

Using the Canvas System for Online Master Gardener Training

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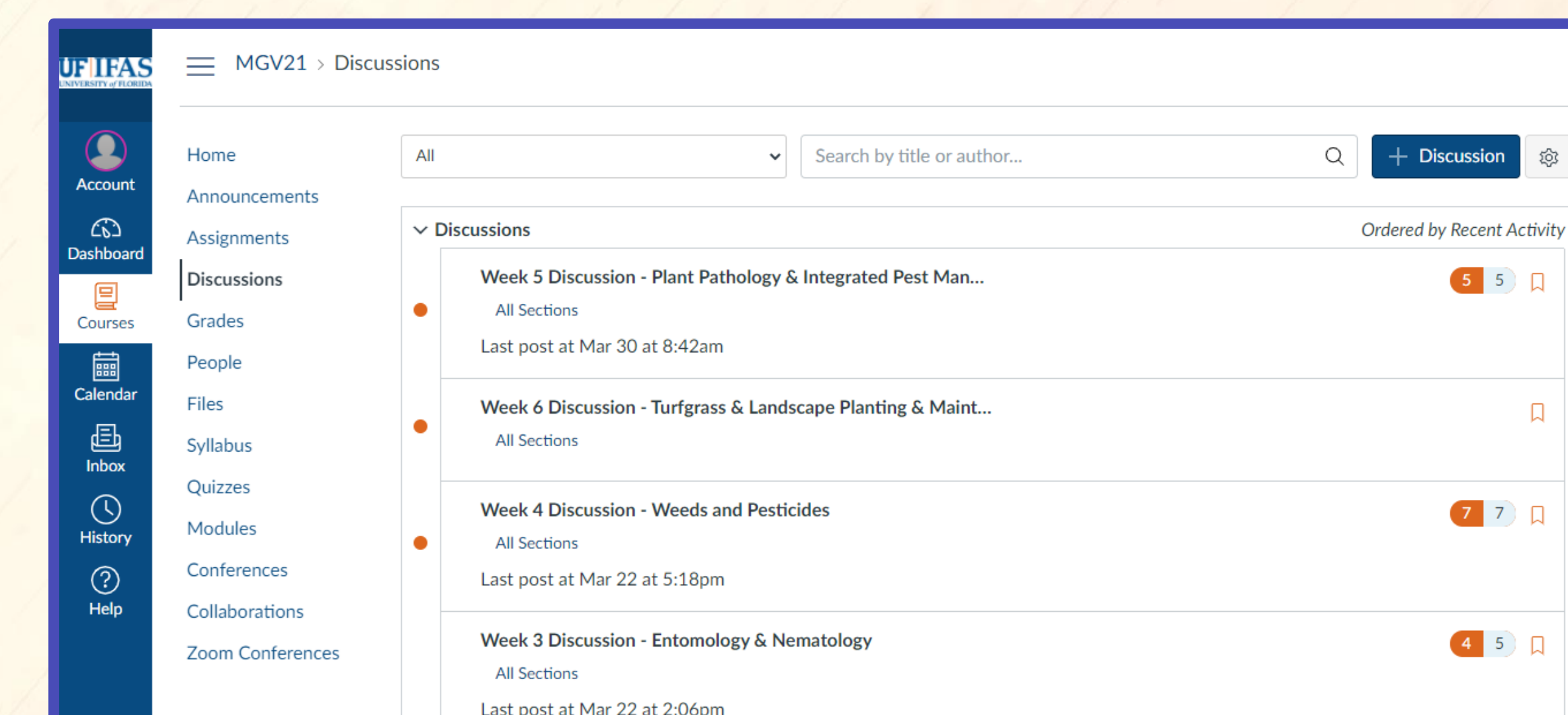


Program Objective and Goals

- To train new Master Gardener Volunteers to help serve UF/IFAS Extension and further its mission of education and outreach
- To prepare volunteers to interact with the public and answer questions on a variety of topics
- To introduce new volunteers to members of the Extension service who can be ongoing resources for their informational needs
- To prepare volunteers to use some of the technology they will need as they work with Extension
- To meet these goals in a safe and engaging manner despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis by using the Canvas system, a platform used for online classes

Methods

- The Canvas system was used to organize and engage new Master Gardener Volunteer trainees
- On Canvas, trainees were able to access the course syllabus, participate on weekly discussion boards, take quizzes, fill out evaluation surveys, view recorded presentations and the associated slideshows, and work on assignments such as plant identification lists
- Trainees attended weekly Zoom meetings, links for which were accessible through Canvas
- Meetings were held on Thursdays for a total of 14 weeks
- Each meeting consisted of a plant identification session and two presentations on various topics
- Volunteers received instruction from the agent and numerous guest speakers on a variety of topics, including:
 - Botany and plant propagation
 - Soils, plant nutrients, and fertilizers
 - Entomology and nematology
 - Pesticides and integrated pest management
 - Weeds and invasive plants
 - Plant pathology
 - Tufgrass and landscape design and maintenance
 - Landscape plant identification
 - Citrus and fruit crops
 - Wildlife habitat and dealing with nuisance wildlife
 - Composting
 - Water conservation and irrigation



Results

- Nine Master Gardener Volunteer trainees participated in the course
- Of those who responded to evaluation questionnaires:
 - 100% indicated knowledge was gained on each topic presented
 - 100% indicated that they would change their behavior based on the information they received
- Trainees were asked what behaviors they would change, and responses included:
 - Disinfecting tools while working with plants
 - Identifying insects before treating them as pests
 - Reading labels and safety information for pesticides before use
 - Adjusting plant fertilization schedules
- All preparations and materials used on Canvas is re-usable and able to be edited for future training classes

