

INST 299A

Moodle

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Note:	During the summer session, the most effective way to contact me is via class discussion forum, email and instant message. I will only occasionally be checking my office phone.

Introduction

Welcome! I am excited that you are taking this class to learn more about how to use Moodle. We have people taking this class for many reasons. Some want to use Moodle to create a fully online learning environment for their students. Others want to supplement their face-to-face (f2f) classes with web-enhanced resources. Still others are looking to create a collaborative working space for their department, project, committee, or other activities. Whatever your goals, look at the tools presented over the next several weeks and think about how they might apply (or not apply) to what you are trying to accomplish. Moodle is very flexible, and although it was developed mainly as a teaching environment, it can be adapted to just about any situation.

The word Moodle was originally an acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment, which is mostly useful to programmers and education theorists. It's also a verb that describes the process of lazily meandering through something, doing things as it occurs to you to do them, an enjoyable tinkering that often leads to insight and creativity. As such it applies both to the way Moodle was developed, and to the way a student or teacher might approach studying or teaching an online course. Anyone who uses Moodle is a Moodler. The design and development of Moodle is guided by a particular philosophy of learning, a way of thinking that you may see referred to in shorthand as a "social constructionist pedagogy". *(From the Moodle documentation)*

For more on the background, philosophies, and future of Moodle, go to <http://www.collegeteacher.org/classes/doc/>.

The official description:

This course will introduce students to the course management system called Moodle. Participants will expand their course components to include the creation and management of interactive elements including quizzes, discussion forums, journals, and assignments. Participants will learn to customize the Moodle interface and will learn how to use various student tracking tools available.

Text and Materials

Reading – files available on the class website.

- Moodle Guide – Brief [pdf]
- Moodle Teacher’s Manual [pdf]
- Moodle Student Guide [pdf]
- Moodle Frequently Asked Questions [pdf]

Plug-ins:

- Adobe Acrobat Reader** - You will need the most current version of Adobe Acrobat Reader to download these files from the class website. You can Acrobat Reader from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html> .
- Quicktime** – available from <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/> to view video segments.

Course Policies:

We are all busy professionals. As such, my focus in this class is not on hitting benchmarks, deadlines, or other markers. My objective for this course is that you will learn something useful that will benefit your students and enhance your teaching practice. If you focus on that, and not on the “grade”, you will be much more successful in the long run.

A successful student in this class will be very self-motivated. We will cover some interesting and important information in class, but it is up to you to take the time to explore and expand your skills. As with anything, the more you practice, the more skilled you will become. Keep in mind that just reading about Moodle won’t teach you anything... this is a HANDS-ON class. You **MUST** apply what you are learning, try it out, spin it around, mess up a few times, and work out the kinks through trial and error if you really want to be proficient. Making mistakes is not only ok, it is expected. Working with classmates on assignments is encouraged. Going out and finding solutions and then sharing them with the class is something I want you to do. Don’t expect me to give you all the answers. Often times I will wait a little while to respond because I know a classmate will have the answer or that you will figure it out on your own. In that way, the learning becomes a much more powerful experience because it is **YOURS**. Don’t panic ... take a deep breath, relax, and have fun. If you do the assignments, play well with others, and don’t give up, you’ll be fine.

If you find that you are having difficulties with an assignment, please let me know. I am always willing to help in whatever way I can.

Attendance Policy

This is a five week course. We have a lot of content to cover and not a lot of time to do it in. You will be expected to participate actively in class discussions and activities. It will be to your advantage to log in to the class website at least 3-4 times a week to check on discussions. If you will be traveling or otherwise unable to access the class website for a period of more than a few days, drop me a note and let me know so that I won’t wonder where you disappeared to! **Just a note:** my policy is to NOT drop students. If you find you can no longer take the class, please withdraw through the college.

Homework

The main outcome for this course will be the creation of your own Moodle website. All of the activities posted will help you in that development process. In addition, discussion questions will be posted that will ask you to think about what you are creating and that will give you an opportunity to share ideas with your classmates. You are encouraged to actively participate in these discussions.

Class Communication:

This class will use two modes of communication: asynchronous and synchronous.

In a nutshell, “**asynchronous communication**” is where the people are in different places at different times. For example, a discussion forum is asynch, as is email. I post something when I get there, you show up later on and post something also. You have the time to think about what you want to write, to research your responses, to bring in additional resources that contribute to the conversation. This is a place where you want to check your spelling, use complete sentences, etc. There will be several discussion forums set up throughout the semester, including the following:

Student Union - introductions, general questions, stuff not necessarily related to the class.

Help Desk - technical questions about the code. Students are encouraged to help each other find solutions to problems so if you think you can help, by all means, jump in.

Topical Forums - Each week we will have a topic to discuss. These will be placed in the box for that week.

We will be using Moodle (<http://www.collegeteacher.org/classes>) for our class website. New to this version of Moodle is a private message feature. When you log in and have a new message, you will see a notification in the Messages block. At other times, if you want to access your messages you can click the button at the bottom of your profile or check the Messages block on the main class page. To send a message to a classmate, you can click on the icon next to someone's name to pull up the message box. These messages are just between you and whoever you send them to. I don't have access to them at all.

“**Synchronous communication**” means that people are in the same virtual place at the same time. For example, instant messenger, Chat rooms, phone conferences. We will use this communication space to hold class Chats, office hours, troubleshooting sessions, etc. Synch communication is freer flowing, like a brainstorming session. Chat shorthand is often used and spelling/grammar doesn't count, as long as we can tell what you are talking about. We will use this as a class to discuss major assignments and topics, and you will use it individually to communicate with your classmates and instructor.

We will use the Moodle chat room for small group chats in week 2. You will be assigned to groups and will have several weeks to organize a meeting time and submit a chat transcript before the end of the course.

I also use AIM (AOL Instant Messenger) for synch communication in all of my classes. If you have never used IM (instant messenger), I would like to encourage you to at least try it out. IM has been one of the most effective tools that I use in making connections with my online students and in helping them make connections with each other. We will discuss the pros and cons of using IM technology in week 2.

You do not need to be a paid subscriber to AOL to use this AIM. If you already have an AOL account, then you can use your buddy list screen name with AIM also. AIM is a simple program that you can download and install on your computer. If you don't want to install it, there is a web-based option called AIM Express available from the website. It isn't as stable as having the program on your own machine, but it's a good option if you are connecting from a library or school computer lab. Once you have set up an account, email me your screen name and I will add it to the class list.

If you prefer a different flavor of instant messenger (ICQ, MSN, Yahoo!, GoogleTalk, Skype) that's ok, but I would still like you to set up an AIM account. Getting everyone on the same service is helpful when you need to reach out to a classmate for help. I use a nice little open source program called GAIM (<http://gaim.sourceforge.net>) that lets me load my buddy lists from all of the different IM clients in one interface.

If you see me online, don't hesitate to say hi or ask a question. That means my office door is open. I am usually online throughout the day and into the evening and am available for individual sessions at specific times by arrangement. Be aware that I am usually pretty busy when I am online, so even though I love to talk to you about class stuff, I probably don't have time to engage in a discussion about the weather, the latest sports scores, or what your Aunt Petunia did last night. It's always good chat manners to ask if someone is available before launching into your question. I'll let you know if I am in the middle of something and need to wait. I want to be able to give you my full attention, so please be patient :)

Note on email: Any email you send me... any at all... MUST have the subject line "**Moodle: your name, topic**". The key is "**Moodle**". I am teaching other classes and several workshops, all involving email. On top of that I get messages from several other projects, and spam of course. In a normal day, this amounts to somewhere between 100-300 messages. My email program is set up to scan incoming mail for the subject line and to sort them into a folder for this class. That way I can see it and give you a timely response. Otherwise, it ends up in my inbox with a hundred other messages and I can't guarantee that I will get to it anytime soon. As a matter of fact, I can almost promise that I'll miss it there because I'll be looking in the folder for this class for any communication from you. Please take the time to use the correct subject line for this class. I sure would hate to miss your messages.

Schedule of Topics:

Week	Topics
One	Using the Student View – Participants, Activities Box, Editing Profile Setting Up Your Course
Two	Organizing Your Class Site Using Communication Tools
Three	Adding Activities and Resources to Your Course
Four	Using Assessment Tools and Log Files
Five	Final Project Workshop – Creating your Moodle Course

Grading:

There are many reasons you may be taking this class. Whatever those reasons are, I expect you to take an active part in your learning process. Even the most experienced students tell me that they learn a thing or two they didn't know before. Technology is a field that is constantly in motion. Successful students are: curious about how things work; very self-motivated; able to work in groups and teams; constantly pushing the boundaries of their knowledge.

Having said that, I will not assign a bunch of busy work. There will be plenty to do and learn without that! Homework assignments will be designed to allow you to practice the skills we are learning and to give you an opportunity to think reflectively on what you have read. Semester grades will be based on discussion participation and completion of the final project. You will be graded on the following:

Discussion.....50%
Final Project.....50%

The final project will be creating a Moodle course shell that includes the following:

- Two completed weeks
 - Lecture Notes
 - Assignments
 - Discussions
 - Assessments
 - Activities
 - Resources

Framework for remaining weeks in place