Learning with Blackboard at SPH

Overview
The use of courseware, the software used to create and display course web pages, has grown steadily across the University and is being used extensively at the School of Public Health as a supplement to classroom instruction. At SPH these pages are created using Blackboard. These course webs as well as course webs from previous semesters can be found at <http://blackboard.bu.edu>.

Logins
Course web pages are secure so usernames and passwords are required. To access course web pages you need to get a computer (ACS) account at the Learning Resources Center in the Alumni Library. When you get the account you will be provided with a BU username and Kerberos password as well as an e-mail account. You will login to Blackboard webs for courses for which you are registered by using your BU login name and Kerberos password. Your e-mail address will enable you to communicate easily with the instructor and other students in the class.

E-mail
The communication tools within Blackboard rely on e-mail. The Blackboard system uses the e-mail address that you have listed in the BU Directory. This directory is the source of student contact information for most BU faculty and administrators, and is also used as a source for student e-mails by various automated systems within the university. For privacy purposes, only you can change your own BU Directory entry or e-mail forwarding. If you want to use a non-BU e-mail address, go to http://www.bu.edu/directory/ and select Change Your Entry. To automatically forward e-mail sent to your ACS account, you should also go to the ACS e-mail forwarding page at http://www.bu.edu/htbin/acsmail.pl/forward and follow the directions there.

Technical Prerequisites
You can access course webs from several locations on campus including the Learning Resources Center. To access course webs from home or from other locations off campus, you will need:
- A PC or Macintosh computer with an Internet connection
- A web browser (Netscape, Internet Explorer, 6.0 or higher) Note: AOL is not a reliable browser for Blackboard.
- Your browser must have cookies and javascript enabled. If you’re not sure about this capability with your browser you can check it by going to: http://www.bu.edu/webcentral/learning/courseware/prereqs/
- Associated programs if recommended by your instructor (ex: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Adobe Acrobat).

Educational Advantages
There are many potential advantages for both the instructor and the student when a course is supplemented with web-based tools. These include:
- Enhancing student-to-student and faculty-to-student communication
- Enabling student-centered teaching approaches (group and project based activities)
- Providing 24/7 accessibility to course materials
- Providing practice and feedback to assess student progress

Contact your instructor if you have any difficulties accessing the web for your course. Your instructor may post course grades on the course web; however, course grades are officially communicated by the University Registrar through the Student Link and TelGrade and not through Blackboard. There is additional information regarding Blackboard and e-mail accounts and Kerberos passwords in your student handbook.

Below is the Welcome page when you log in to Blackboard. Links to courses with webs you are enrolled in will appear on this page. To view other course webs click the All Courses tab and for technical assistance click Help.
The picture above shows a typical course web home page. These pages can be modified and some sections may be disabled or additional sections added by an instructor.

**Announcements** – This is the home page for the course web. Here instructors can provide current information about course logistics or current events relevant to course material. This area appears in the main course window each time you enter the course.

**Staff Information** - This area contains specific information about staff or faculty that are involved in the course.

**Course Information** - This area is used to display general information about the course. Typically, this contains an approved course description, a listing of pre-requisites, and times/locations for lecture components.

**Course Documents** - This content-specific area is used to hold the majority of information that will be delivered online such as course outlines, handouts, lecture materials, and related readings.

**Assignments** - This area holds course assignments, tests, quizzes, and surveys.

**Communication** - This area holds all of the communication tools. Discussion, chat, and e-mail are located here, along with student and group pages.

**Discussion Board** – If the online discussion is a prominent feature of your course, an instructor may decide to create a separate section for this as was done in the web above.

**External Links** - This area lists helpful URLs you can use to take virtual "field trips" or view related course material.

**Tools** - This area holds the tools needed to submit information to the Instructor, view a course calendar, check your grades, manage your homepage, and edit your profile.

**An important note about printing**
You may want to print some of the Blackboard web pages; however, printing web pages can be tricky and yield some unexpected results. Here are some printing tips:

- If the instructor has put documents up as PDF files you need Adobe Acrobat Reader to view these. To print these PDF files use the print button inside the Adobe Acrobat Reader window.
- If the instructor has documents on the web as Word files (.doc) or as PowerPoint files (.ppt) it’s best to download these files to your computer before you print them. Therefore, you avoid printing off the web; however, this requires that you have Word or PowerPoint on your computer.
- PowerPoint files that have been saved as HTML are available this way for more convenient viewing on the web, not for printing. These pages print out one page at a time. This is both costly and wasteful. Do not print PowerPoint files saved a HTML.

If you have difficulties accessing your Blackboard web contact [http://www.bu.edu/help/blackboard](http://www.bu.edu/help/blackboard)

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