

CSU498 Project

Interim Report

Is it time to say goodbye to CATE?

Bachelor of Technology

in

Computer Science and Engineering

Spring Term 2014

Abstract

¡Abstract here¿

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Project Objectives

Chapter 2

Background

Canvas is a Learning Management System targeted towards higher education institutions. It is developed and maintained by Instructure, a growing start-up with its main headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah [1].

Canvas has had success on the market in the last few years and is presenting itself as a good alternative to CATE, mainly due to its clean user interface, availability on both desktop and mobile platforms and ease of extensibility. Nonetheless, CATE has many features that Canvas lacks at the moment, which is why the latter needs additional extensions that I intend to add in order to make it compatible with the university system in the U.K.

In this section I will go through Canvas's set of features, its market reach, how it compares to other existing (and more mature LMS) and also provide details regarding how I plan on building extensions for it.

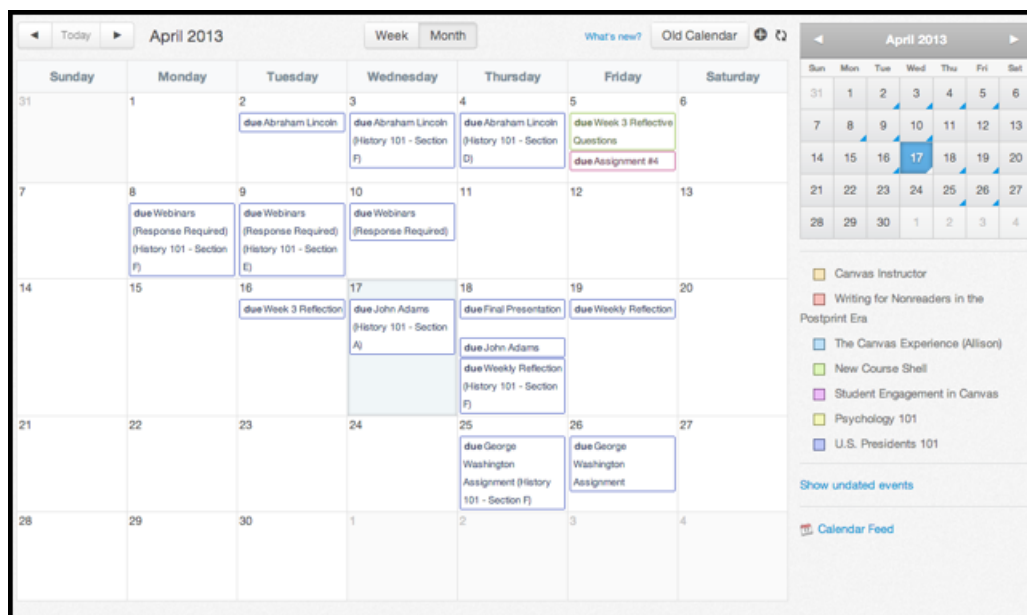
2.1 Features of Canvas

Canvas offers a rich set of features, in a clean and dynamic modern U.I., making it the only Learning Management System available in the market that offers e-learning capabilities in an interface that respects the latest standards.

As the majority of e-learning tools, Canvas splits itself between the Student and the Teacher view.

2.1.1 Calendar

Canvas uses a convenient system for displaying a personalized calendar for each student and professor. The main logic behind this is that each course has its own calendar (containing the time and dates of lectures and assignments)[9]. When students choose multiple courses they will be able to merge all the cal-



enders into one that is displayed on the main U.I. They will also be able to hide certain calendars for certain courses at their choice, should the calendar become too crowded.

Another less obvious (yet very important) feature of the Canvas calendar is how it can be easily exported using the "Calendar feed" option from the calendar menu. Students and teachers will be able to easily integrate this calendar system with the ones they use regularly (Google Calendar, iCal, Outlook, etc). The only missing part here is that the integration has to be done manually each time, so if a student decides to drop a course or take a new one, these changes won't propagate immediately to their usual calendar software.

Apart from this, the calendar is pretty much on par with the usual calendar software that we can see in Google Calendar: multiple views (week, month, day), the ability to add custom events, a minimized view (in top right), etc.

2.1.2 Groups

2.1.3 Grading

2.1.4 Courses

2.2 What CATE is better at

This section will focus on the differences between Canvas and CATE, more specifically on the resources offered by CATE which are not found in Canvas. Most of them are vital to the way the Department of Computing functions in terms of interaction between the lecturers and the students in terms of grading, issuing and organizing assessments and keeping students informed of recent updates.

2.2.1 Projects portal

Canvas supports both group and individual assessments, which fits perfectly with our department. CATE, however, uses the projects portal to allow students to choose and rank various projects issues by their lecturers. This is vital to the way some important parts of the Computing course works (e.g. 3rd year group projects, final year individual projects).

Making Canvas support this functionality means finding a way for both students and teachers to interact in the same manner on the Canvas U.I.

2.2.2 Tutoring support

For Undergraduate Teaching Assistants, CATE offers the possibility to mark the works of their group of students through an easy interface. The platform deals in the background with the whole hierarchy of student tutors (PMT, PPT, Personal Tutor, UTA, etc), a feature that is not available in Canvas.

2.2.3 TeachDB

2.2.4 CATE Calendar

The calendar shown in CATE is quite different than the one that Canvas has. While Canvas is focusing on having a classic calendar in place that is on par with the ones developed by Google or Apple, CATE contains a version better personalized to the university experience: it makes the student see with ease when a certain assessment has started and when it's ending, it contains links to submission pages, etc.

2.3 Use in industry

Canvas is used in more than 300 universities, the majority of them being located in the United States[2]. This is only natural, since the growth model in contemporary start-ups dictates that companies should start local and diversify the customers as they grow.

Examples of universities using canvas include : University of Washington [?], Pittsburg State University [4], University of Texas at Austin [5], etc. Although the platform is quite young, its usefulness attracted the admiration of many critics and customers[6, 7, 8]

2.4 Comparison with existing LMS

2.4.1 CATE

2.4.2 Moodle

2.5 Design and Implementation Details

Chapter 3

Future Work

¡Future work here!

Chapter 4

Conclusion

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Acknowledgments

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