

Comparing Discussion Platforms for Student Engagement



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Nutrition 10 & 10V: Discoveries and Concepts in Nutrition

- Introductory 3-unit general education course
- NUT 10: Traditional in-person
 - >500 students per quarter
- NUT 10V: 100% online
 - ~700-900 students per quarter (+ UC Online)

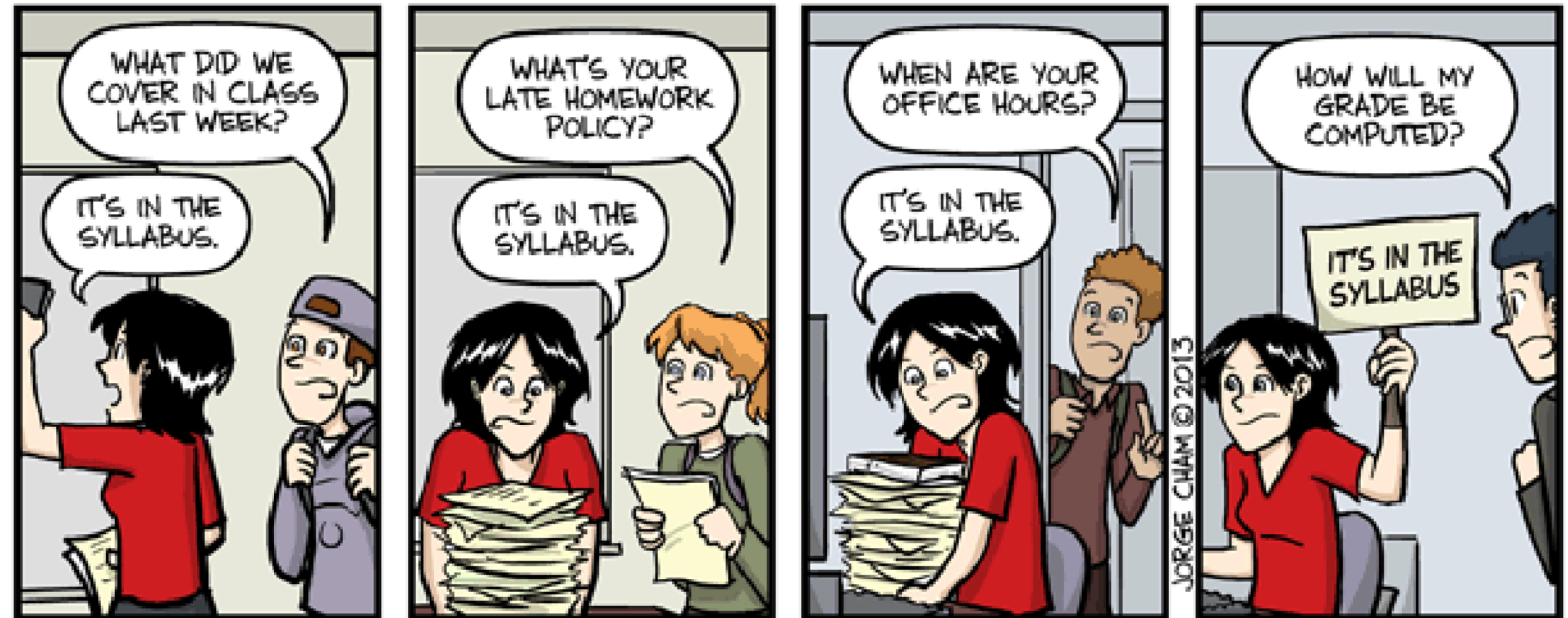


Hi!

Hey

Typical College Course

- Syllabus
- Assignments
- Announcements
- Lectures
- Grades



IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

"Piled Higher and Deeper" by Jorge Cham

Hi!

Hey

To Answer or Not to Answer the Question...now THAT is the Real Question!



Hi!

Hey

Why Use a Discussion Platform?

- Reduce individual emails
- Promote interaction
- Informal
- Faster responses



Hi!

Hey

Caveats...

- Anyone can post anything—including misinformation!
- Don't always know the identities of the students posting
- Time-consuming
- Possible academic integrity concerns



Hi!

Hey

Think-Type-Share

Thinking about your own classes, why or why not would you consider using a discussion platform?



Hi!

Hey

Timeline

2011

- Piazza launches for all universities

~2012/13

- Nutrition 10 begins using Piazza

2017

- Piazza approved as a Canvas-integrated tool

March 2020

- COVID-19 pandemic: Emergency-remote education begins

2020

- Students turn to Discord for interaction

2021

- Nutrition 10 replaces Piazza with Discord

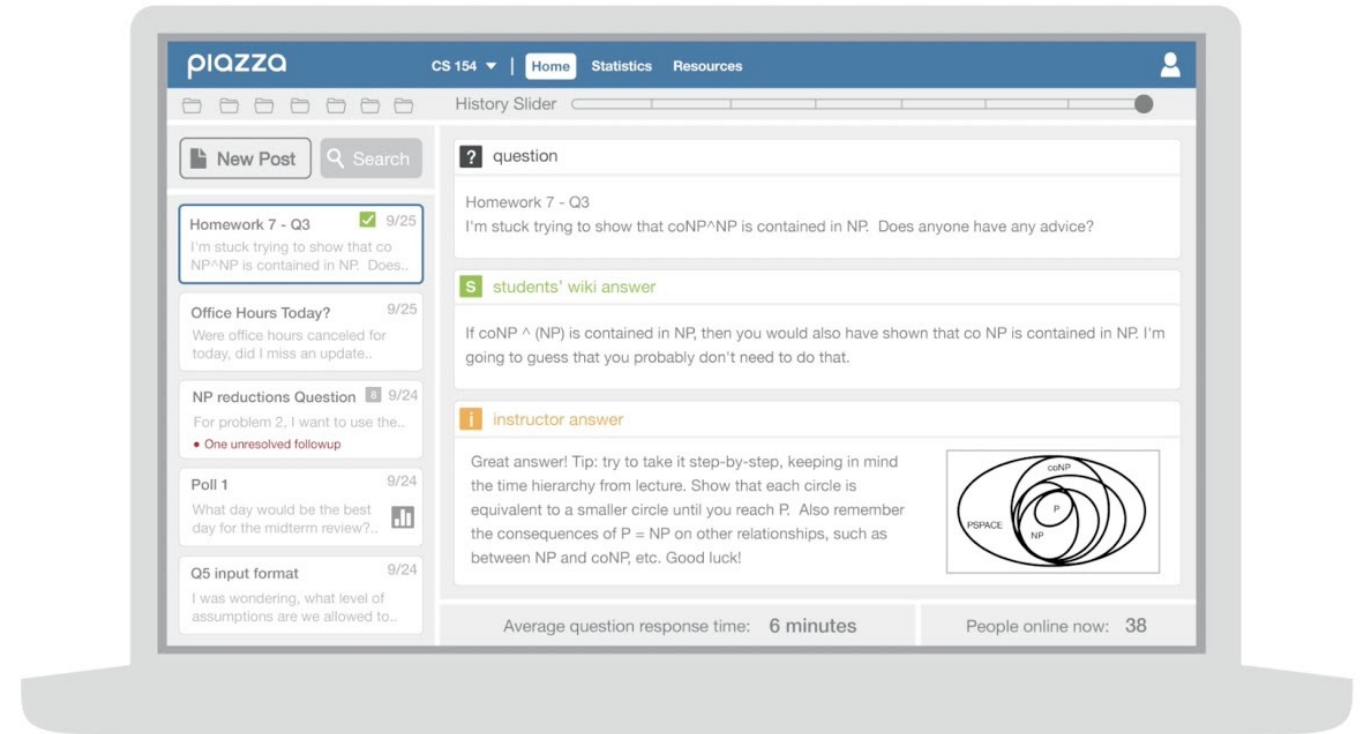
Hi!

Hey



Piazza

- Web-based question and answer platform
 - Also available as a smartphone app
- Students can post questions and answer each other's questions
- Instructional team can answer questions and endorse answers
- Identities can be anonymous
- Canvas-approved integration



Hi!

Hey



Piazza: Student Feedback

- Liked seeing other student's questions
- Familiarity across classes
- Disliked the platform interface
 - Clunky
 - Confusing
 - Hard to search for questions

The screenshot shows the Piazza Q&A interface for a class named "NUT 010 FQ: 2019". The interface is cluttered with many buttons and options, reflecting the "clunky" and "confusing" feedback mentioned in the text. The main content area shows a question titled "Vitamin C function" with 81 views and one answer. The question text is: "At the beginning of the lecture on vitamins, we categorized the general functions of vitamins as regulatory rather than structural or for energy. But for Vitamin C, one of its purposes is strongly associated with collagen, a structural protein in blood vessels and gums. So does that mean that Vitamin C could also play a structural role?". The answer is: "Vitamins play a regulatory role and vitamin C has a regulatory role in the formation of collagen. Collagen itself (a protein) has a structural role. :)".

Hi!

Hey



Piazza: Spring 2020 Feedback

- “Whenever I went on Piazza to ask a question, many of the times the question had already been asked, so I was able to see the response. I think Piazza is very useful because there are questions that many students have and if they check it frequently.”
- “I read comments of questions previous students had and it was very helpful.”
- “Although it is a little hectic when you first log on (this is a complaint of the website itself), it was EXTREMELY useful to have a platform to ask/answer questions as a class.”

Hi!

Hey

Piazza: Spring 2020 Feedback

- “I love piazza I wish every class had it especially for online one's because students tend to answer quickly and will explain the answer in a different way than the professor in case I don't understand the professor's way.”
- “It's a great way to get questions answered by peers as well as answer others' questions to see if we actually know the material.”
- “Piazza was very helpful to get your questions answered when you did not want to reach out to the professor or TAs. It was nice to be able to talk to other students who had similar questions to yours. It was a very reliable source for getting your questions answered.”
- “I liked using Piazza because even though this was a virtual class it had that added component of interacting with other classmates.”

Hi!

Hey

Piazza: Spring 2020 Feedback

- “I stopped using piazza. Too many students asking the same question 500 times. students blatantly disregarded all other tools (canvas, emails) and then asked the most ridiculous/obvious questions on piazza.”
- “I felt myself forgetting about Piazza a couple of times. I did find myself on that site a couple of times, but I couldn't figure out how to navigate.”
- “Only a handful of times. I felt it was rather confusing and some students were not always helpful
- “Piazza is overly complicated and very annoying.”

Hi!

Hey



Enter: Fall 2020

- Piazza was still the official class discussion platform
- However, the students made their own discord server

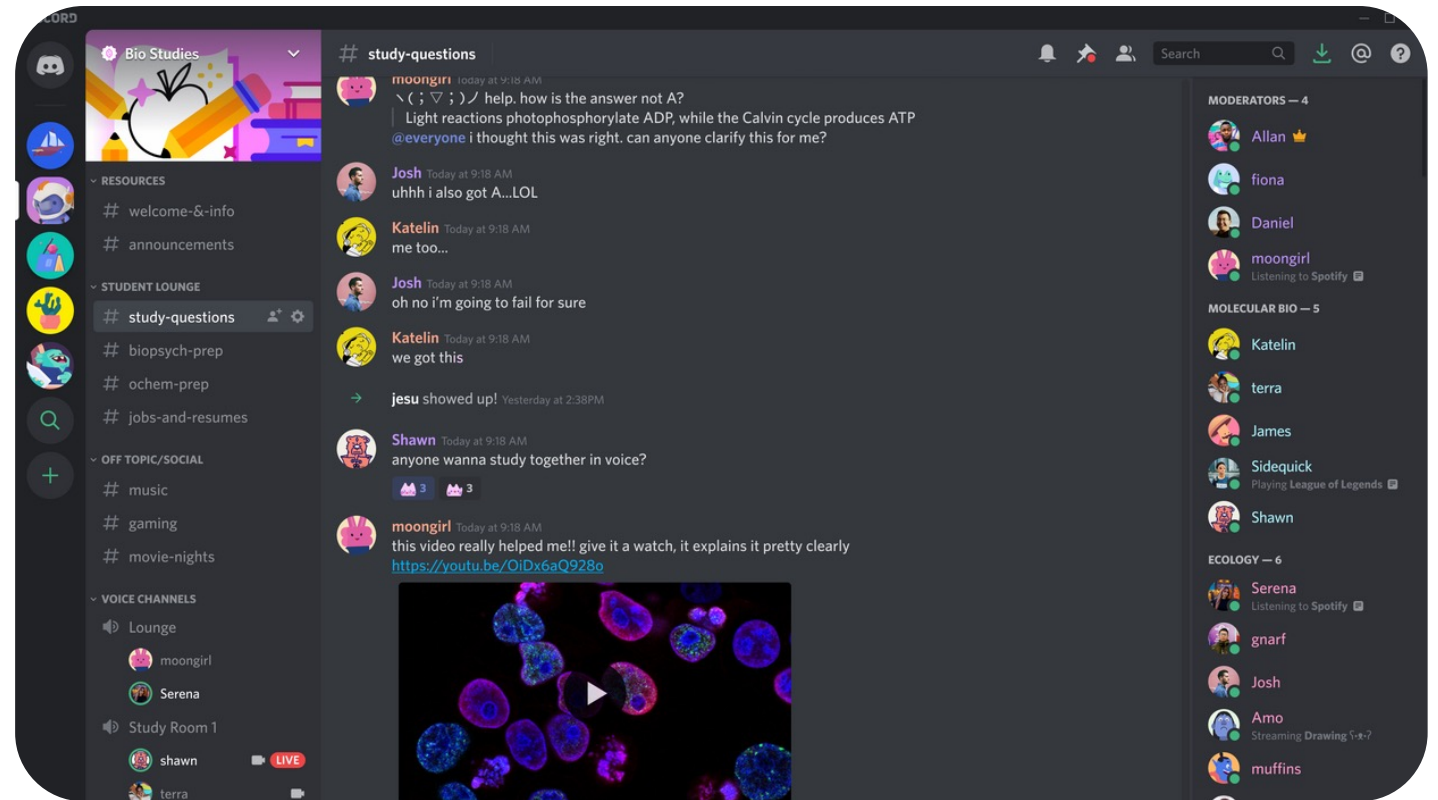
Hi!

Hey



Discord

- Traditionally used as a gaming/streaming communication platform
- Increased adoption during the pandemic
- Structured like a group chat
- More informal than Piazza
- Can add personalization



Hi!

Hey



Big Jump in Student Interaction

- More informal communications
- Students created a community of support
- Academic integrity concerns
- No monitoring for misinformation

Hi!

Hey



Fall 2020

- I did not use Piazza mainly because talking to my peers on discord gave me a faster response time
- I used Piazza but I also used Discord more for this class. I use piazza for other classes and it is relatively helpful.
- I did use Piazza in the beginning but instead, used the Discord channel for NUT10V which I was more accustomed to. Piazza is a bit messy and I keep getting email spams because of the questions that are constantly being asked or answered.
- I didn't feel the need to use piazza since I joined the class discord which also helped answer questions I had.
- No I mainly used Discord instead of Piazza

Hi!

Hey



Winter 2021: Were you in the student-run Discord? Should Discord be the class discussion platform?

- Yes so incredibly helpful but I like that it was just classmates being regulated by instructors might be weird.
- Very helpful with reminders and advice / support
- Yeah I was a member of the discord group and whenever I needed help on quizzes people were very eager.
- I did, discord seemed a lot easier to use and students were always on to answer questions.
- It was helpful to interact with my peers
- I was a member and was able to find valuable information have my questions answered. I would prefer to have a discord group set up instead of Piazza.
- Discord felt like a student group chat

Hi!

Hey

- Discord should not be associated with the instructional team as it is a space students can meet outside of class and lecture. It is almost a personal space.
- No I did not use discord. I have issues with discord since it can be really easy to cheat and violate academic integrity.
- Discord was useful too in that I was able to reach out to peers. I could ask about how difficult or time-consuming an assignment was so I was able to plan ahead.
- Overall, I used this resource more than Piazza. I think Discord has a more friendly user interface and should be used instead of Piazza.
- Yes, the discord was helpful in interacting with students and helped in answering question about the project. I would prefer discord over piazza since it is a app that I have been using for a long time.

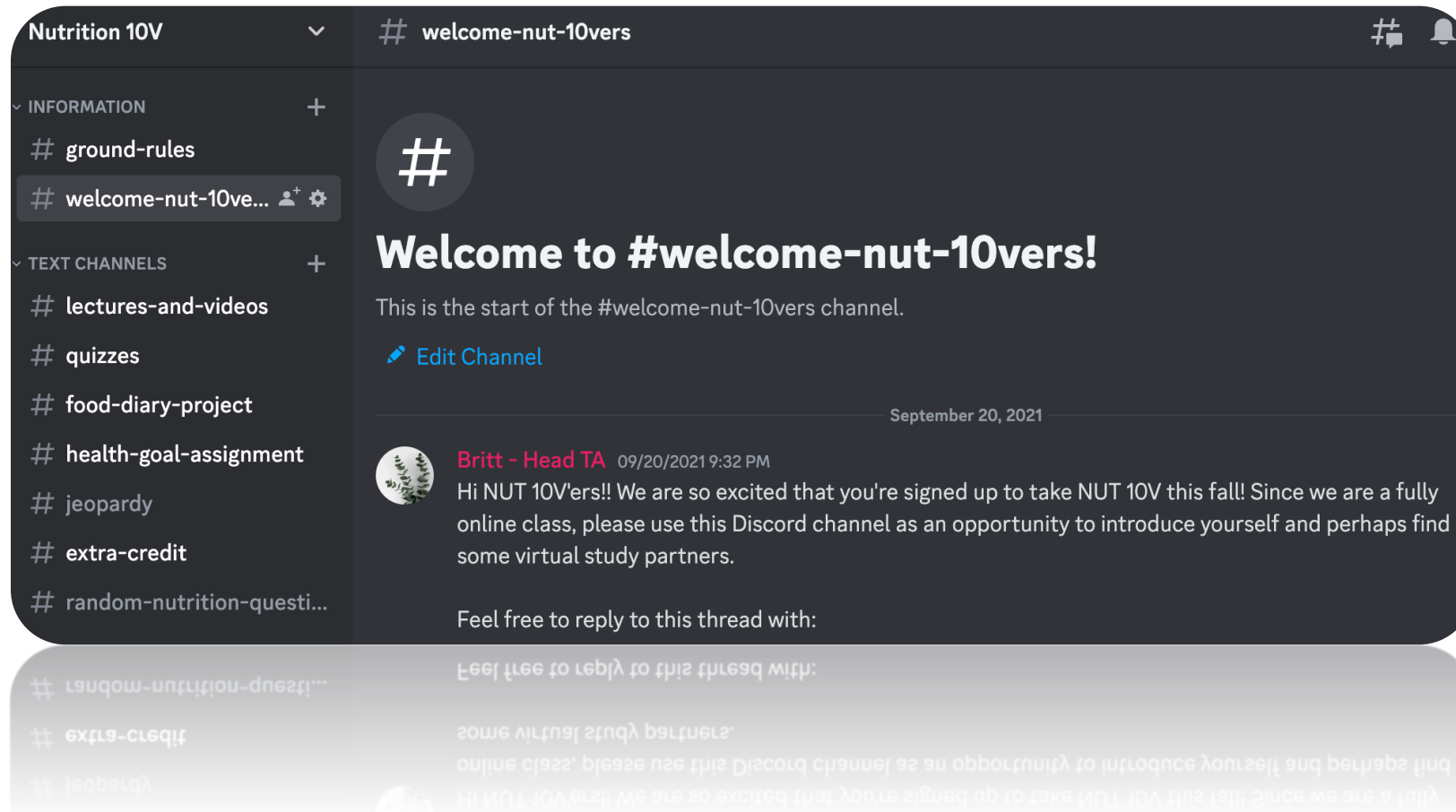
A blue speech bubble with a white border and a tail pointing towards the bottom left. It contains the text "Hi!".

Hi!

A yellow speech bubble with a white border and a tail pointing towards the bottom left. It contains the text "Hey".

Hey

Transitioned to Discord in Fall 2021



Hi!

Hey



Discord Feedback: Some pros...

- Definitely, it was very helpful especially when one of us had a question super last minute, because our classmates could help us
- Discord is very useful because so many other people have the same questions that I did so it was great to be able to get those answered there.
- YES! This was the most useful way to communicate with students and TA's. I got a lot of responses in a timely manner.
- Yes, I found the Discord extremely helpful. I think because it's a more casual environment, people are less stressed about asking for help/clarification, also in general the responses came quicker. It was also nice to get responses from fellow students.
- Yes, discord was very helpful for me to ask some small questions and get fast responses

Hi!

Hey



Discord Feedback: Some pros...

- Yes and it was very useful to me because it allowed me to connect with my peers and teachers.
- Discord is a great aid for many students and I enjoyed being able to help those who needed it and when I needed help, someone always had an answer whether it be the TA or a student.
- Yes, and found the TA's and Professor's were quick to respond and were helpful.
- Discord is simple and clear to use.
- Discord, was an amazing tool for reminders, communication, and to just get info about assignments.

Hi!

Hey



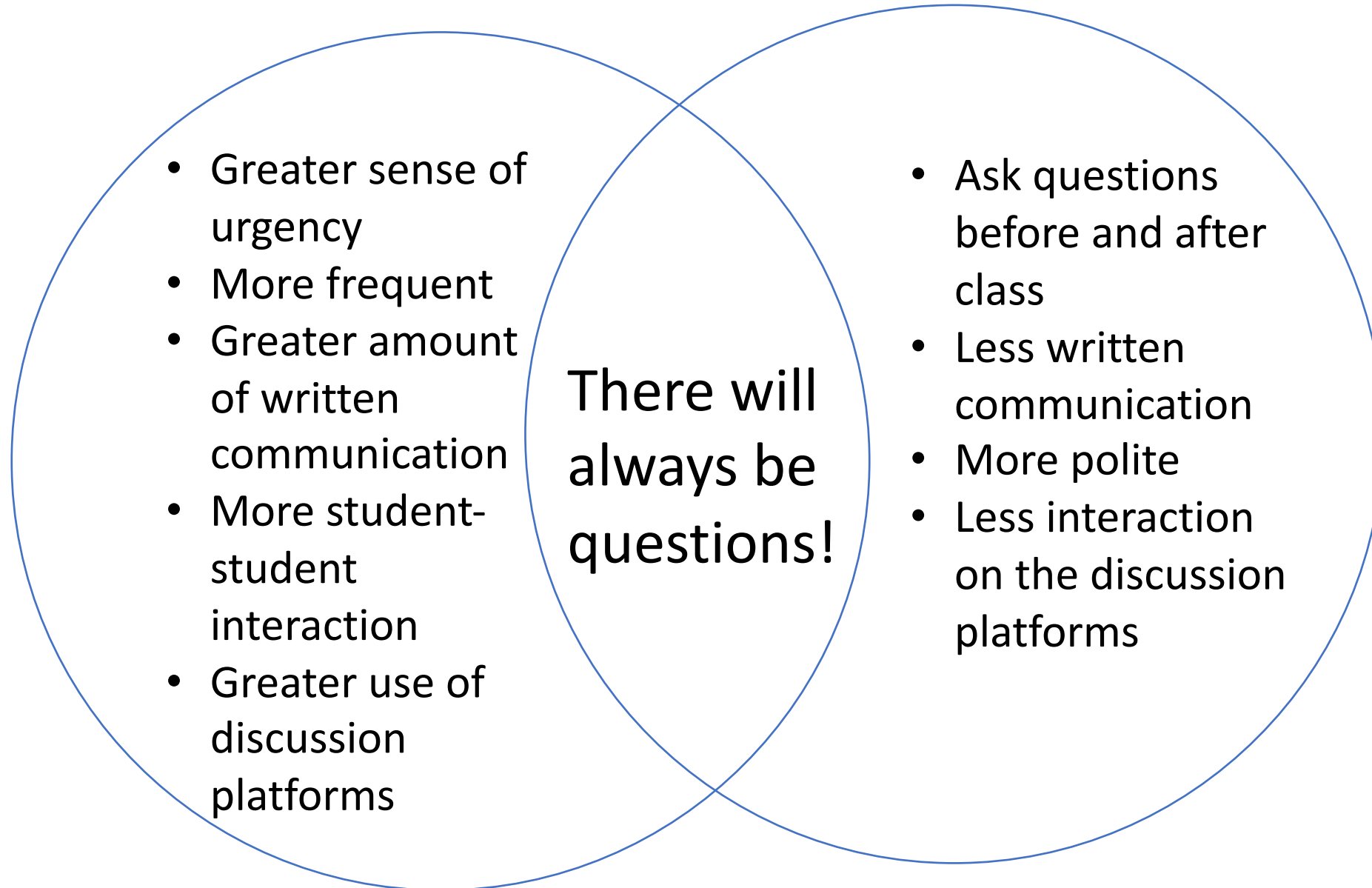
Some cons...

- I don't like using discord as an academic communication tool. Since I usually use discord for gaming.
- No. I found the Discord chat to be overwhelming and unhelpful.
- I did use discord to ask questions. Most of the time the answers were helpful but sometimes the responses were too vague.
- No, I personally disliked Discord and preferred Piazza.
- I'm not entirely a fan of discord, but I know that for some students it has proven to be a helpful and reliable source of communication with students and lecturers. However, I struggle with anxiety and the multiple notifications I received from Discord on

Hi!

Hey

NUT 10V vs. NUT 10



Hi!

Hey

You Can't Please Everyone

- Figure out what will work best for your students and class structure
- You can always re-group and make changes



Hi!



Hey

Factors to Consider Before Implementing a Discussion Platform

- Why do you want to use a discussion platform?
- How will you monitor the board?
- What is your communication policy?
- How will the instructional team be involved?
- How familiar are your students with the technology?

Hi!

Hey

Communication Policy

Discord* Q&A forum Netiquette: **Discord will be our main form of communication. If your question can be answered from the syllabus or Canvas site, we will direct you to ask your question on Discord. Before sending an email, use Discord to ask general course questions.** As with email, using Discord should be viewed as a professional form of communication, but much “quicker” in format as you will be writing brief sentences (questions, clarifications, etc.) Log on to Discord—it's easy to set up. Instructions are on the Discord page in Canvas.

1. **Link on Discord on Canvas (left hand margin)**
2. **The first time you link up, you will enter a name**

Questions will be answered by the instructors and fellow students -- **please give the video name and time frame or a page number from the eBook as back up for your answer. NOTE: Discord is NOT a complaint forum. If you have an issue of concern, please address this in a private email to Dr. Fetter.** Please also do not send the instruction team private messages on Discord, if you need to contact us directly, reach out via email or Canvas messaging (see below).

**Discord is not licensed for campus-wide use and is not a campus supported tool, please be careful about sharing personal information*



Hi!



Hey

Discussion Management

- Include in TA contract of responsibilities
- Each member of the instructional team picks 1-2 days to be the lead responder
- Weekly meetings: Check in about the discussion platform
- Optional: Assign one TA to be in charge of the platform
- Incentivize participation



Hi!



Hey

Conclusions & Next Steps

- Discussion platforms can be a useful communication tool
- Every class and group of students will have different needs and preferences
- Next steps: Analyzing the types of interactions between the discussion platforms
 - Student-student, student-instructor, student-TA
 - Formal, informal
 - Logistics, assignment content, outside nutrition questions, etc.



Hi!



Hey

Questions?



Thank You!

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