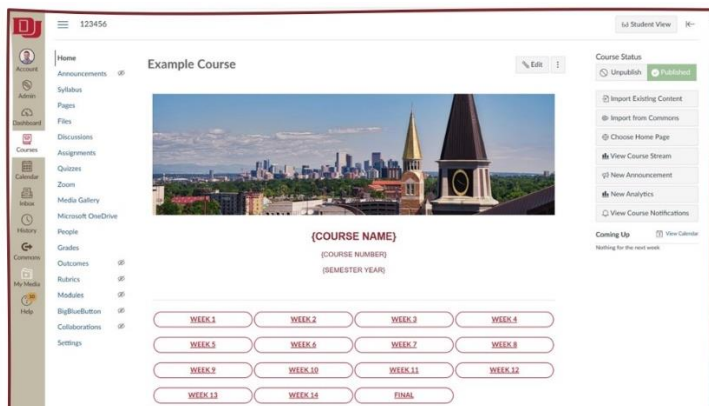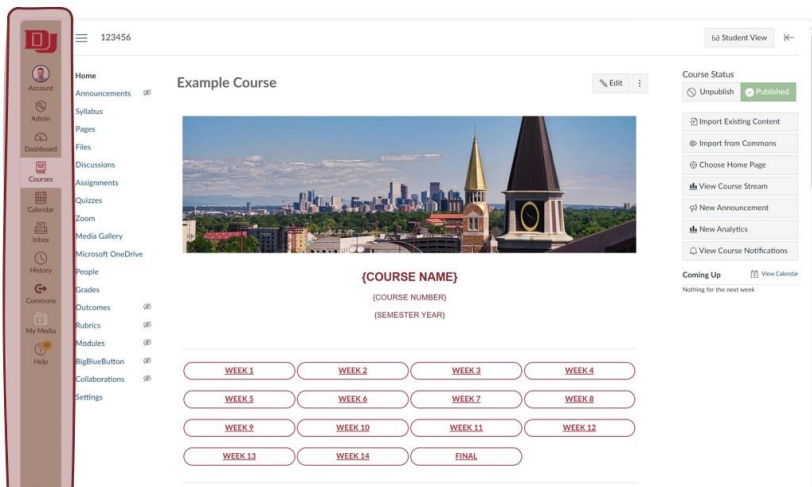# HOW TO NAVIGATE THE CANVAS PLATFORM
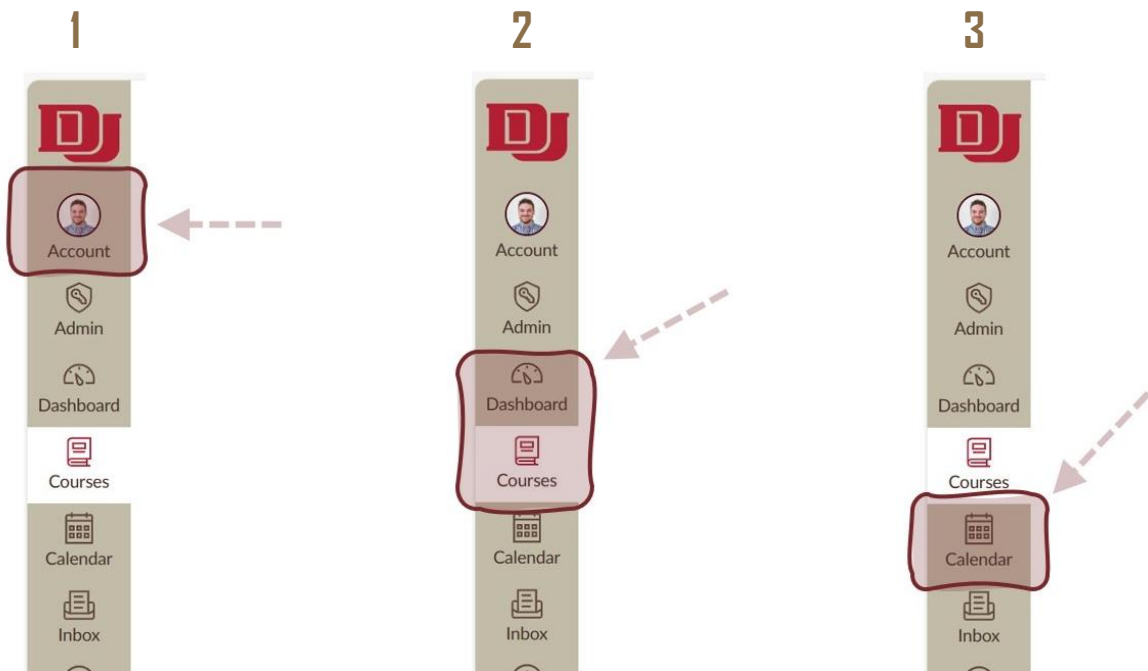
CANVAS MAIN SCREEN

☐ **WHENEVER** you use Canvas, you do so through the **'Main Screen'**, that is, what you see when you log into Canvas and what remains constant as you navigate the platform. Within the main screen, it is important to be familiar with four key areas.
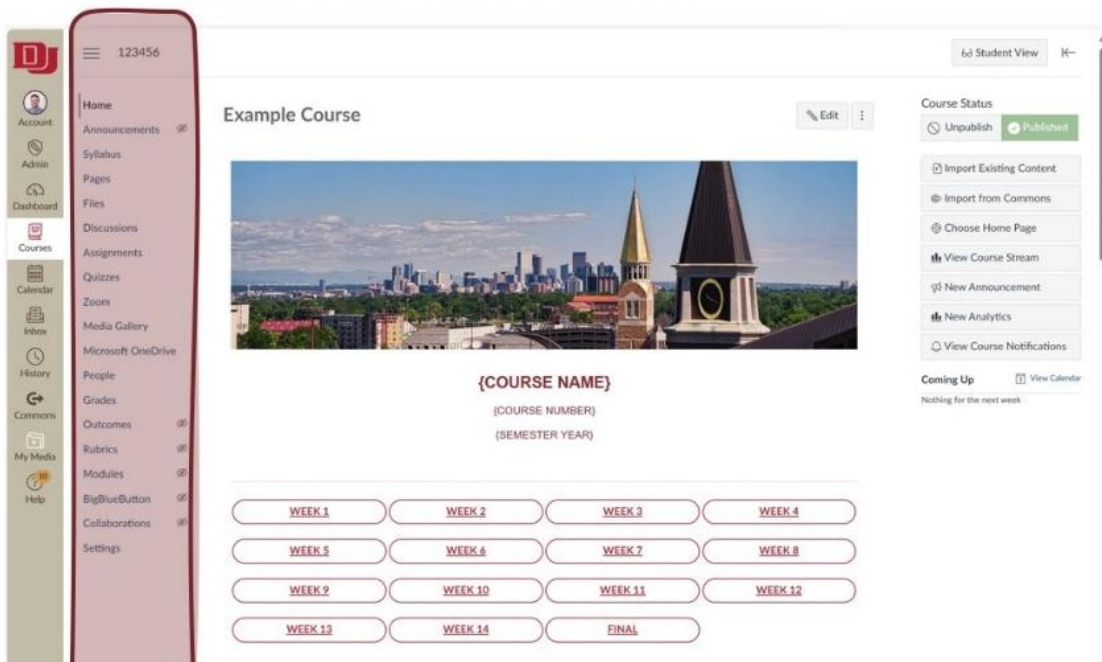

☐ **MOVING** left to right, the first of these areas is the **'Global Navigation Bar'**. It is described as 'global' because it involves several features that function above the level of a specific course.
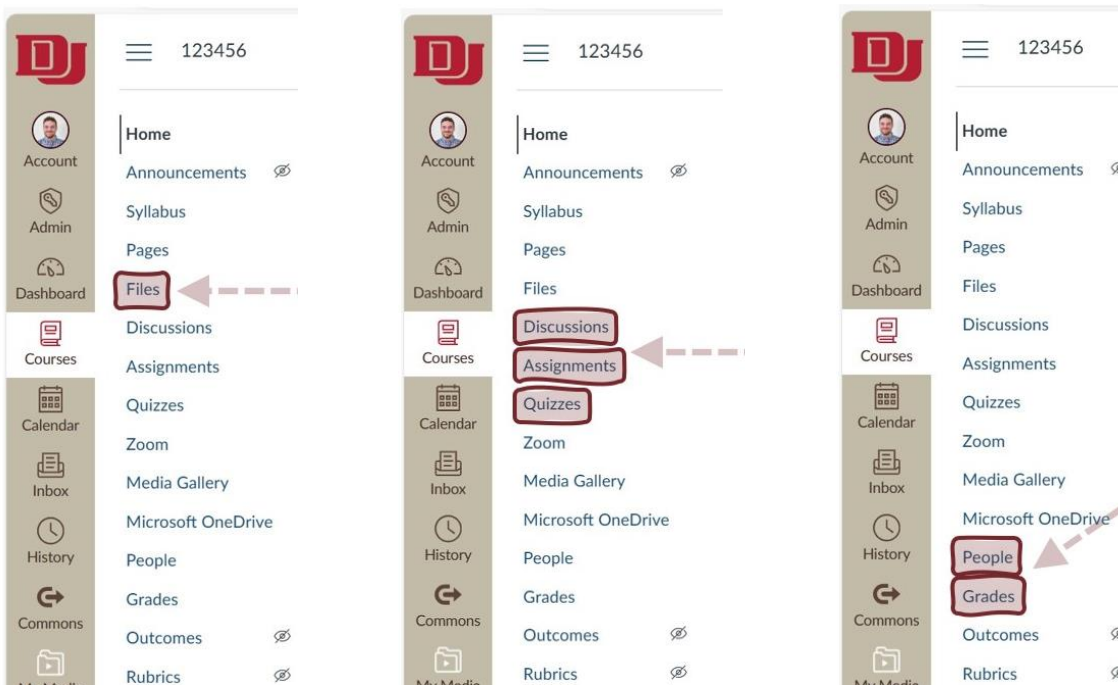
For example, the global navigation bar is where you can update your **(1) account details**. It is also where you can view and enter **(2) all of your Canvas courses**. (Note that the 'Dashboard' tab contains a list your active or most-recent courses, while the 'Courses' tab contains a complete list of courses you have taught.) Finally, the global navigation bar is where you will find your **(3) in-Canvas calendar**, with which you can keep track of events and assignments for multiple courses at once.
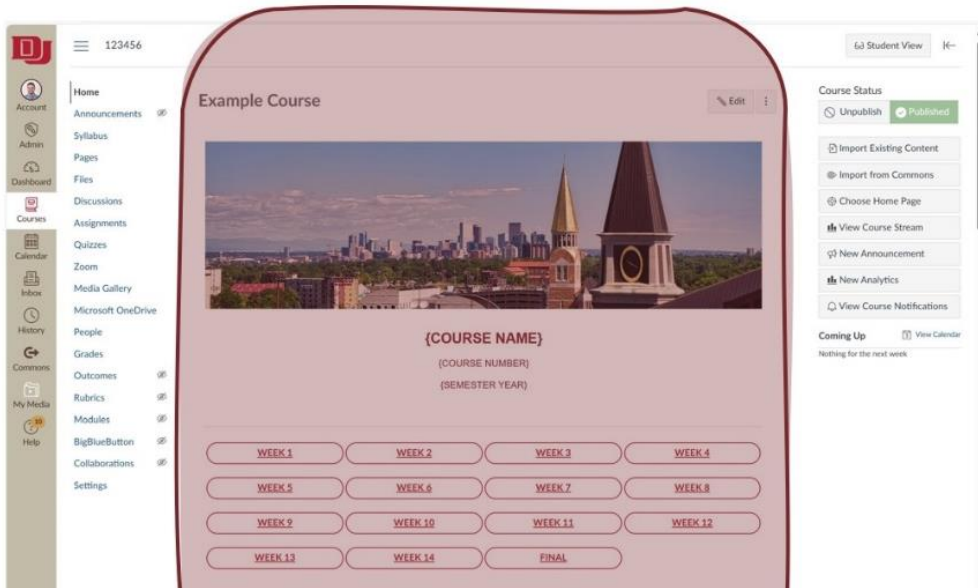
1

2

3

☐ **JUST** Moving to the right, you will find the **'Course Navigation Bar'**, which gives you access to features that pertain to a specific course. Of note are the course databases.
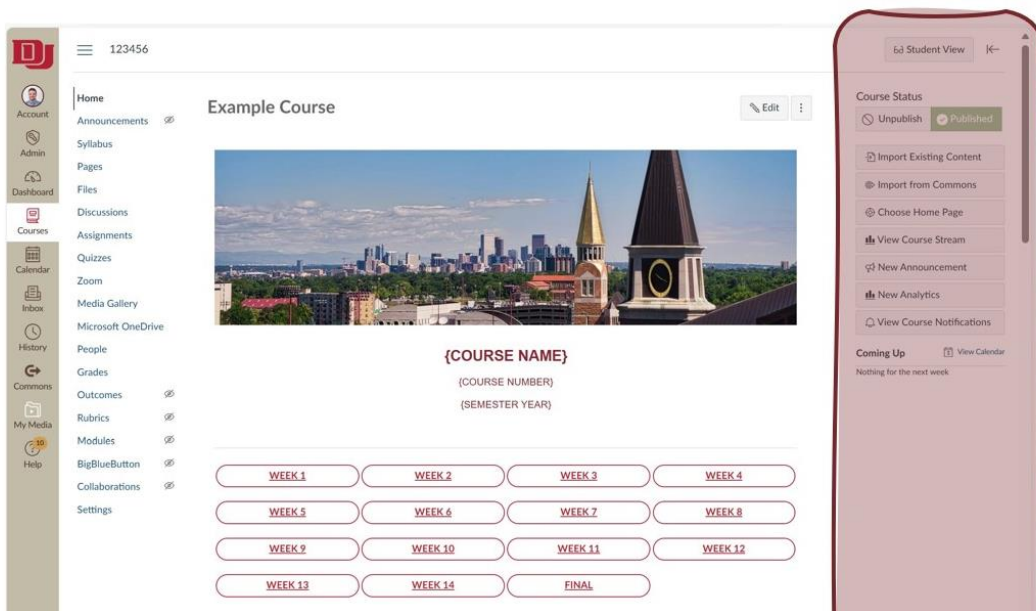

As you build your course, Canvas stores your new and updated content. For example, any course documents or images can be viewed via the **Files** tab. The learning activities you create—namely, **Discussions**, **Assignments**, and **Quizzes**—can be accessed by clicking on the respective tab. You will also find a convenient list of course participants (**People**) and student progress (**Grades**).

☐ **CONTINUING** across the screen, you come to the **content viewer**. This is where the contents of pages and learning activities are displayed. While this space will change as you navigate to different areas of your Canvas course, the global and course navigation bars will not.
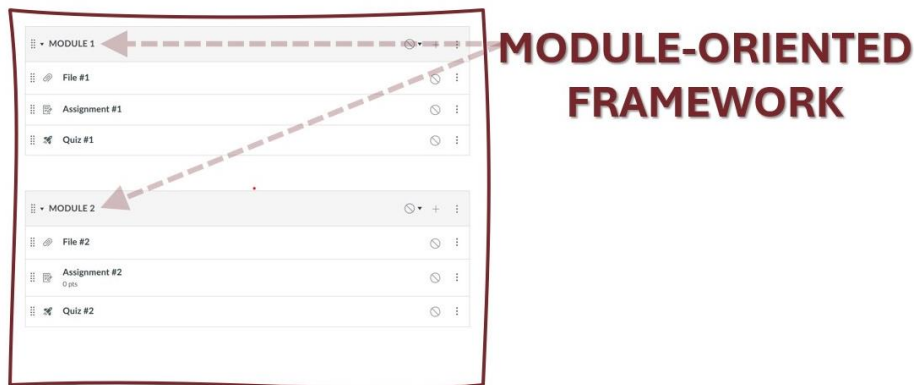

☐ **FINALLY,** at the far right of the screen is the **Sidebar**. The specific features of the sidebar will be taken up elsewhere in other guides. At this point, it is enough to be able to locate it on the main screen. Like the navigation bars, the sidebar will remain in its place regardless of where you are in your course.
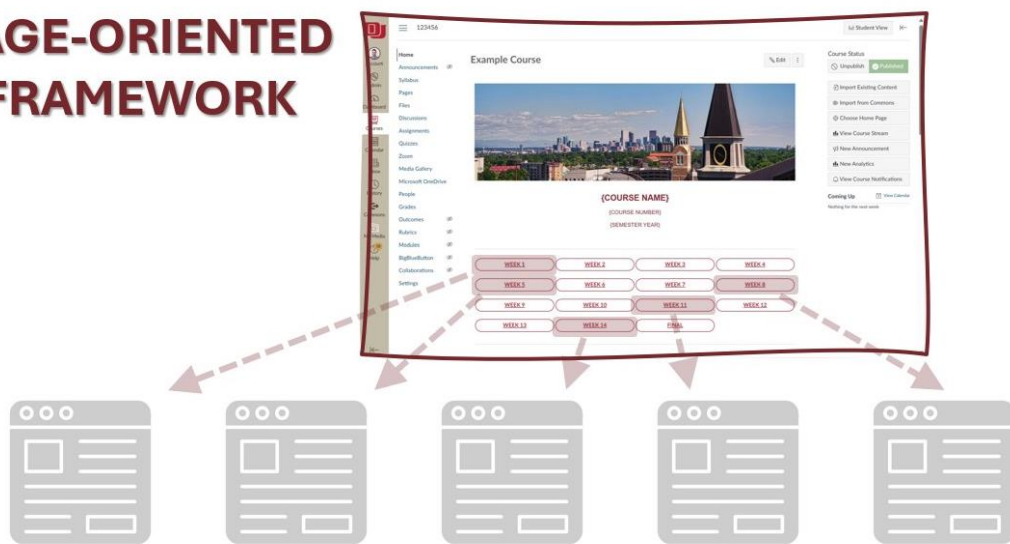
COURSE FRAMEWORK

☐ **HAVING** addressed what you see as you navigate your course (the main screen and its key areas), it is necessary to address what you do not see (your course's conceptual framework, its overarching organization). Canvas allows you to divide and present your course content in one of two ways: with modules or with pages.

☐ **AS** the name implies, a module-oriented framework structures a course around modules—clusters of learning activities and resources. With this approach, a module typically corresponds to a unit of course material.

MODULE-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK

☐ **BY** contrast, a page-oriented framework divides and presents course content using pages, where one unit corresponds to one page. Moreover, rather than a list of modules, a page-oriented framework consists of a network of pages that function like a website. That is to say, the course centers on a homepage, from which other secondary (i.e. unit) pages can be accessed.

PAGE-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK

☐   **WHICH** framework should be preferred? Both allow you to divide course content into units; both allow students to view the core elements of a unit all at once. Ultimately, it is a matter of preference. However, a page-oriented framework does have a significant advantage in that it allows unit materials to be contextualized. Modules simply list core elements; pages provide the opportunity to explain how core elements relate or fit into the broader scope of the course. This is especially advantageous in the context of asynchronous learning, where guidance though course material relies largely on what students see on their screens.