

# How to Succeed in Your Online Graduate Class



# The Following Will Help You Be More Comfortable With Your Online Class :


- When you register for your class you will be given the necessary information for ordering any required texts.
- You will want to obtain all materials well in advance of the starting day of the course since it will likely take between a week and ten days from the time you order your text to the time you receive it.
- Use the time prior to the opening day of your course to familiarize yourself with the textbook(s).

# And Still More Ways to be Comfortable With Your Online Class:

- You will be able to view your Peru State College online graduate class approximately two days prior to the actual start date.
- The purpose of the aforementioned is to give you an opportunity to become familiar with the contents of the course.
- This task should be accomplished in a comprehensive and systematic fashion.



# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course:

- All of the courses are organized in a similar manner.
- First, look at the labels on the left side of the opening page of your Blackboard course. Each label will lead you to different content as is listed below.
- Announcements –  This section provides information that your instructor, or the Distance Education Director, desire to share with you. It is not unusual to see one or more announcements each week. Since some announcements are permanently at the top of the page, it is essential that you scroll through all messages daily.

# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course (continued):


- Assignments – This section will generally contain the assignment for each week. It will also have the assignment links necessary to turn in each student's work.
- Some instructors may also have such items as the Syllabus included in this section.
- The section could also contain links with materials necessary to complete assignments .



# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course (continued):

- Assignments might be listed at various levels. For example, if you need to open **Week One** in the assignment section it could contain additional links that need to be opened as well.
- **Make sure that you always look for additional links within the Assignment section of Blackboard.**
- **In some instances there could be assignments which require you to visit a specific type of facility. Plan in advance for this requirement.**

# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course (continued):

- Course Documents -  This section contains items such as assignment rubrics, additional readings, check off lists, and detailed instructions for such things as submitting a Livetext document.
- Some instructors may place the syllabus in this section and/or assignment due dates.
- There may be materials you wish to print from this section.

# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course (continued):

- Discussion Board – This section is organized so you can participate on a weekly basis.



# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course (continued):

- Many professors will start the Discussion Board section with a special area designated for student questions. You will want to check this daily to see if any of your concerns have already been addressed.
- The Discussion Board will usually involve very specific assignments for each week of the course. You could be assigned to review and share an article or state a reflection on a specified topic.

# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course (continued):

- You will probably be asked to respond to other students' contribution.
- Be sure to read the instructions for the Discussion Board carefully. Your contributions will be due by a specific time and may have a specified length in order to receive full credit.
- Instructors will be reading all items in the Discussion Board, however, they may or may not elect to comment about your items.

# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course (continued):

- Staff Information – This section will usually contains a brief bibliography of your instructor and information about contacting personnel associated with Peru State College's Distance Education Office. Staff members are available during stated business hours and at after hours numbers as well.

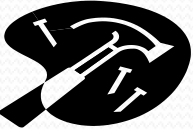


# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course (continued):



- Communication - This section contains access to the Discussion Board, Groups and E-mail.
- The Group section, if used in your class, provides another opportunity for you to share the learning experience with your classmates. In some classes there could be a group project to complete or you might be assigned to review another group members work.
- The E-mail function will be something which you are likely to use to communicate with your instructor or classmates.

# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course (continued):

- Tools –  You will find access to your Homepage, Grades and Users Manual, for Blackboard, through this site.
- Your Homepage allows you to share information about yourself with your instructor and classmates. Many students include pictures of themselves and/or their families. It helps everyone to put a face with your name. Most students will simply copy and paste their Homepage from one class the next, so as not to have to repeat the task.
- You will want to check your Grades frequently (at least once a week).

# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course (continued):

- The Users Manual for Blackboard will give you information about how to best utilize the features of this system. It will also help you to problem solve issues which may be interfering with you completing assignments successfully.

# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course (continued):

- Technical Issues – This section contains information about Technical Support Updates which may influence your ability to use Blackboard. When encountering a technical issue be sure to check this source first.
- You will also find information about how to most successfully make use of Office 2007.
- There is also information for individuals who are using Mac computers rather than a PC.
- Finally, you will find information about data needed when asking for assistance from Blackboard Technical Support.



# Familiarizing Yourself With the Course (continued):



- College Policies – Some of the information in this section of Blackboard can be found in all course syllabi and some is unique to this site.
- Here you can obtain information about the Mission and Goals of PSC, Academic Integrity Expectations, and the Incomplete Grade Policy.
- Additionally, you will find information about how to utilize the PSC college catalog, and request a Transcript of your work.
- One of the most important areas concerns how to access the PSC Library. You will have to make use of this information for most courses.

# Essential Technical Skills

- It is assumed that all students have a basic knowledge of computer usage. These skills should include:
- Using Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint for your assignments. These programs are equally available regardless of whether you use a PC or Mac computer;
- A basic knowledge of using the internet for e-mail and research purposes.

# Helpful Tips to Make You More Successful

- Print out a copy of your Syllabus before the class begins and read the content completely.
- Print out a copy of the Assignment schedule if one is provide. If one is not provided, make up a sheet with the assignment dates for each week. Check off each assignment as it is completed and turned in.
- Print out a copy of the Support Staff phone numbers.
- Check your e-mail a few times each day. It is best to check mid-morning, mid-afternoon, and late evening.

# Helpful Tips to Make You More Successful (continued):

- Before submitting any document (even in the Discussion Board) be sure to spell check your submission.
- Also, before submitting documents, be sure that you are within the required specifications for that document. This could include length, format, and/or notation. In many courses you can check your work against a provided rubric.
- All notation on graduate courses at Peru State College must be completed in APA format. Keep the APA writers manual handy as well as some of the quick guide materials provided by PSC and in individual courses.

# Helpful Tips to Make You More Successful (continued):

- Most courses have a penalty for submitting assignments late. It is therefore essential that you meet the specified due dates. If you believe you have a legitimate reason for not being able to complete an assignment on time, be sure to contact your instructor to see if any alternate arrangements can be made. It is entirely at the discretion of each instructor to determine if exceptions will be allowed with respect to when assignments are due.

# Helpful Tips to Make You More Successful (continued):

- Success in online classes requires some advanced planning on the part of students. The very nature of online education makes it very easy to delay working on course material until there is too little time to do a quality job.
- It is essential that you plan to work on your online course at specific times during the week. You will need to allot time for reading, library or online research, and the preparation of written assignments.
- Plan your time so that you can obtain assistance in a timely manner if problems should occur.

# Some Final Thoughts

- There is no such thing as technology that is free of all problems. Over one hundred and twenty years after the invention of the telephone, we are still trying to make it trouble free.
- Computers, the internet, Blackboard, and Livetext are all vulnerable to a wide variety of problems.
- You can protect yourself from problems with your personal computer by backing up all of your work frequently. In fact, you should never have only one copy of anything you are doing on your personal computer.

# Some Final Thoughts (continued)

- Network problems ( which could mean the internet service provider, Blackboard or Livetext) are almost always resolved in a few hours at the very most. You need only be patient.
- On occasion PSC will post notices that one or more internet services will not be available, at specific times, due to maintenance issues. Every attempt is made to schedule these occasional interruptions at times which will least effect your work.
- Finally, please be assured that all the faculty and professional staff at PSC are here to serve you. Don't hesitate to contact us for assistance.

# See You Online in Our Virtual Classroom

