

Representing the past and presenting our future

In order to acquaint students with Blackboard (Bb) on the History programme, it was decided that the Level 1 core history module – Presenting and Representing the Past – would have a substantial Bb presence. It was important for us to include within it as many of the core functions of Bb as possible so that students were acquainted with it early on in their studies.



This then provides the grounding for subsequent modules at Levels 2 and 3 to develop activities and do more sophisticated task-work. The module was therefore designed with Blackboard at its core, and included a series of tasks and elements in each of the four teaching blocs. Aside from the basic module information on teaching and assessment it also included:

- use of discussion boards as preparation for in-class debates;
- use of the discussion boards for feedback: from the students on the teaching and for the students on their assessment and their module evaluations;
- use of the discussion boards for students to share opinions and comments on history-related web-sites
- use of the group pages to encourage out-of-class collaboration and teamwork
- use of the digital drop-box for electronic submission of work and feedback

The screenshot displays the Blackboard Learning System (Release 6) interface within a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser. The address bar shows the URL: https://blackboard.dmu.ac.uk/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab=courses&url=%2Fbin%2Fcommon%2Fcourse.pl%3Fcourse_id%3D_294037_1. The interface features a navigation menu on the left with options such as Announcements, Module Information, Assessments, Communication, Discussion Board, External Links, Tools, Lecture programme, seminar programme, Staff information, and lecture outlines. Below this menu are links for Course Map, Control Panel, and Quick Enroll. The main content area lists several discussion topics, each with a title, a brief description, and a 'Modify' or 'Remove' button. The topics are:

- 2 Irving: Guilty or Innocent?** - This is the place to reflect on the Irving trial: was he guilty of falsifying evidence? Can he properly be called an historian? [32 Messages] [All New]
- 3 The best and worst History you have experienced** - OK, time to engage your critical faculties a little: what is the best/worst History book you have read? What about History on TV: best and worst? [14 Messages] [All New]
- 4 Don't Panic!!** - On this forum please feel free to post any questions or queries you have about this module or history in general. Postings are anonymous! But please exercise responsibility when posting. [No Messages]
- 5 Feedback: Your Opinion Counts** - Let us know the good (and the not-so-good) on the course. Rate the lectures (and the lecturers!) [21 Messages] [1 New]
- 6 Feedback on assessment** - I will be posting some feedback on your assessments here. Please take time to read this, as well as the individual comments we will write on your work. [No Messages]

The bottom of the screen shows the Windows taskbar with various open applications and the system clock at 14:41.

The idea behind this approach has been the gradual extension and development of our students' awareness of the potential of e-learning, and to highlight the importance of work outside of class. We stress that it will help to deepen their understanding and, enhance their skills. But we also encourage greater virtual interaction which we hoped will help to create a greater sense of overall cohort identity for the year one history students. It's a work in progress, but so far the signs are encouraging.