

VASSAR moodle

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What is Moodle?

Moodle is an open source course management system renowned for its flexibility and customizability.

The Syllabus View

The default structure, organized by classes or topics, echoes the structure of many syllabi. This structure makes it easier for students to identify readings, assignments, and discussion topics that are current and upcoming, and to access those materials without any back and forth steps between schedules and directories.

The screenshot shows the Moodle interface for a course. On the left is a navigation sidebar with sections like 'Quickmail', 'Online Users', 'Activities', 'Search Forums', 'Administration', and 'Course categories'. The main content area is titled 'Topic outline' and displays a syllabus for 'Research Methods in Developmental Psychology' (Psychology 239) by Nicholas de Leeuw. It includes contact information, office hours, and a list of topics with dates and descriptions. The topics listed are:

- 1 1/22/09: Meet and Greet, Divide into small groups, Effective reading.
- 2 1/27/09: Begin Project 1: Verbal analysis of children's play dialogue. Content analysis papers: Camphuis, et al. (2008), Crabb & Bielawski (1994), Dyer, Shatz & Wellman (2000), Poling & Hupp (2008), Wang & Leichtman (2000), Verbal Analysis Forum, Content and verbal analysis articles.
- 3 1/29/09: Why study play? Nursery School orientation. Bjorkland (2007) Chapter 6: Play, Taking Play Seriously - link to NYT article, Taking Play Seriously - use if above link is broken.

Moodle at Vassar College

A moodle pilot program has been investigating moodle as an alternative to Blackboard. The faculty testers unanimously found moodle superior to blackboard and have recommended the campus switch to Moodle.

Flexible & Moddable

Setting up groups within the class is simple and easy, and sending e-mail just to a particular group is a snap. Changing enrollments is much easier than with Blackboard.

The screenshot shows the Moodle Groups management interface for 'PSYC-239-51-2009B'. It displays a list of groups on the left and the members of 'Project 1 Group 1' on the right. The groups listed are:

- Project 1 Group 1 (3)
- Project 1 Group 2 (3)
- Project 1 Group 3 (3)
- Project 1 Group 4 (3)
- Project 1 Group 5 (3)
- Project 2 group A (3)
- Project 2 group B (3)
- Project 2 group C (3)
- Project 2 group D (3)
- Project 2 group E (3)
- Project 2 group W (4)
- Project 2 group X (3)
- Project 2 group Y (3)
- Project 2 group Z (4)

The members of 'Project 1 Group 1' are:

- Amanda Batista
- Mallory Bram
- Molly Cahen

Buttons for group management are visible at the bottom: 'Edit group settings', 'Delete selected group', 'Create group', 'Auto-create groups', and 'Add/remove users'.

Moodle is an open-source system, which, among other benefits, enables users like Vassar to tailor it to their own needs by adding and removing specific modules and features or even designing new ones.

Easy to Use

It is very simple to upload documents for students to access, requiring significantly fewer keystrokes and clicks than in Blackboard. It is also very easy to replace an existing document with an updated version. For someone like me, who revises handouts and assignments every semester, this means that I can start with all or most of my documents already in place, and easily update them when the class comes nearer.