

Winter Weather has Canceled Class...Now What?



As instructors we are tasked with the challenge of keeping up the momentum of student learning we have created in our face-to-face sessions. How can we do this in the absence of face-to-face interaction with our students?

We might start by asking ourselves-when can learning take place? In an ideal design, students can learn:

- Prior to in-class presentation of material- by having students prepare for new learning and exposing them to this learning content
- During class- via challenging students' understanding
- After in-class review of material- by reflecting, evaluating, and reinforcing class learning content

Class cancellation will undoubtedly impact our “during class” learning opportunities, but by supplementing our class with additional “prior to class” and “after class” learning opportunities through our Blackboard course site, we can keep student learning momentum moving forward during this time.

The information that follows helps provide context for crafting these prior to/ after class learning opportunities, as well as some suggested tools to use in Blackboard to provide students these opportunities.

This guide, in addition to the technology resources provided by the Educational Technology Department, will help students keep up their learning momentum in the absence of a face-to-face class session.

First Things First-Communicating With our Students



There are many things to consider when a sudden change in course plans occurs due to winter weather cancelling a face-to-face class meeting. As instructors we will likely want to begin with a solid **communication plan** for how the week will run. Use of Blackboard's announcement tool is a great way to distribute our plan for students quickly. Our communication plan should include the following:

- What is expected of students during this time period?
 - What new learning resources or activities will you provide?
 - Will there be any new assignments?
 - Will any preexisting assignments be modified or eliminated?
 - Will their due dates change?
- How will class look during the next in-class meeting?
 - Will learning content simply be moved back a week, with a make-up session to follow?
 - Or, are students expected to review this material on their own?
 - If so, what will constitute evidence of student learning?
 - Or, might two sessions be merged into one to account for the lost class?
 - If so, what should students be doing/ reviewing to prepare for this next session?
- What should students do if they have any questions or concerns during this time?
 - Also, include when they can expect to hear back from you

We should try to keep in mind that inclement weather will impact students differently, depending on their location, access to Blackboard/internet, as well as their relative comfort or skill with using Blackboard. We should be prepared to accommodate students with flexible due date expectations as their experience will vary during the inclement weather.

Learning Activities that Can Take Place Prior to In-Class Presentation



Prior to in-class review of course learning content, instructors can keep class momentum on track by preparing students for the new learning that will take place, via:

Entry points-here we prepare students for new learning content by explaining the significance of what is to be covered in a way that matters to them. Personal and concrete references to content should be shared so students know why they should care about the learning that is to take place. As an analogy-think of an entry point as a movie trailer. By providing a quick introduction to students about why this learning is important, hopefully we make them receptive to the knowledge and eager to learn more.

- Effective entry points will be **concrete and tied to personal or professional relevance for the student**
- Technology options for entry points:
 - Posting an announcement in Blackboard
 - Creating a quick Kaltura video clip

First Exposure-here we want to provide content for students to explore. After an effective entry point, students will hopefully be asking themselves, "What can I do to learn more?" Our role as instructor is to provide an answer to this question. Consider giving students something to read/watch and then something to do/discuss as it relates to this learning content.

- Effective first exposure activities will build off of entry point interest by demonstrating **why this particular knowledge is necessary for success in the class/professional field**
- Technology options for entry points:
 - Supplying learning content via uploading items, videos, or web-links into Blackboard
 - Having students complete a task after reviewing the content, such as a discussion forum, blog, quiz, or assignment

Reinforcing Student Learning After In-Class Presentation



After class presentation, we should provide students with multiple, varied opportunities to engage with course content. We may consider including additional reinforcement for learning content that was presented the week prior to our canceled class session, so that students do not lose the learning momentum that we have had up that point. Some of the different activities we may consider include:

Evaluations-here we have students retrieve previously learned content to strengthen connections between ideas presented in the course. Some technology options for evaluations include:

- Assignments in Blackboard (written assignments, projects, etc.)
- Quizzes in Blackboard

Reflections- here we give students the opportunity to work with previously learned content in a new, perhaps personal manner. Some technology options for reflections include using Blackboard in creating:

- Journals
- Blogs
- Discussions

Self-regulation-these activities allow students to assess how their efforts impacted their learning. We want to ask students questions such as:

- How did you prepare for this assignment? How much time did you spend reading? Reviewing notes? Studying alone? Studying in groups? What is your predicted score on this assignment? What might you do differently next time?
 - These questions, sometimes referred to as **cognitive wrappers**, allow students to assess what they know about what they know, as a means of making students better learners overall. These meta-cognitive skills are very rarely addressed in the normal ebb and flow of a class and as such a cyber-day might be a good opportunity to have students reflect on their practices and how they have impacted their performance.

The following Blackboard tools may be helpful in providing students self-regulation opportunity:

- Journal
- Surveys
- Anonymous discussion

Reinforcements- think of this as the “exit point,” the opposite of our entry points. Here we try to reinforce the learning that has taken place by reminding students of the role this content plays in the larger context of the course, the curriculum, or in their future careers. Similar to entry points, we may consider the following Blackboard tools to provide reinforcement opportunities for students:

- Posting an announcement in Blackboard
- Creating a quick Kaltura video clip