

Course Overview

- Course opens to announcement area
- Menu buttons kept to a minimum, unused buttons deleted
- Course structured into intuitive sections (weeks, units, etc.), with all materials for each section housed within that section
- Avoid folders-within-folders and other confusing navigational structures
- All UNT Dallas-required syllabus information is present (instructor's name, email address, contact information, grading policies, etc.)
- A course schedule with due dates is provided (within the syllabus or as a separate document)
- Syllabus also includes information for online students, such as netiquette requirements and technical support info



Course Technology

- Appropriate tools are used for their intended purpose (assignment tool for homework, exam tool for exams, rather than having students email assignments, for example)
- Tools outside of Blackboard are used in ways that comply with FERPA regulations and student completion of work is logged within Bb
- Grades are communicated to students using the Bb grading center
- Hidden and duplicate columns are deleted from the grade center
- Links to outside resources are functional



Accessibility

- Menu buttons are used (not links), simple color scheme
- Visuals, such as PowerPoint presentations, contain sufficient contrast from background color to foreground text
- Documents are posted in accessible format (such as a PDF file with document structure tags)

General

- Do not use special characters in the name of any file or object in Blackboard
- Do not use spaces in your file names. Some browsers have problems with this.
- Consider your audience
- Avoid the use of underlining for emphasis – students may think these are links
- Include images that add to understanding of the content – not just because they look cute/pretty, etc.
- Be consistent!!

WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!

Office of Distance Learning and Instructional Technologies

Web: <http://www.untdallas.edu/dlit>

Blackboard Best Practices

Making the course your own

- Add a banner or image to your course announcements page or home page
- Include a picture of yourself in the contacts section
- Remove any empty buttons or buttons you don't want to use
- Rename the remaining buttons so they fit your content and your teaching style
- Make your course available when you are ready for students to see it
- Make sure the style of buttons or links you use is easy to read
- Make sure to include a welcome announcement in your course
- Turn off tools you don't want students to use
- 6 to 8 buttons is ideal



Organizing your course

- Choose a way to organize the materials in your course.
 - ⇒ By subject area (unit, chapter, etc.)
 - ⇒ Chronologically (week, session, etc.)
 - ⇒ By type of content (handouts, videos, tests, etc.)
- Within your main organizational method organize the materials in a consistent way (same order, same terms to describe the materials, etc.)
- Determine how materials will become available (all at once at the beginning of the course, turning off and on by date, or a combination). Again, be consistent!
- Choose a consistent format for the items in your course (font, colors, size, images, spacing, etc.)
- Consider displaying the items within a folder on the outside of the folder.
- Test your links before the semester starts.

Discussion Board

- Create an introduction forum so students can practice with the discussion board and also meet the other students in the class.
- Include links to directions for use of the discussion board (both video and text)
- Tell the students to be sure to click SUBMIT, not just save.
- If you are going to grade discussion postings create a grading rubric so students will know what you are looking for.
- Post Netiquette guidelines and remind students that everyone sees discussion postings
- Use the Collect feature when reviewing student postings.



Content

- Use plenty of white space to separate paragraphs, images and other elements.
- Display information in small chunks that permit scanning
- Use bulleted lists
- Use white background with dark text – maximize contrast
- Do not rely on color alone to indicate something since not all students can see color and avoid putting red and green together since this will be hard for color blind individuals to distinguish.
- Use a variety of methods to convey your content (text, audio, video, images, discussion, etc.)
- Avoid using all capitals
- For any image provide alternate methods of receiving equivalent information for students who cannot see the images
- Videos or podcasts need captions or a transcript



Assignments

- Consider using the Assignment feature in Blackboard to collect assignments, instead of having students email them to you.
- Include an introductory assignment worth little but set up the same as later assignments so students can practice.
- Include links to directions for use of assignments (both video and text)
- Let students know when to expect the assignments to be graded
- Include feedback to students

Assessment

- Use a variety of assessment strategies in your course
- Create rubrics for assessments

Grade Center

- Hide any columns you don't want students to see – make sure you are using Show/Hide to users and not just hiding the columns from yourself with Hide Column.
- Organize the columns in a way that works best for you.
- Periodically download your grade center to your computer (work offline)