty members.
- **All My Courses** — The All My Courses portlet offers a way for you to quickly navigate to your own course contexts.

Tools for maintaining your course context (2)

- **Tools that let you reuse and manage materials**

e-Racer includes a few tools that let you manage materials and reuse them in multiple course contexts.

- ***The File Cabinet***

Every member of the Faculty role has a **File Cabinet,** which you can use to store materials for use in future course sections. For example, you can store any of the following:

- **Online assignments, which you create in the Coursework portlet**
- **Bookmarks**
- **Handouts**
- **Readings**

Some of these items can also be created from within the File Cabinet portlet.

The File Cabinet is located on a page within your My Pages context.

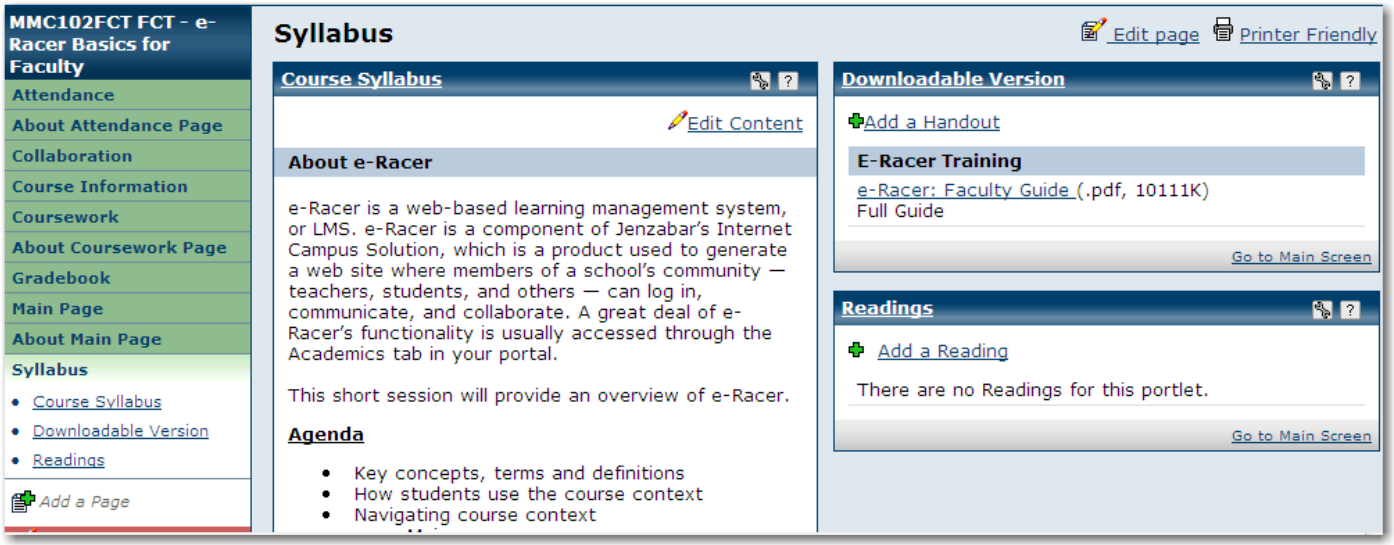
- ***Copy Course Materials***

If you teach the same course regularly, or if you teach similar courses, you may want to copy portlets from one course context to another. You can do this using the **Copy Course Materials** portlet, which you access from the Quick Links area of the sidebar. The idea behind this process is similar to the idea of saving something in your File Cabinet for later reuse, but with the Copy Course Materials portlet, you can copy whole portlets in bulk, along with any permissions you have defined for the portlets.

Syllabus

The Syllabus page hosts three portlets:

- **Course Syllabus — You can use this portlet to read the agenda for the course section.**
- **Downloadable Version —You can use this portlet to download the information listed in Course Syllabus portlet.**
- **Readings - this portlet host a list recommended and required readings. This list can include a link to an online bookstore, details about the appropriate edition, and whether or not the reading is required.**

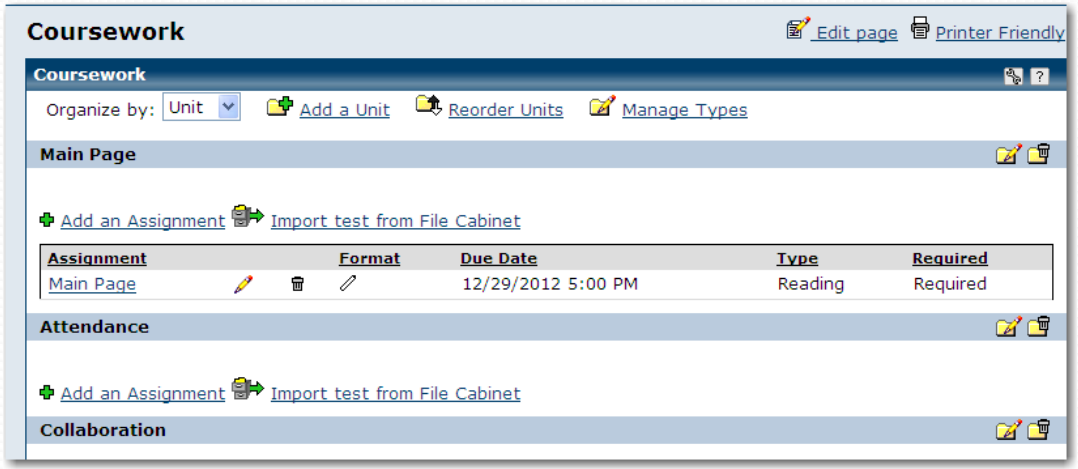


Coursework

e-Racer includes a unique instance of the Coursework portlet for each course section. This portlet is the place where students and teachers interact with assignments. It is used in the following ways:

- **For faculty members, the Coursework portlet is the place where you create and manage assignments**.
- **For students, the Coursework portlet is the place where they complete or turn in assignments, review their own work, and review feedback from teachers**.

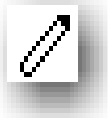
For both students and teachers, the default view of the Coursework portlet is essentially a list of assignments for the course section. The default view shown to faculty members (below) includes more options than the student view, but the views are similar.



Formats of a Coursework assignment

Online Test — These assignments are created and completed in the portal. You add content to online assignments using **Test Builder**, which is a component of the Coursework portlet.

Upload File — These assignments are completed outside the portal, but they are uploaded and turned in through the Coursework portlet. For example, this format might be used for a term paper that is completed in Microsoft Word and then transferred to the instructor through the portal.



Basic— This format is intended for assessments of the student that take place outside the portal. For example, you might use the offline format to track students' grades on an oral presentation. You could also use this format to track and record an overall grade for participation in the course.

You select a format when you create an assignment. Once the assignment is saved for the first time, the format cannot be changed.

Assignment Types

Each assignment is classified as a particular type. In general, the type is a label that helps students understand the nature of the assignment.

The types of assignments in the system:

- **Exam**
- **Homework**
- **Lab Report**
- **Paper**
- **Quiz**
- **Reading**
- **Test**
  - Instructor can also have other new types as appropriate.

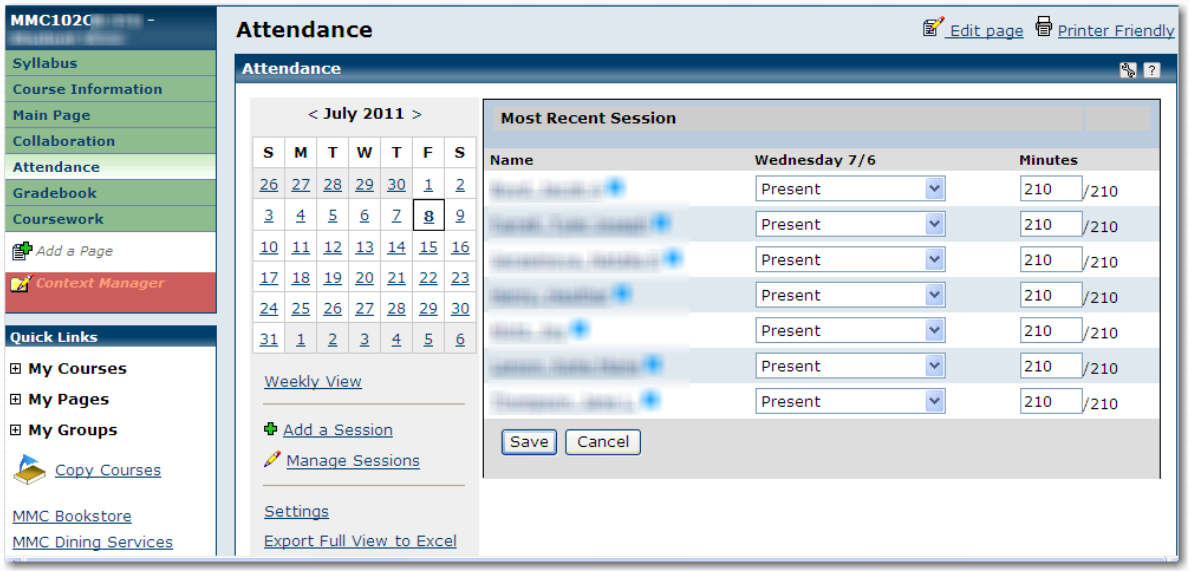
The type is completely independent of the assignment's format. That is, an exam could be an online assignment, an offline assignment, or a file-exchange assignment. Similarly, an online assignment could be a test, a lab report, or something else.

Attendance (1)

The Attendance portlet is used to track students' attendance. Data from the portlet is automatically imported into the Gradebook portlet, where you can use it to help determine students' midterm and final grades, if desired.

About the value of attendance

If you want attendance to affects students' midterm and final grades, you will make that configuration within the Gradebook portlet.



Attendance (2)

Giving attendance a value

You can configure your system so that attendance is equal to a specific value that will be used to determine the student's midterm and final grades. Depending on how you set up your Gradebook, this value could be a point value or a percentage of the total grade. With this system, you can penalize students for tardiness and unexcused absences.

Triggering automatic failure

In addition to — or instead of — the options described in "Giving attendance a value," you can set up your Gradebook so that students automatically fail the course after a certain number of unexcused absences. In this scenario, it doesn't matter how well the students do on any of their coursework. It also doesn't matter whether you set up attendance to have a relatively small value in relation to coursework (or any value). If students reach the limit of unexcused absences, they fail.

About sessions

Student attendance records are organized by **session.** A session is any scheduled meeting of the class. The Attendance portlet automatically includes a session for each regular class meeting (as determined by the schedule for the course section), and you can also manually add sessions. For example, you might manually add a session if you schedule a field trip or a review meeting outside the regular schedule.

If you have set up the course section so that attendance affects grades, note that by default, the credit that a student gets for attending a session is proportional to the duration of the session.

However, you can manually increase a session's value by increasing the minutes that it is worth, without changing the scheduled start and end times.

Attendance (3)

About the faculty view

The initial view of the Attendance portlet includes the following tools:

- **A calendar, which you can use to locate existing sessions or create new ones.**
- **Details on the most recent session, with each student's record for that session.**

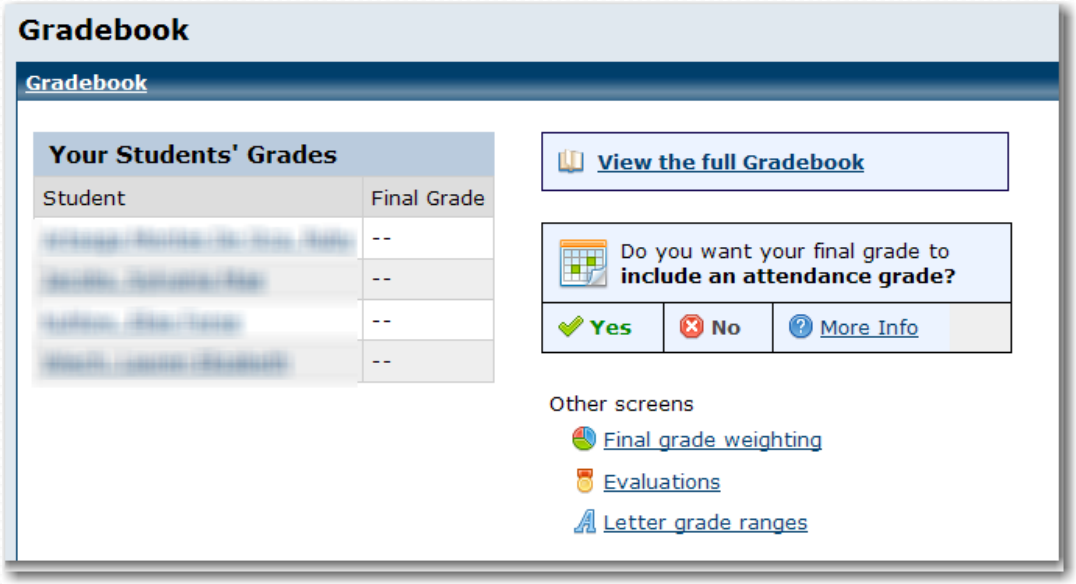
If you have not yet recorded attendance for that session, the system displays drop-down boxes that you can use to mark students present, absent, and so forth.

- **Links to screens for adding and managing sessions.**
- **A link for displaying settings for the portlet instance.**
- **A link to a tool for exporting attendance data to Microsoft Excel.**

If you are using the default template for course contexts, the Attendance page is read-only. This means you cannot remove the Attendance portlet, nor can you add additional portlets to the page.

Gradebook

- For faculty members, the Gradebook portlet is the place where you do the following:
- Specify how the system should automatically calculate students' midterm and final grades using data from the Coursework and Attendance portlets. This process, is known as configuring the Gradebook, is the primary subject of this chapter.
- Review each student's overall course grade, adjust it if necessary, and enter feedback for the student via his or her Gradesheet.
- Depending on your school's configuration, submit midterm and final grades to the ERP system.



Collaboration

The Collaboration page hosts three portlets.

- **Forums — The Forums portlet is used for collaborative discussions.**
- **Chat — The Chat portlet is an online chatroom.**
- **Coursemates — The Coursemates portlet is an online roster of all students and faculty associated with the course section.**

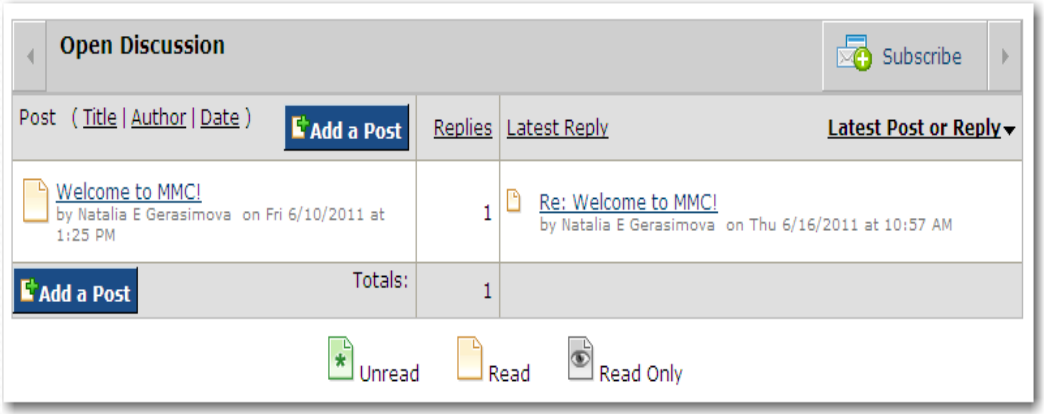
Forums

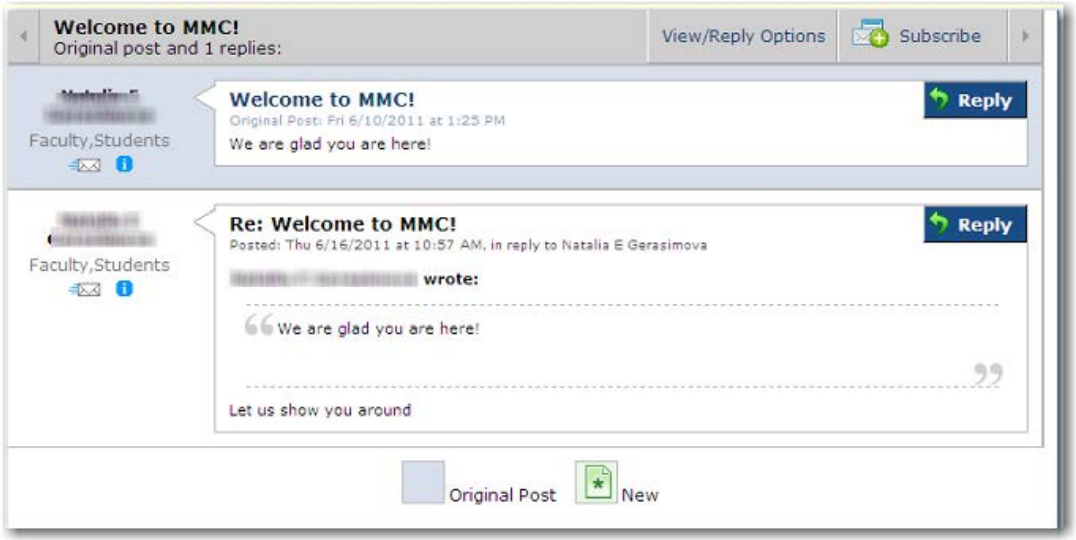
The Forums portlet lets students and other users engage in conversation. This portlet is ideal for classroom discussions and other types of collaboration.

Within a portlet instance, all conversation is organized into categories and sub-categories, which are called topics.

The default view of the Forums portlet shows a list of recent posts, with links to a few other features.

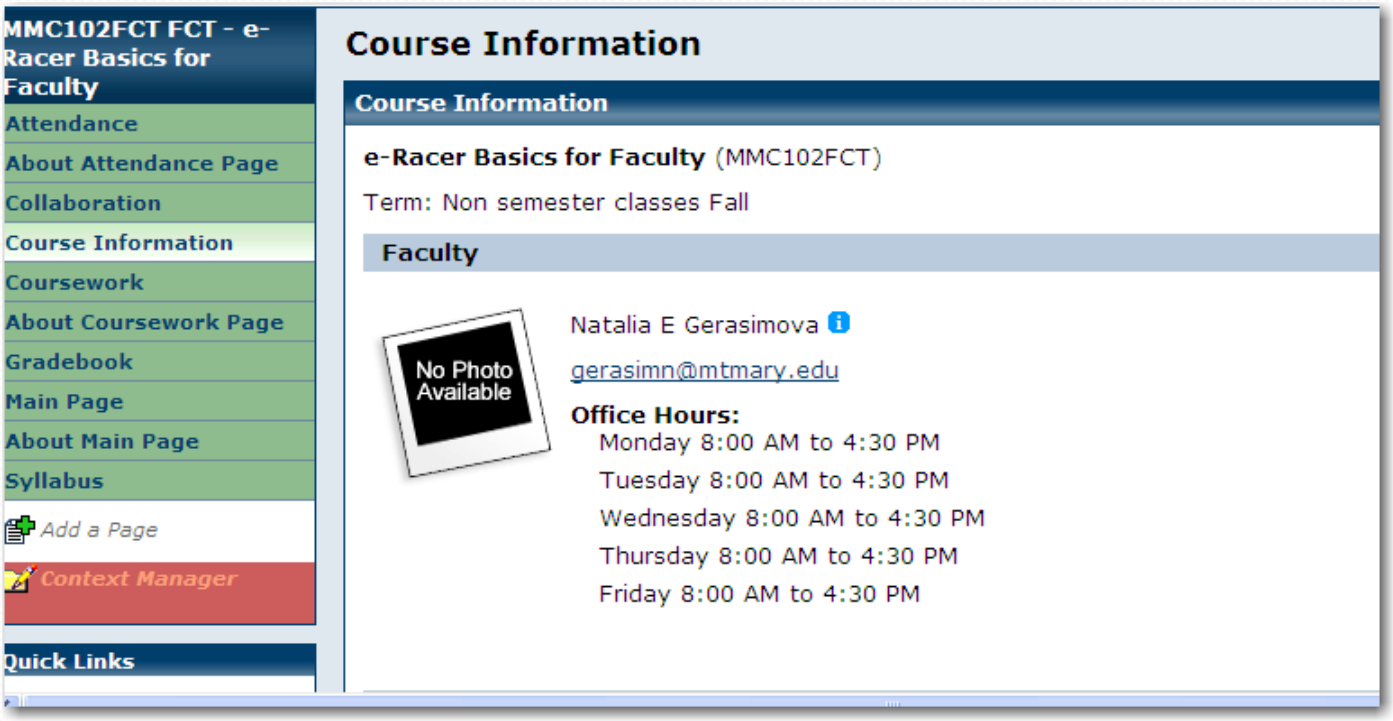
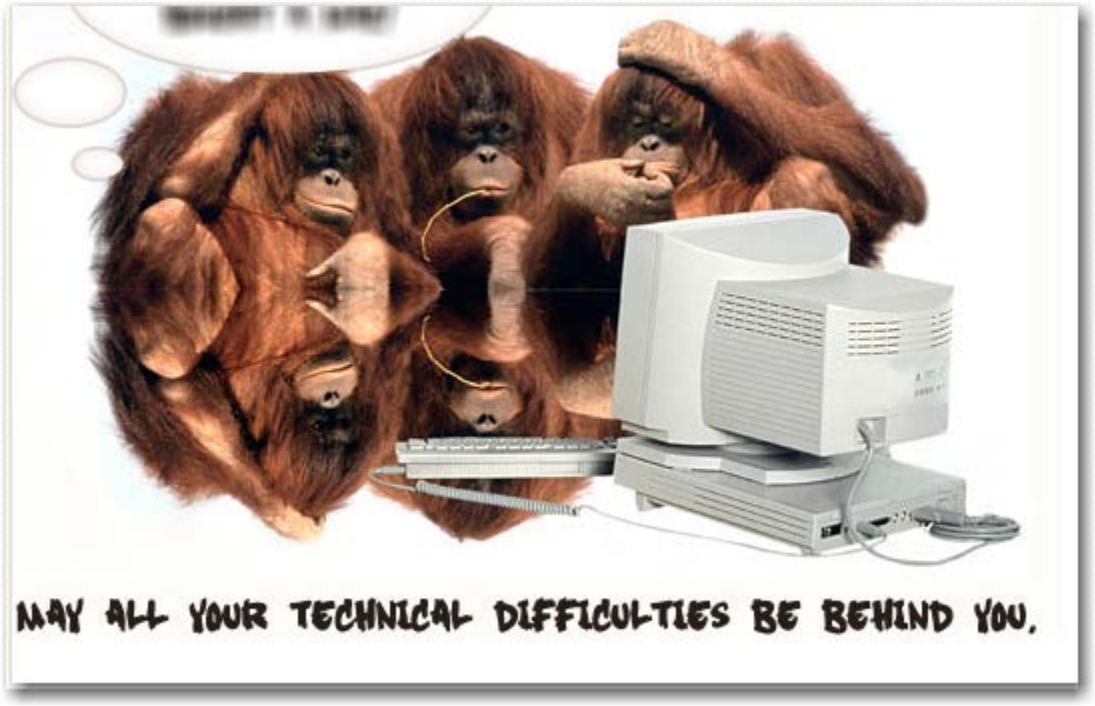
When a user first maximizes the portlet, the system displays a console that shows a few standard controls, a list of recent posts, and a summary of each category, with a list of each category's topics. This is the **Forum Home.**





Course Information

The Course Information portlet lists details about the course section and the person teaching it. This information is derived automatically from the system when the course context is created.



Questions?