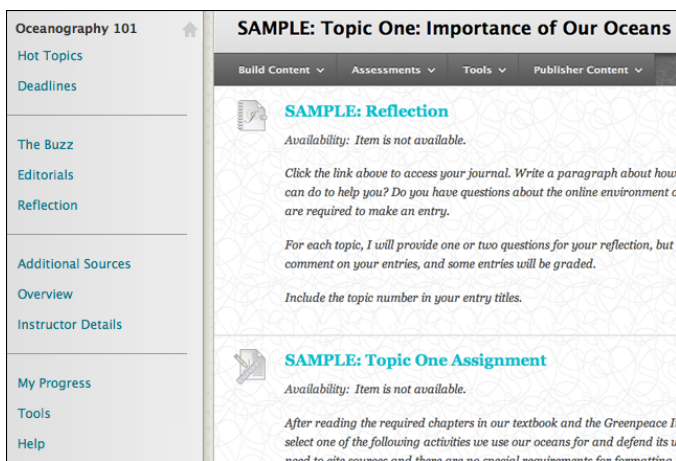# Course Structure: By Topic

Use the topic-based course structure to organize your course in self-contained segments.

Use **The Buzz** discussion forums for students to generate ideas and share resources. **Editorials** provide a space for students to blog about their insights and opinions and get feedback from peers. Students can use their **Reflection** journals to contemplate on their experiences and communicate privately with you.

This course structure works well for self-paced courses that allow students to select which topic to complete next as well as courses that use current events to demonstrate concepts.

What does the course menu look like?

Using your course menu

The following table describes the content areas and course tools included in the By Topic course structure.

Content Type	Description
Hot Topics	Use **Hot Topics** as your central instructor-designed content area. To provide your students with an easy-to-navigate and familiar environment, you can create folders for each topic or lesson. Include similar content, such as objectives, readings, instructions, assignments, and your lectures.
Deadlines	The customizable **Deadlines** module page provides students with an overview of current course information such as **Announcements**, **My Calendar**, **To Do**, **What's New**, and **My Tasks**.
The Buzz	You can use the **The Buzz** discussion forums for formal assignments, such as posing weekly questions related to the course topics, and for informal interactions, where students ask and respond to each other's questions. You can create gradable discussion forums and threads to assess students' participation and knowledge. After each topic, ask reflective questions to invoke conversation.

Content Type	Description
	What is the critical message of this topic? What would you do in this particular situation? How would you approach solving this problem?
Editorials	**Editorials** links to your course's individual blogs. Students can make a blog entry after each topic so they have a space to think through aspects of the material they find interesting or challenging. You can ask students to answer a specific question or allow them to react freely to course content. Students can extend classroom conversations by commenting on each other's blog entries. You can help them develop their thoughts by offering encouragement, more background information, and supplementary resources.
Reflection	**Reflection** links to your students' private journals. In their journal entries, ask students to comment on the topics and their experiences. Because this is private communication with you, students can receive feedback about their writing before it submitted as a graded assignment. They can also let you know how they feel the course is progressing. As you communicate with and get to know your students individually, they may feel more at ease sharing their thoughts with their classmates in the discussion forums and in their blogs.
Additional Sources	In the **Additional Sources** content area, you can share additional material so interested students can learn more. Help students expand on the topics presented by directing them to specific web articles and recommended reading. Students can also use these resources to find ideas for projects or papers.
Overview	In the **Overview** content area, provide materials that students can access throughout the semester. Include a syllabus or other basics, such as grading policies, a topic schedule, textbook information, and important dates.
Instructor Details	Create profiles for yourself, other instructors, teaching assistants, and guest lecturers participating in your course in **Instructor Details**. Include contact information such as email addresses, phone numbers, office hours, and location.
My Progress	Students can see the status of gradable items such as assignments, tests, blog entries, and discussion posts on their **My Grades** pages.
Tools	Give students access to all available course tools on a single page. Add commonly used course tools to the course menu for easy access.
Help	Blackboard Help contains searchable how-to information. Students in need of additional assistance should contact the institution's computing help desk.

Customize the course structure by renaming, removing, hiding, or adding content areas and links to tools.