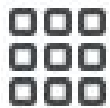


Tech Snacks: Start of Semester Spring 2021

- If your Spring 2021 courses aren't showing up in "My Courses," click on the grid button in Brightspace and type "202130" into the search bar. Click the pushpin icon next to each 2021 course and unpin any old courses that you no longer want pinned in "My Courses." If you notice any discrepancies in the Spring courses you have access to, check with your Chair right away. 
- If you're teaching multiple sections of the same course, you can ask Jason Geer or Brittany Garden to merge sections, or to rename sections for you. If you are merging sections, don't do anything else with the courses until the merge process is complete (it will take overnight from when we merge the shells). Please send an email with the course numbers and sections you would like to merge.
- If you want to copy material from a previous course into your new semester course, do the following: go to the new course and click "Edit Course," then "Import/Export/Copy Components" and follow the prompts from there. Ask Jason or Brittany for assistance if needed.
- Update your course syllabus, upload it to the Content area and delete the old syllabus.
- Go to the "Edit Course" tab and select "Manage Dates." Update or add due dates, start dates, and end dates in the following areas:
 - Assignments
 - Announcements
 - Quizzes
 - Discussions
- Double-check any links to external videos or other resources to make sure they still work. Fix or replace any broken links. Click on your Brightspace profile name and click "View as Student" to see the course as a student would see it.
- Delete outdated Announcements. If you're re-using old Announcements, uncheck "Always Show Start Dates" in the editing window. Update "Welcome" and/or "Getting Started" messaging for the new course.
- Note that courses are open to students starting **January 12**, one week before the official start of class. You should try to at least have a welcome message and syllabus visible to students by then, as some students will start looking at their courses as soon as they open.
- Consider recording a short video introduction, especially for online-only courses. Talk about yourself, the objectives and structure of the course, and any other critical information that students should know going into the class. Brightspace's Video Note tool is ideal for recording yourself talking. Otherwise, Zoom, Webex, or Screencast-o-matic offer easy screen recording solutions. Contact Jason or Brittany if you need assistance.
- Talk to ITS (helpdesk@msun.edu) if you have special computer lab or classroom software needs for Spring Semester 2021. Make sure any required software is up to date and working.
- Let OTLE know if you have any additional instructional technology needs, and we will coordinate with ITS to do our best to acquire needed equipment. A list of our current technologies for checkout is on the OTLE website under "Brightspace and Instructional Tech."
- Plan to attend a "Try Out Your Classroom Technology" training session the week before class starts in January (more info TBA in December).
- This is also a good time to backup your electronic media. If you have a lot of critical files on your computer, you should make copies on external hard drives, thumb drives, or cloud backup services like Google Drive.

Communication and Presence

COVID-19 has caused more stress to both students and faculty than during normal semesters. Establishing your presence first in your courses (especially for online courses, but also in face-to-face courses) will help ease students' fears.

- ❑ **An Introduction.** In your Brightspace courses, using the “Announcement” tool to introduce yourself and welcome students is a good way to establish immediate presence. Uploading an introduction video or photo establishes a “face-to-face” connection.
- ❑ **Ongoing Announcements.** The “Announcement” page in Brightspace is the first page your students will see when logging into your course throughout the semester. Using this tool to check-in with your students regularly will signal your presence in the course.
- ❑ **Set Clear Expectations for Communication.**
Be as straightforward and upfront as possible with students about the Covid-19 situation and your expectations for communication. Sample syllabus statements are at msun.edu/otle.
Let them know:
 - How they can expect to hear from you about important course matters (through Brightspace emails, Announcements, etc.).
 - How you prefer to be contacted and when they can expect a response.
 - When and how to attend your office hours.
 - How you expect them to notify you if they need to be remote.
 - How you plan to deal with remote attendance and/or work.
 - That you're available to help connect them to any campus resources they might need during this strange time.

Organization

Many students are facing the challenge of taking more online (or hybrid) courses than ever before, and it tends to be more difficult to stay organized and accountable when they are not seeing their professors/instructors every day. How you can help:

- ❑ **Create a Visual Schedule.** Make sure a clear timeline or calendar for the semester (even if it's tentative) is either in your syllabus or in the Course Documents section in Brightspace.
- ❑ **Use Due Dates in Brightspace.** When due dates are set in for activities in Brightspace, students can see them in the Brightspace calendar. This helps immensely with student organization.
- ❑ **Use Brightspace Modules.** Put everything that students need to see for your course into the respective Brightspace weekly or biweekly modules. If students have to check 3 or 4 different spots for each of their courses every week to find their assignments, they will quickly lose track of what needs to be done.

See our Brightspace Tutorial video on Organizing Course Structure in Brightspace here (also accessible by visiting the “MSU-Northern OTLE” video library on YouTube):
<https://youtu.be/yz2ZdC6MyRc>

Survey to Assess Student Needs

One way to address student needs right off the bat is to create a survey to check in with students about their situations for Spring 2021. Sometimes students are more likely to submit a survey response than to draft an email.

- ❑ Use a Google or Microsoft Form or the Brightspace Quiz tool
- ❑ Ask students about their tech situation in case they need to go remote
- ❑ Ask if there is anything about their situation during Covid that they'd like you to know about
- ❑ Ask if they have any concerns about Spring 2021 or your course that they'd like you to know about ahead of time