Digital Writing Toolkit

The engaged and innovative use of technology can enhance the learning experience both inside and outside of the classroom. Below are some suggestions and resources for incorporating instructional technology into your course.

General Suggestions for the Effective Use of Instructional Technology

Avoid grief with these tips for effective use of technology in your course.

- Require that students use one e-mail address and one username (preferably with their name in it) so they can be identified on the Web.
- Make sure you get their address right away, and not just on paper, which often goes awry; ask them to e-mail you.
- Explaining online tasks is easier when the students can look at the screen, so either get a smart classroom or bring a TV or projector to class at least once or twice.
- It's better to require that students post regularly rather than just a certain number of times by the end of the semester—because they may only post at the end.
- Perhaps suggest to students that they write their posts in a word processor and then copy them to the blog, which may save some grief.
- Students should be encouraged to edit their work online just as much as they do offline. However, in order to foster dialogue, try to engage with student posts on the level of content rather than mechanics.
- Student wikis are more likely to be successful if it is a topic the students feel they are experts on—if it is a matter of simple observation or interpretation, for example.
- The Google habit is sometimes deleterious to student research skills, but you can combat this by using Google in class. Demonstrate to students how they need to be discriminating about sources and information that they find online.
Blogging

Create an online course journal to organize and make available to students important course materials and web resources, and to provide a forum for student writing and group discussion. Course blogs are a great way to extend classroom conversations and to incorporate low-stakes writing into your course. Here are a variety of blog development tools:

- Blogger
- LiveJournal
- Tumblr
- WordPress

Wikis

Develop a course webpage that allows for synchronous use (users may contribute simultaneously, at once, from different sites), which may be helpful for collaborative group writing, ongoing development and revision of a group project, and group discussion. Wikis provide an excellent forum for collaborative writing. Here are a couple of wiki development tools.

- PBWorks
- Wikia

Web Apps

Explore these online tools to facilitate and promote student writing, identify Web content resources, and organize and make available course materials. These sites provide a host of content and functionalities that can enhance your course.

- Flickr (image posts)
- Goodreads (book review library)
- Google (Maps, Docs, Groups) (online surveys, synchronous writing, list-serves, etc.)
- Podbean (podcast sound posts)
- Surveymonkey (online surveys)
- Twitter (social networking)
- Wikipedia (informational posts through collaborative writing and editing)
- YouTube (video posts)
Resources and Examples

Examine how students and instructors employ Web apps such as wikis and blogs in different courses and academic learning communities.

- Academic Commons Wiki
- Commoncraft
- CUNY Academic Commons
- Digital Writing Wiki
- E-Portfolios
- Looking for Whitman