

What this is

The Innovative Instructor is a forum that publishes articles related to teaching excellence at Johns Hopkins

About the CER

The Center for Educational Resources partners with faculty and graduate students to extend instructional impact by connecting innovative teaching strategies and instructional technologies

For information on how to contribute to *The Innovative Instructor* or to access archived articles,

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- www.cer.jhu.edu/ii
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Forum categories

Pedagogy Forum

Hopkins professors share successful strategies for teaching excellence

Technology Forum

Information about emerging technologies, who is using them, and why you should know

Best Practice Forum

"How To" workshops on using technologies and applying innovative instructional methods

Blackboard

Amy Brusini, Instructional Technology Specialist, CER

What it is

Blackboard is a web-based course management system that allows instructors to present course material and interact with students in an online environment. Depending on the instructor's needs, Blackboard can be used either to supplement face to face courses or present courses entirely online. Blackboard features a broad collection of tools, including a calendar, announcements, discussion boards, blogs, chat rooms, tests and surveys, a grade center, and more, all of which can be customized and configured for each course.



Who's using it

In the fall of 2010, the full time programs of the Krieger and Whiting Schools migrated from WebCT to Blackboard 9. The School of Medicine, School of Nursing, Carey School of Business, Peabody, SAIS, and the part-time programs of the Krieger and Whiting Schools (AAP and EP) are also using Blackboard.

Who's managing it

Blackboard 9 is hosted on IT servers at the university and maintained by IT@JH staff. Faculty support for Blackboard is provided by individual divisions. The CER continues to provide instructional user support for Homewood faculty.

Why it matters

The continuous access to online resources and automated course management that Blackboard 9 provides is a benefit to both

students and instructors. Students stay more organized knowing that they can go to one place on the web for all of their course materials, rather than trying to remember several websites. 24/7 access to course material online reduces the potential for excuses. When students miss class, the assignments and handouts are still available to them. Blackboard's communication tools, such as the blog or the discussion board, help to engage students actively in the course outside of class, encourage active learning, and help increase student-to-student and instructor-to-student communication.

Instructors can use Blackboard to assess student learning continuously throughout the semester. By reviewing discussion board and blog postings, faculty can see how well students are grasping course material and what areas may need to be reviewed. Blackboard also helps instructors to reach students with different learning styles. Lecture notes and images can be posted for visual learners, while podcasts can be posted for auditory learners. Blackboard also provides instructors with the ability to email the entire class, certain groups of students, or only TAs, all from within Blackboard. Other time savers for instructors include the ability to automatically grade online tests and to notify students of upcoming deadlines using the announcements tool.

How it can be used

The tools available in Blackboard present a host of opportunities for student collaboration and course management and time-saving strategies to help instructors manage their courses. Here are some examples:

- **Communicate with students** using the *Discussion Board*. Assign students weekly discussion questions. Grade students on the quality of their participation and responses to their peers. Graded discussions are automatically entered into the Blackboard *Grade Center*, which serves as a grade book.
- **Share information and thoughts** throughout the semester using a *Course Blog*.
- **Manage electronic file submissions** from students using the *Assignment Tool*. Instead of cluttering your email account, have students submit their papers (and other assignment files - ppt, jpg, mp3, etc.) through the assignment tool in Blackboard. Assignment grades are automatically entered into the Blackboard *Grade Center*.
- **Manage and post grades** using the Blackboard *Grade Center* (grade book). A number of functions, including averaging, weighting, and dropping highest and lowest grades, are available. Create custom grading scales based on assignment criteria. Download and upload grades to and from a spreadsheet file, such as Excel.
- **Create student groups for collaboration on team assignments** using the *Groups Tool*. Each group is assigned its own set of collaboration tools by the instructor. For example, a group could have its own blog and discussion board separate from the course blog and discussion board.
- **Post the syllabus, lecture notes, links, or other files** you want to share with students. Create *folders* within your site to organize your material. Use the *adaptive release feature* to automatically release items for specific periods of time.
- **Automatically alert students** to new items posted to the course, as well as institution-wide announcements, such as weather-related emergencies, using the *Notification System*.

Blackboard has developed and continues to expand the functionalities of its mobile app, Blackboard Mobile Learn. Using the app students can access content, read announcements, participate in online discussions, blogs, and journals, view and play media, take mobile tests, and check their grades. Future enhancements to the app include the instructor's ability to grade assignments and tests.

How to get started

All courses are automatically added to Blackboard from ISIS. Instructors will need to login to <http://blackboard.jhu.edu> with their JHED ID and password to view and access their courses. Courses will be listed in the 'My Courses Plus' module. (Note: If a course is not listed, please send an email to blackboard@jhu.edu. The registrar will be notified that the course needs to be 'flagged' for Blackboard.)

The CER has developed several online Blackboard tutorials that can be accessed at <http://help.sset.jhu.edu/display/Bb/Home>. We also offer training workshops each semester for beginning and advanced users. Please check our website (<http://www.cer.jhu.edu/bb.html#training>) to register for upcoming training sessions. Individual consultations are also available. Send an email to cerweb@jhu.edu if you'd like to make an appointment with a staff member.

Where it is going

Blackboard's tools and functionality bring greater enrichment to both traditional and online learning environments. Version 9 presents an updated user interface, including drag and drop capability, consolidated page layouts, contextual menus, and accessibility improvements. It also includes Web 2.0 functionality, such as social networking opportunities,

throughout. Each fall and spring semester IT@JH updates Blackboard with the latest service packs. These service packs include bug fixes as well as product enhancements and new features. Upcoming enhancements include a test access log, an attendance tracking tool, and a revised portfolio tool.

Additional Resources

- Latest updates and information about Blackboard at the Homewood campus: <http://www.cer.jhu.edu>

Author's Background

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Amy Brusini works at the Center for Educational Resources (CER), a teaching and learning center for Homewood faculty. Amy provides support and training for Homewood faculty on Blackboard, the university's course management system, as well as instructional design support. Amy has a Master's Degree in Education from Johns Hopkins University.