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# Getting Started

This course guide was written to get you acquainted with the structure of the course, namely the syllabus, BlackBoard, and the weekly pacing for classroom/online instruction. This guide is **not** meant to prescribe a certain manner or specific activities that you must teach through; rather, it is intended to help you as an instructor achieve the goals set out for this course.

## The Syllabus

* The syllabus has not changed drastically – the course content and the textbook are still the same as they have been for the past few semesters.
* Text highlighted in green is meant for you to customize.
* In the course policies section, most of the policies are set by the university and the department and should not be changed. Please note the areas in green. This is where you’ll add policies for your particular course. In general, we advise that you add an attendance policy, an assignment submission policy, an anti-racist pedagogical statement, as well as a campus resources list.   
  If you are teaching remotely/online, you should also include:
  + a modified attendance policy, which should stipulate how attendance might be counted in lieu of classroom attendance
  + a modified emergency procedures/inclement weather policy, which should address expectations on course obligations with regard to such occurrences
  + a communication policy, which can outline office hours and expectations for email etiquette and response times; and
  + a feedback policy, which can detail an expected timeline for shorter and longer assignments.

You can find examples of such statements in [Appendix A: Syllabus Statements](#_Appendix_A:_Syllabus).

* In the course schedule, you’ll find that each week contains learning objectives, activities, and assessments. You should not change the learning objectives. You can make some slight modifications to the activities. You are able to modify the weekly assessments as you wish so long as the task you create sufficiently assesses whether or not students have met those learning objectives. These are explained more in depth in the section entitled [Weekly Instruction](#_Weekly_Instruction).

## BlackBoard

* Weekly Lessons: Like the syllabus, the course is divided by week, with each week’s lesson objectives loaded on to the shell. It is up to you how you might want to include the homework and activities and what assessments to post if you don’t want to use the assessment ideas in the syllabus.
* Grading & Rubrics: BlackBoard will now have rubrics that are linked to the assignments. These will also automatically calculate grades and populate in your gradebooks. Please grade in BlackBoard as you can still write text comments on each student’s assignments.
* Remote/Online Teaching: You will notice that the first set of links on the black column in the left-hand side of BlackBoard are called Course Information. Even if you are not teaching remotely/online, you can still use these links. Each link on BlackBoard has more information on what information you should include.

## Weekly Instruction

### *Objectives*

You will find weekly learning objectives in the syllabus and in the Weekly Lessons on BlackBoard. **These objectives should not be altered.** They are designed to let your students know what they can expect to learn during the week. These objectives are also directly connected to the course goals as outlined in p.1 of the syllabus and are tied to the weekly assessments (writing activities, quizzes, etc.)

### *Homework/Activities*

The weekly activities and homework have been a core part of the syllabus for the past few semesters. It advises you on what to cover and to ensure an even pace. However, if you feel that your class needs some more time to cover the material, you are welcome to slow the pace down a bit by replacing certain activities with others from the [Activity Bank](#_Activities_Bank_(Ongoing). You are also welcome, where highlighted in green, to find alternative methods of covering the material. For example, if it says “Video Lecture: Analysis of Sedaris’ *Genetic Engineering*” but you would rather do a PowerPoint presentation, that’s fine as well, so long as the week’s learning objectives are met and assessed in weekly writing assessments.

### *Weekly Assessments*

There are assessments provided, but you do not have to use them. If you feel that another type of weekly writing assignment would be a better assessment of the week’s learning objectives, you should feel free to try that out. (This is only for the weekly assessments; you should not alter the major assessments.)s

# Teaching Tips & Teachable Moments

## Managing the Grading Load

It can be tough grading all these assignments while keeping up with lesson planning, classroom management, and not to mention your own coursework! Here are some tips for managing the grading load so that your students receive timely feedback and that will hopefully help you feel less burdened!

1. Prioritize the skills by focusing on the learning objectives and course goals.

Time and time again, studies have shown that students often do not read our feedback as thoroughly as we’d like them to. Often, the feedback that we give is so comprehensive, but if students are already overwhelmed and see writing as a one-and-done process, it might not be the most effective use of our time!

Instead, consider isolating a couple of skills that the assignment and the unit ask the student to focus on. For example, if students are working on a summary paper, you may want to comment on things only related to the relevant skills. Don’t forget to praise what they’ve done well, too!

The downside is that sometimes, minor things get missed, but that’s fine. What research has found is that feedback points tend to stick with students more if:

1. the feedback is grounded in something that has already been covered in class,
2. there is a pattern to the errors in the writing, and
3. students can engage with concrete suggestions that refer to prior coursework.

Prioritizing a couple of skills at a time does indeed have its limits, but it’ll also make your feedback purposeful and more effective.

(By the way, if you really want the research, just let me know! I’m happy to forward it along.)

1. Use a “quick-check” rubric for drafts.

You can establish with your students a set of criteria based on the course goals and assignment purposes that you will check for when reading their drafts. This list doesn’t have to be comprehensive, but again should focus on a specific set of skills that you have been working on in class.

For example, if you are working on a rhetorical analysis, your “quick-check” rubric can include a likert scale on how well students have discussed the rhetorical appeals or connected the context and the text. And to lessen your workload, you might consider having students come up with those criteria for homework to post in a discussion board or to discuss in class.

If you’d like a sample “quick-check” rubric, just ask the Rhet Comp Office!

1. Five-at-a-Time  
   Like the title suggests, grade 5 papers at a time. This technique can still work even if you’re a batch grader! Your batch, instead of being 18 papers, is just smaller.

More tips like this will be made available on our wiki (aer.uark.edu). Feel free to contribute your own if you’d like. And if you need any help, please reach out to us at the Rhet Comp Office!

# Activities Bank (A Dynamic, Running List)

The activities listed here are suggestions for increasing student engagement. They are divided by purpose and identify whether they’re for in-class or distance learning.

The activities are only a sample of what we can come up with. For a more dynamic list, consult our wiki (aer.uark.edu), which is linked through the ENGL 2003 BlackBoard. You can also feel free to contribute your own ideas – let’s make this a running list!

Note: Online can refer to both asynchronous and synchronous learning.

## Lecture Activities

### *Short Video Clip (Online & Face-to-Face Learning)*

Use a short video clip that you’ve found online to introduce a new idea or topic. Generally speaking, students find video clips with animation to be more engaging and stimulating. Of course, clips on YouTube are fine, but here are two general sources for clips. (Please feel free to grow this list!)

* [NBC Learn: Higher Ed](https://www.nbclearn.com/portal/site/HigherEd) for clips on current events
* [American Rhetoric](https://www.americanrhetoric.com/) for audio and video clips taken from American speeches

### *Skeleton Notes (Online & Face-to-Face Learning)*

(Adapted from Belinda Richardson & Debi Griffin, Bellarmine University)

Upload/distribute a handout of the key points in a recorded or live lecture. Instruct students to fill in the blanks with details from the lecture.

Can be helpful for students who struggle to take notes. Can be combined with *“One Minute Paper” or “Support a Statement”* activities.

### *One Minute Paper (Online & Face-to-Face Learning)*

(Adapted from Belinda Richardson & Debi Griffin, Bellarmine University)

At the end of the lecture, have students write for one minute on 1-2 main points of the lecture. They can summarize the points, analyze them, ask questions about them, refute them, etc.

Can be submitted as part of the Weekly Assessment or as part of the week’s discussion board, journal, blog, etc. Can be done individually or in pairs/groups.

### *Support a Statement (Online & Face-to-Face Learning)*

(Adapted from Belinda Richardson & Debi Griffin, Bellarmine University)

After the lecture, provide a statement or a scenario that students must either support or refute using notes from the lecture or their readings.

Can be submitted as part of the Weekly Assessment or as part of the week’s discussion board, journal, blog, etc. Can be done individually or in pairs/groups.

### *Guided Analysis (Online & Face-to-Face Learning)*

(Adapted from the University of Waterloo)

Select a document to upload/distribute/share with students for analysis in class. Perform the analysis of your document with the class, specifying your procedures, and showing students how you reach your conclusions. Allow students time to conduct their own analysis following your example.

Can be helpful for analysis, synthesis, and reflection exercises. Can be submitted as part of the Weekly Assessment or as part of the week’s discussion board, journal, blog, etc. Can be done individually or in pairs/groups.

## Discussion (Large Group/Whole Class) Activities

### *VoiceThread on BlackBoard (Online & Face-to-Face Learnng)*

This online tool is integrated into BlackBoard and allows students to type or record an audio or video response to a topic that you choose. Students can create their own thread or respond to another peer’s comment in that thread.

Can be helpful as an alternative to the discussion board, as a way for students to generate questions on homework readings, or simply as a way for remote/online students to engage with each other. Threads can be reviewed in remote/online settings via a future recorded lecture or in an upcoming face-to-face class.

Visit this [University of Arkansas TIPS post on VoiceThread](https://tips.uark.edu/using-voicethread/) to see how you can set up VoiceThread for your course. Includes a video for how students would engage with it.

### *Backchannel Discussions (Synchronous Online & Face-to-Face Learning)*

(From “[The Big List of Class Discussion Strategies](https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/)” from [The Cult of Pedagogy](https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/))

This is a digital discussion that students can engage in while another activity is happening. During a lecture or some other activity, allow students in groups to comment on what is happening in a collaborative document or chatroom. Students can respond by highlighting key points, connecting them to previous lectures, raising questions, asking their peers what they think, etc.

Can be a bit confusing at first but a quick demo should solve this. Can be beneficial for students who are reluctant participants in the traditional class discussion. Conversations can be collected for informal assessment.

### *TQE (Online & Face-to-Face Learning)*

(From “[The Big List of Class Discussion Strategies](https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/)” from [The Cult of Pedagogy](https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/))

Thoughts, Questions, and Epiphanies is an activity that you can use to bolster flipped learning. Invite students to post their thoughts, questions, and epiphanies on an assigned reading on a discussion board/VoiceThread. If meeting in-person, invite students to share their thoughts at the start of the class. Allow students the opportunity to address each other. For more information, check out “[Deeper Class Discussions with the TQE Method](https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/tqe-method/)”.

## Small Group Activities

### *Breakout Groups on BlackBoard (Synchronous Online Learning)*

Collaborate Ultra is BlackBoard’s tool for synchronous conferencing. Using Breakout Groups, you can break your class into smaller groups for deeper discussion, engagement, etc.

Many of the suggestions can be adapted to online learning with the use of the Breakout Groups function.

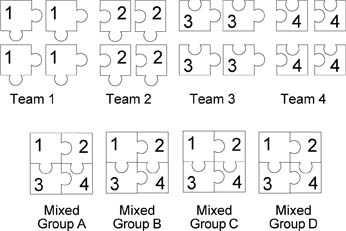
Visit this BlackBoard Tutorial on [BreakOut Groups in Collaborate Ultra](https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Moderate_Sessions/Breakout_groups) to see how you can manage your synchronous sessions.

### *Fish Bowl (Sychronous Online & Face-to-Face Learning)* (Adapted from The New York City Writing Project)

Select a small group of 2-4 students and have them sit facing each other or in a circle. The rest of the class sit in a circle around them. The small group of students will engage in a discussion on a topic, e.g., structured peer review, etc. while the larger group of students on the outside observes what is happening and takes notes. Regroup and ask the larger group of students what went on.

This technique is great for demonstrating what you want your students to during a class activity. It is best to select the students who will be doing the demo beforehand and practice with them (or give them some sort of emailed/face-to-face guidance).

### *Jigsaw (Sychronous Online & Face-to-Face Learning)*

Create and label one grouping of students that will discuss a section of an assigned reading. Give students an allotted time for this discussion. You can provide them with a set of guided questions to discuss, or they can freely discuss what happened, generate questions to ask about what they didn’t understand, react to what did happen, etc. This group is going to become the expert on this section.

When the allotted time is up, mix up the groups so that each new group contains one member from each original team. Students will have to share their expertise with their new group. Come back together as a whole class for students to share what they have learned.

1 A diagram of a sample jigsaw group. A class of 16 students is divided into 4 teams. These teams discuss and become experts on their topic. Then, these teams are mixed into new groups, so that each new mixed group has 1 person from each team.

Note from Katherine: This task requires a ton of preparation but is very effective as a method of flipped learning if done well. Students need to have done the reading beforehand in order to discuss it with their first group, but before that, instructors need to assess that students have indeed a decent grasp of their assigned reading. You may want to give a brief quiz or so to see if students have actually understood the reading.

Video Description of the Jigsaw Learning Technique

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dvi0ZvOhZs0>

Step-by-Step Preparation (and Video) of the Jigsaw Learning Technique

* <https://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/jigsaw>

## Peer Review

### *Response-Centered Reviews (Synchronous Online & Face-to-Face Learning)*

(From John C. Bean’s *Engaging Ideas*, 2nd edition)

Divide the class into groups of four. The writer reads the draft aloud or provides digital or hard copies for group members to read silently. Group members are given several minutes to take notes on their responses – they can note areas that worked well, any negative reactions (disagreements, etc.), as well as any questions that occurred while listening or reading (areas needing clarification, better evidence).

Each group member then explains what the writer they found effective/ineffective about the writing, what was clear/confusing, etc. No advice is given, only responses. During this time, the writer is not allowed to respond or make any clarifications – they are only allowed to take notes.

Repeat until everyone in the group goes. It may be best to allot a certain amount of time for each writer.

This activity is best paired with the Fishbowl activity. When the Fishbowl demo is done first, students will have an idea of what is expected of them.

### *The Supportive Friend (Online & Face-to-Face Learning)*

Divide the class into pairs and have each pair exchange drafts with another pair. For classes with an odd number of students, one will be a group of three.

Prepare in advance a set of guidelines and/or criteria you want your writers to have focused on in their drafts. These criteria can come from the rubric, lessons, the textbook, etc. The writer will identify areas in which they think they did well as well as areas in which they struggled or need help.

The reader will ask the writer what they think they did well. The reader will also ask the writer to share with them a couple of places where they struggled or are stuck. Reverse roles. Having taken notes on what their writers are proud of/concerned with, the readers will read the writers’ papers, affirming what the writer did well (if they did, in fact do it well) and offering advice/encouragement with regard to the writer’s struggles.

## Tech Resources: A Short List

Please feel free to help grow this list!

* VoiceThread   
  *See first activity under* [*Discussion Activities*](#_VoiceThread_on_BlackBoard)
* [Kaltura for BlackBoard](https://tips.uark.edu/about-kaltura/)   
  *U of A TIPS tutorial for creating video lectures, etc.*
* [Moderating Syncrhonous Sessions in BlackBoard’s Collaborate Ultra](https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Moderate_Sessions)  
  *BlackBoard tutorial for moderating synchronous sessions.*
* [ScreenCastify](https://www.screencastify.com/) for Chrome browsers
* [ScreenCast-o-Matic](https://screencast-o-matic.com/)

# Sample Syllabus Statements

Feel free to copy and paste these sample policies into your syllabus.

### *Sample Attendance Policy for Online Instruction*

From Katie Powell, doctoral candidate

“Student absences resulting from illness, family crisis, University-sponsored activities involving scholarship or leadership/participation responsibilities, jury duty or subpoena for court appearance, military duty, and religious observances are excusable according to university rules. The instructor has the right to require that the student provide appropriate documentation for any absence for which the student wishes to be excused. Moreover, during the first week of the semester, students must give to the instructor a list of the religious observances that will affect their attendance.”

—Academic Regulations University of Arkansas Catalog of Studies

Participation is a critical element of this course. Since I cannot take "attendance," our discussion board will serve in place of attendance. For this reason, no more than three (3) "absences" are allowed in this course before you will lose a letter grade, with a consequent letter grade lost for every 3 absences following. Our definition of absence here, of course, means your lack of participation in our weekly discussion posts. There will be one discussion post a week, and you will all be in charge of coming up with discussion questions. Full participation means one response of at least 150 words by THURSDAY of each week, and a response to at least 2 of your peers by the typical Sunday deadline. Depending on the circumstances of your absence, 2 of these 3 "absences" may be “made up” by scheduling a 1:1 appointment with your instructor.

### *Sample Feedback Policy for Online Instruction*

I will typically try to grade all major assignments within 1 week, and feedback will be accessed through the assignment. I will also email you when I post feedback and grades. Please note that longer assignments and group assignments might take up to two weeks.

### *Sample Communications Policy for Online Instruction*

Because we do not have built-in time in which we can see each other in person, I am committed to responding to you as quickly as possible. If you email me during the week, please expect a response within 24 hours. If you don't hear from me by then, feel free to "nudge" me to remind me to respond. Though I do check my email on the weekends, I will not respond after 8 pm, and please expect about 48 hours before you will hear back. With that and your Sunday deadline in mind, it might be important to consider questions you have about assignments before the weekend begins.

### *Inclement Weather & Emergency Procedure Policies for Online Instruction*

[]

### *Sample Peer Review Policy for Courses of All Formats*

Writing is rarely the straightforward process we wish it to be, and quality writing often involves drafts and peer reviews. Therefore, with every major assignment, you are required to turn in a draft for peer review on BlackBoard and to complete a review of another classmate’s draft through [Microsoft Office online or Google Docs]. Your instructor will provide a peer review sheet with instructions and assign you your partner a week prior, and you will have one week to complete the peer review.

After your peer has evaluated your paper, you can download a version that shows the comments and turn it into me with a brief paragraph highlighting if you found the peer feedback helpful. If you rate the feedback as unhelpful, I will then review the feedback you received to determine if points need to be taken off from your peer’s assignment.

If you do not turn in a draft or a peer review on time, you will lose [10 points per submission] off your final assignment grade.

### *Sample Late Assignment Submission Policy for Courses of All Formats*

You should aim to submit your assignment at least 30 minutes before the deadline to avoid the inevitable doom that is BlackBoard being slow when everyone submits their assignment at the same time. Note that I do not accept papers via email.

There is a 3-day grace period after the due date where you can *still* submit your assignment without it being counted late. After the third day, your assignment will not be accepted, and you will get a zero (0). If you have an incomplete assignment, you should still turn that in to get partial credit.

This timeline does not apply to drafts or peer review.

Sample Submission Timeline

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs |
| You can turn in the assignment early. | You can turn in the assignment early. | You can turn in the assignment early. | ASSIGNMENT  DUE DATE | Grace Period Day 1 | Grace Period Day 2 | Grace Period Day 3 | Assignment is late and not accepted. |

*Sample Learning Environment for Courses of All Formats*(Possible Alternative / Add-Ons to the Classroom Disruption Policy)From Katie Powell, doctoral candidate

Participation is a critical element of this course because your growth as a learner and a writer requires you being open and willing to embrace the work of Composition I. The writing process can be messy and often unpleasant, but students are encouraged to approach all writing assignments, course discussions, major assignments and peer feedback with respect and compassion. Part of this vulnerability includes being fully present. Even though we will not physically meet as a class, our classroom space should be a space of learning, vulnerability, and growth. Students are to create not only a safe, but a brave space to connect and grow as learners, writers, and students.

As a faculty member, I am committed to using your preferred name and pronouns. We will take time in our first discussion board to do introductions, at which point you can share with all members of our learning community what name and pronouns you use, as you are comfortable. Additionally, if these change at any point during the semester, please let me know and we can develop a plan to share this information with others in a way that is safe for you.