

Online Instruction (within English Courses and others) at MCC  
Presentation by Alexandra Fields and Ray Dademo

In order to successfully facilitate student learning within online courses, faculty may wish to structure their online courses as follows:

- The course content should be divided as evenly as possible across weekly modules. Each weekly module should contain instructor-generated content (ideally, video recorded lessons), a weekly discussion board that requires students to engage thoughtfully with the content and with their peers and instructor, links to relevant texts to support student learning, and any assignments that are to be submitted for the week along with their corresponding rubrics.
- The instructor should be facilitating learning within the discussion boards. This can be done by providing clarifying information, highlighting strengths in students' responses and asking for additional information, and/or posing guided questions in response to students' posts that facilitate more critical thought and discussion.
- Faculty should provide specific, individualized feedback to students within the comments section of SpeedGrader and within students' papers.

In order to meet Middle States accreditation requirements and ensure positive learning experiences for students, please teach students how to engage thoughtfully with you and with their peers within the discussion threads. Review proper "netiquette" with students, and provide examples of strong responses and weak responses. Give clear grading criteria for discussion posts. For example, you may have a minimum word, minimum sentence, or minimum paragraph requirement for initial posts and for student replies to one another.

When giving feedback to students within the discussion threads, please remember that the act of sharing writing publicly, within a discussion board, may be intimidating to students, and so it is important to create a warm, welcoming space. Keeping this in mind, we suggest that your comments to students within the discussion thread begin by highlighting a strength within a student's posting, and then shift to clarifying questions or guiding questions that facilitate more critical reflection. The individual comments within SpeedGrader can then be used for more critical feedback as needed since those comments are private between you and your student.

Building a Module:  
A Checklist of “Must-Haves”

On the “Home/Welcome” page of your course, include a welcome note that includes your contact information.

Under “Syllabus,” please post the course syllabus with the department’s learning outcomes, your contact information, and all relevant policies. (For a sample, please consult the Faculty Guidebook or with your department chair/coordinator)

Prior to the first day of classes, send a “First Day/Getting Started” email, explaining how to navigate the course, where to access course materials, and how to contact you.

Each week’s assignments are contained in a discrete module, typically published (and, thus, available to students) on Sunday. Each week’s module should be fully designed and built in advance of publishing. All fully online courses are designed to be self-paced; therefore, it’s essential that the week’s deadlines and instructions be communicated clearly and explicitly.

To aid this communication—and fulfill MCC’s expectations for online learning—follow this list as you build each week’s modules.

In order to build your first module, click “Modules” in the course navigation bar. Click the blue “Add a Module” button. Then title it: “Week One.”

Now that the module is created, it needs to be populated with a week’s worth of material. Remember that a fully online course is not simply *all the work* from a face-to-face section, transferred onto Canvas. Every module should be curated to (a) guide the student through his/her/their assignments in a logical, intuitive sequence and (b) target specific steps in the writing process. We recommend that each module be populated with the following must-haves:

- A “Read Me First” page
  - How to do it: Click the “Add Item” button. Using the drop-down menu, click “Add Page to Week One.” Click “[New Page]” and title it: “Read Me First: Week One.”
  - What to say: When editing the “Read Me First” page, be sure to lay out the sequence of the week’s assignments in the order students are expected to complete them. Provide clear instructions and expectations. When you’ve finished making this list, use the “chain-link” icon to insert hyperlinks. This will centralize the “Read Me First” as a point of departure and navigation. Students will be able click through to other relevant pages.
- Assignment pages with clear instructions
  - How to do it: Click the “Add Item” button. Using the drop-down menu, click “Add Assignment to Week One.” Click “[New Assignment]” and title it.
  - What to say: When assigning student work, include: (1) deadlines/due dates and (2) some written instructions for the assignment. Feedback from Summer I/II

students indicates that clear, detailed written instructions (in conjunction with audiovisual instruction in the video/PowerPoint portion) are useful in aiding student success.

- Discussion thread
  - How to do it: Click the “Add Item” button. Using the drop-down menu, click “Add Discussion to Week One.” Click “[New Topic]” and title it.
  - What to say: The goal of each week’s discussion should be two-fold, (1) asking students to share their original work and (2) comment upon the work of at least two peers. With clear deadlines and explicit instructions, make certain that students are submitting their initial post by mid-week and offering up substantive replies by week’s end. Instructors should provide a sample post that serves as a model for student contribution and a rubric that outlines grading criteria.
- A short video lesson + PowerPoint
  - How to do it: Using Canvas Studio and your webcam, film a 5-10 minute video lesson that targets specific learning outcomes for the week and gives a human face to all this online instruction.
  - What to say: Brevity, visual aids, and your face make all the difference here. Students should get targeted explanation that feeds directly into this week’s assignments. Referring to a PowerPoint (1) tethers the instruction to something tangible, (2) gives students another reference point and allows them to pause the video and take notes, and (3) bolsters multimodal learning. Please note that this is not an invitation to “video lecture” (for no sane man could sit through it!).
- Links to any relevant supplemental material you’ve created
  - How to do it: Under “Files,” upload any materials you’ve created (worksheets, samples, etc.). Once they’ve been uploaded to the course, you can either:
    - Click “Add Item” -> “Files” and add directly to the module
    - Include a link to the file in one of your course pages.
- Links to any relevant supplemental material that you’ve not created
  - How to do it: Click the “Add Item” button. Using the drop-down menu, click “Add External URL to Week One.” Paste the web address under URL (owl.purdue.edu) and title the link under “Page Name” (“Sample Works Cited page”).

Synchronous meetings or instruction (via Zoom or Google Hangouts) may be offered as optional elements of the course; however, “live” attendance cannot be graded.

## Sample First Day/Getting Started Email

Hi, Everyone!

I am writing this email to you with the goal of introducing myself prior to the start of the semester and to ensure that each of you will be able to successfully access our first Remote Live class together on September 8th from 11:00 AM - 12:20 PM.

To be clear, the majority of the College's English classes are being offered in one of two formats for the Fall, 2020 semester: either as synchronous Remote Live classes in which students meet "Live" online with their professor and peers during the class's normally scheduled in-person times, or as asynchronous online classes in which students work independently over the course of the week to complete weekly assignments and meet assignment due dates without having any "Live" meetings with their peers and professor. *Our class is a Remote Live class, which means that we will meet together online twice per week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 AM-12:00 PM.* In order to meet together for these Remote Live class sessions, you will need to have access to Zoom, which the College has purchased for us to use. Our class meetings will always be held through the following Zoom link: \_\_\_\_\_. Please note that the link will only work for you during our scheduled class session, so if you try to use the link now, you will be told that the meeting is not yet available. You can access our first class meeting initially through the link above, and then for future classes, you will be able to access our class meetings directly through a Zoom link within our Canvas class.

In order to prepare for our first class together, I suggest that you download the Zoom app onto whatever device you plan to use to login to our classes, and I recommend that you use a device that has camera access, if possible, so that we can see each other during class together. If you are nervous about using Zoom, feel free to practice with a friend or relative by creating a Zoom meeting and trying out the various Zoom features. For our first class, when you login to Zoom, Zoom will ask you if you want to connect your audio and video. Be sure to connect your audio so that we can hear you during class. I also recommend that you try to find a quiet disturbance-free space for class together, or, if that is not possible, that you try using a headset with a microphone during class so that background noise cannot be heard loudly when you speak. If you have any technological struggles accessing our class or using Zoom, please email IT at [help\\_desk@middlesexcc.edu](mailto:help_desk@middlesexcc.edu). If you have any trouble using Canvas, please email e-learning for support at [elearning@middlesexcc.edu](mailto:elearning@middlesexcc.edu).

Please know that this is a new experience for me just as it is for many of you, and so we will navigate this Remote Live learning experience together this semester. I have attached a copy of our class syllabus to this email so that you can familiarize yourself with the work we will complete this semester together as well as my expectations as your professor, and I look forward to getting to know each of you over the course of the upcoming semester.