I. Course Information

Designing and Instructing Distance Learning (DL) Courses
September 30 - November 3, 2009
Distance Learning Course Week: Wednesday through Tuesday

Instructor Information
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Email is always the best and fastest way to reach me. If you need to call, please leave a message if necessary and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

Document Overview
This syllabus contains all relevant information about the course: its objectives and outcomes, the grading criteria, the texts, the outline of weekly topics, assignments, and due dates.
Consider this your roadmap for the course. Please read through the syllabus carefully and feel free to share any questions that you may have. Please print a copy of this syllabus for reference.

Course Description
Research and experience in distance learning (DL) have shown that the approach is educationally effective, offers business value, and is in many cases more cost-effective than other approaches.\(^1\) DL, when implemented successfully, offers the potential for the Rabb School’s Division of Graduate Professional Studies (GPS) Programs to expand their student bases and to enhance current course offerings through interactive media.

This course has been developed to provide current and future DL course instructors with standards, techniques, and tips necessary to make the transition from on-ground instruction to DL. By requiring all DL instructors to participate in this course, we are ensuring that collectively we retain the quality of course delivery that we have successfully demonstrated in our on-ground courses.

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Topics include:

- The DL Philosophy
- Division of Graduate Professional Studies DL Standards
- Learning as a DL Student
- The DL Course Syllabus
- The Participation Component
- Written Communication and Online Tone
- DL Course Content
- DL Discussion Questions
- Techniques of Facilitation
- Creating and Managing Virtual Groups
- Asynchronous Tips
- The DL Instructor Checklist
- DL Assessment Methods
- Student Feedback

Welcome!

Over the course of the next five weeks, we will explore fundamentals of the distance learning pedagogy, learn how to design a comprehensive DL course, review various models of online course delivery, discuss the Division of Graduate Professional Studies DL Course Standards, and study methods for facilitating online discussions. We’ll do so through our online course’s discussions and assignments, all of which you can take with you as you embark to deliver your own DL courses.

For the past eight years I have enjoyed the online methods of course delivery, primarily here at Brandeis. I enjoy the flexibility, and even more so, I enjoy the enriching online discussions with students as they explore our course content. I hope that you will leave the course understanding the challenges and the rewards of online instruction.

I have tried to make the procedures that we will use clear to everyone through this syllabus and through the materials posted in LATTE. Please familiarize yourself with these materials and feel free to ask me any questions that you may have. I will work with you all to help you learn and apply these new skills, and I encourage you to ask questions when you are unsure and answer questions of others when you have the responses; in explaining how to approach problems, we learn more ourselves. We can all learn from each other, and I hope that we’ll have open and enriching discussions as we move forward!

Related Programs: N/A

Prerequisites: None, though most participants have instructed on-ground (campus) courses in the past. Assignments can be tailored if this is not the case.

Following the Course: It is expected that participants who complete this course will then participate in the follow-on 2-week online course, Build Your DL Course in LATTE, which will run from November 11-24, 2009.
Materials of Instruction

a. **Required Texts** - None. All materials will be provided via our LATTE course site.

b. **Required Software** - None, other than a browser to access LATTE (discussed further in part d below).

c. **Recommended Resources**
   - **Recommended Journal Articles.** Two to five journal articles each week, available on the course site as Additional Readings
   - **Recommended resources/links:**
     a. *Distance Education Clearinghouse*, http://www.uwex.edu/disted/home.html

   - References for topic notes and additional resources include:
d. **Online Course Content**

- This course will be conducted completely online using Brandeis’ LATTE site, available at http://latte.brandeis.edu. The site contains the course syllabus, assignments, our discussion forums, links/resources to course-related professional organizations and sites, and weekly checklists, objectives, outcomes, topic notes, self-tests, and discussion questions. Access information is emailed to enrolled participants before the start of the course.

- To begin participating in the course, review the **Welcoming Message** and the **Week 1 Checklist**.

### Overall Objectives

Upon completion of this course, participants will:

- Understand the **core principles of the DL pedagogy**, and understand how the Graduate Professional Studies’ model and standards fit within this broader context.

- Understand the key components of **DL content** including the DL course syllabus, online content, and discussion questions.

- Understand effective principles for **facilitating online learning**, including Guide on the Side, Facilitator as Project Leader, and Facilitator as Group Process Leader.
  - Understand the importance of written communications skills and online tone.
  - Understand strategies for establishing and managing collaborative online groups.
  - Understand methods to effectively facilitate discussions in the asynchronous classroom.

- Navigate the **GPS LATTE Course Shell** and understand its components.

- Understand the importance of clear and timely **student feedback** in the online environment.

### Overall Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Define your course’s participation requirements consistent with the Rabb School’s Division of Graduate Professional Studies DL Standards.

- Author a brief DL “lecture/topic note” that helps the student realize weekly outcomes.

- Build discussion questions that expand upon the weekly readings and topic notes, allowing students to participate in discussions to solidify their understanding of the weekly objectives.

- Analyze classroom dynamics of a “live” online course.

- Successfully design and facilitate an online course at Brandeis following the Rabb School’s Division of Graduate Professional Studies DL Standards!
Grading Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Component</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60 %</td>
<td>Discussions/On-line participation (12% per week)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>DL Participation Requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>Sample Topic Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>Discussion Questions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Description of Assignments

Participants are responsible to explore each week's materials and submit assignments by their due dates. The Course Outline below contains the calendar of assignments and due dates.

1. Individual Discussions/ Online Participation (60%, 12% per week)

There are three forums within each weekly block:
- Week [n] Discussions forum
- Week [n] Summary forum
- Week [n] Open forum

The required weekly discussions will take place in the Weekly Discussions and Summary forums. Each week, all participants will be asked to post a response to the Week [n] Discussions forum question by Saturday (midnight EST). An original response to the Week [n] Summary forum is due by Monday (midnight EST). Two substantive replies to the posts of others (in any forum) are due to Tuesday (midnight EST).

In the Weekly Open forums, participants can share any questions or comments pertaining to the topics covered in the corresponding weeks.

Participants will be expected to complete the following during weeks 1 through 5 of the course:

1. **Respond to (at least) 2 Discussion Topics each week;**
   - Respond to the question in the Weekly Discussions forum by end of day **Saturday (midnight EST)**.
   - Respond to the question in the Weekly Summary forum by end of day **Monday (midnight EST)**.
   - Specific evaluation criteria follow.

2. **Post (at least) 2 other substantive messages to the Discussions each week**
   - Post by end of day **Tuesday (midnight EST)**.
   - These may be replies within the Weekly Discussions, Summary, and/or Open forums.
   - The assumption is that you will read through the posts of your classmates to enhance your learning; respond to those of your choice, based upon your own experiences and insights.
Evaluation Criteria

Each week, 100 raw points may be earned toward the participation component of the grade.

Original Responses

Maximum raw points earned for original responses each week: 30 points each, 60 points total. Evaluation Criteria:

• (8 pts) Includes your own insights into the topics, sharing your professional experiences as appropriate and your own conclusions
• (8 pts) Includes references to weekly required readings and/or other external sources, cited appropriately
• (8 pts) Answers the question posed completely
• (3 pts) Consists of at least 200-250 words
• (3 pts) Well written, with no spelling or grammatical errors
• One day late: -15 out of 30 possible raw points; more than one day late: no credit

Substantive Replies

Maximum raw points earned for substantive replies: 15 points each, 30 points total. Evaluation Criteria:

• (12 pts) Substantive (beyond an “I agree” post) with:
  o Follow-on points from your related experiences or from the readings
  o Follow-up questions of others to extend the conversation (encouraged)
  o Consists of at least 200 words
• (3 pts) Grammar/spelling/format/sources noted as appropriate
• One or more days late: no credit
• At least one substantive reply not posted to the other group’s forum: -7 out of 15 possible raw points

Posting on Three Days of the Course Week

• Post on three days of the course week: 10 points (full credit)
• Post on two days of the course week: 6 points
• Post on one day of the course week: 2 points

Thoughts on Discussions

Keep in mind that these postings to the forums will be as rich as we make them; not having a traditional classroom in which to discuss topics, we can have some interesting discussions and share our experiences during the five weeks. They are required to encourage you to share your knowledge and ideas while gaining from the experiences of your peers as well. You will quickly adjust to the weekly requirements and become familiar with the review criteria, and I look forward to some rich discussions.
2. DL Participation Requirements.
   
   *Available: Wednesday, Week 2. Due: Tuesday, Week 2*
   
   Participants will define DL participation requirements that will form part of the DL course syllabus.

3. Sample Topic Note.
   
   *Available: Wednesday, Week 3. Due: Tuesday, Week 3*
   
   Participants will convert a small subset of a weekly classroom lecture to online content.

4. Discussion Questions.
   
   *Available: Wednesday, Week 4. Due: Tuesday, Week 4*
   
   Participants will develop a set of Discussion Questions corresponding with the sample topic note.
II. Weekly Information

On the course site, the course homepage contains 5 sections, or blocks, one for each week of the course. On each weekly block, you will find:

- Week [n] Checklist
  - Required readings, postings, and assignments/assessments
- Week [n] Outcomes
- Week [n] Discussion Details
- Forums
  - Week [n] Discussions
  - Week [n] Summary
  - Week [n] Open Forum
- Week [n] Topic Notes
- Week [n] Additional Readings
- Week [n] Assignments and Self-Test

As appropriate, you will find assignment related materials in the corresponding weekly blocks, once their availability dates have passed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>DL Pedagogy: Philosophy, Teaching, and Learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September 30 - October 6, 2009</td>
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</table>
| **Objectives** | • Understand the Division of Graduate Professional Studies LATTE Standard Course Shell.  
|                     | • Understand the DL pedagogy and how online learners differ from their traditional campus course counterparts.  
|                     | • Understand different models of online course delivery and how GPS' approach aligns with these models. |
| **Outcomes** | • Write your introduction that you can use within your future DL courses to introduce yourself to students.  
|                     | • Develop techniques that you can use to help online learners understand and apply expected prerequisite DL skills.  
|                     | • Evaluate your own abilities as a DL learner and instructor. |
| **Readings** | • Welcoming Message  
|                     | • Orientation Materials  
|                     | • Syllabus  
|                     | • Week 1 Topic Notes  
|                     | • Week 1 Additional Readings (recommended) |
| **Assignments / Assessments / Self-Assessments** | • Week 1 Self-Test (optional)  
| | • Week 1 Posts - see Week 1 Discussion Details for full requirements |
## Week 2
### DL Syllabus and Course Standards
**October 7 - 13, 2009**

**Objectives**
- Understand the key components of a DL syllabus.
- Understand the critical nature of the participation component in asynchronous online courses.
- Understand the GPS DL Standards and their implications.

**Outcomes**
- Define your own online participation requirements that are consistent with the Rabb School’s Division of Graduate Professional Studies DL Standards.

**Readings**
- Week 2 Topic Notes
- Week 2 Additional Readings (recommended)

**Assignments / Assessments / Self-Assessments**
- Week 2 Self-Test (optional)
- Week 2 Posts - see Week 2 Discussion Details for full requirements
- DL Participation Requirements Assignment: Available Weds Week 2, Due Tues Week 2 - see Week 2 > Assignment block for full requirements

## Week 3
### Designing and Building DL Course Materials
**October 14 - 20, 2009**

**Objectives**
- Understand key elements and various types of effective DL course content.
- Understand the importance of written communication and tone in the DL environment.

**Outcomes**
- Construct online “lecture” topic notes and content for your online course that allow students to realize weekly outcomes.

**Readings**
- Week 3 Topic Notes
- Week 3 Additional Readings (recommended)

**Assignments / Assessments / Self-Assessments**
- Week 3 Self-Test (optional)
- Week 3 Posts - see Week 3 Discussion Details for full requirements
- Sample Topic Note Assignment: Available Weds Week 3, Due Tues Week 3 - see Week 3 > Assignment block for full requirements
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Facilitating DL Course Discussions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Understand key elements of effective DL discussion questions.&lt;br&gt;• Understand effective principles for facilitating online learning, including Guide on the Side, Facilitator as Project Leader, and Facilitator as Group Process Leader.&lt;br&gt;• Understand strategies for establishing and managing collaborative online groups.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Outcomes</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Analyze classroom dynamics of an on-going online course.&lt;br&gt;• Construct discussion questions for your online course that expand upon the weekly readings and topic notes, allowing students to participate in discussions to solidify their understanding of the weekly objectives.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Readings</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Week 4 Topic Notes&lt;br&gt;• Week 4 Additional Readings (recommended)&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Assignments / Assessments / Self-Assessments</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Week 4 Self-Test (optional)&lt;br&gt;• Week 4 Posts - see Week 4 Discussion Details for full requirements&lt;br&gt;• Discussion Questions Assignment: Available Weds Week 4, Due Tues Week 4 - see Week 4 &gt; Assignment block for full requirements</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Evaluating Online Learners and Preparing to Teach Online</th>
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<td><strong>Objectives</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Understand the importance of clear and timely student feedback in the online environment.&lt;br&gt;• Understand the steps required to prepare and deliver an online course.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Outcomes</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Analyze classroom dynamics of an on-going online course.&lt;br&gt;• Practice techniques of Guide on the Side, Facilitator as Project Leader, and Facilitator as Group Process Leader.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Readings</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Week 5 Topic Notes&lt;br&gt;• Week 5 Additional Readings (recommended)&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Assignments / Assessments / Self-Assessments</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Week 5 Self-Test (optional)&lt;br&gt;• Week 5 Posts - see Week 5 Discussion Details for full requirements</td>
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III. Course Policies and Procedures

Orientation
From the Home Page of the course site, participants are expected to read all of the Orientation Materials available. These are located within the top-most center block.

Asynchronous Work
All required work for the course may be done asynchronously: i.e., participants can login to the course, read/download materials, post to the Discussions, and submit assignments throughout the course week. Please carefully follow syllabus and the weekly checklists to help manage your time throughout the course week; once we enter week 2, participants typically become much more comfortable with the pace and flow of the course.

At one or more points throughout the semester, I will make myself available for synchronous Chat sessions using the course site’s Chat Room. These sessions will be open Q&A, and they are optional. I will post a log of each chat session so that those participants who did not participate can view the recorded synchronous discussions.

Late Policies
Participants are encouraged to respond to all posts and to complete all assignments by the due dates provided. This will help ensure that all stay in sync with the pace of the course and realize the anticipated outcomes of the course. If you find that you cannot complete the assignments or posts for a given week, please contact me.

Work Expectations
Participants are responsible to explore each week’s materials and submit required work by their due dates. On average, a participant can expect to spend approximately 2-3 hours per week reading and approximately 3-4 hours per week completing assignments and reading/posting to discussions. The calendar of assignments and due dates is located at the end of this syllabus.

Grading and Feedback
Feedback will be provided on all assignments within 7 days of receipt. Participants will receive a weekly feedback form within 7 days of the close of each week that includes a breakdown of grades earned to date along with narratives describing work and discussions submitted to date. Given the nature of this course, traditional grades of A, B, etc., will not be given. Assignments (i.e., non-posts) submitted in this course will be evaluated on the scale of:

- Meets Expectations (numeric equivalent: 100%)
  - Submitted on-time, to the correct locations, with all required elements present
- NI: Needs Improvement (numeric equivalent: 90%)
  - Late, or one or more required elements missing
- NS: Not Submitted (grade equivalent: 0)

Additional details regarding the evaluation criteria for assignments will be provided within the individual assignments.
### Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>September 30 - October 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>October 7 - 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>October 14 - 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>October 21 - 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>October 28 - November 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Calendar of Due Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DL Participation Requirements</td>
<td>Weds, Week 2</td>
<td>10/7</td>
<td>Tues, Week 2</td>
<td>10/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Topic Note</td>
<td>Weds, Week 3</td>
<td>10/14</td>
<td>Tues, Week 3</td>
<td>10/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Questions</td>
<td>Weds, Week 4</td>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>Tues, Week 4</td>
<td>10/27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to 2 Discussion Topics</td>
<td>Weds morning of each week</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 by Sat each week (Discussions);</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Weekly Discussions and Summary)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 by Mon each week (Summary)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Substantive Posts (2 per week)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 by Tues each week</td>
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IV. University and Division of Graduate Professional Studies Standards

Please review the policies and procedures of Graduate Professional Studies, found at http://www.brandeis.edu/gps/students/studentresources/policiesandprocedures/index.html. We would like to highlight the following.

Learning Disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this course, please contact me immediately.

Academic Honesty and Student Integrity

Academic honesty and student integrity are of fundamental importance at Brandeis University and we want students to understand this clearly at the start of the term. As stated in the Brandeis Rights and Responsibilities handbook, “Every member of the University Community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. A student shall not receive credit for work that is not the product of the student’s own effort. A student’s name on any written exercise constitutes a statement that the work is the result of the student’s own thought and study, stated in the students own words, and produced without the assistance of others, except in quotes, footnotes or references with appropriate acknowledgement of the source.” In particular, students must be aware that material (including ideas, phrases, sentences, etc.) taken from the Internet and other sources MUST be appropriately cited if quoted, and footnoted in any written work turned in for this, or any, Brandeis class. Also, students will not be allowed to collaborate on work except by the specific permission of the instructor. Failure to cite resources properly may result in a referral being made to the Office of Student Development and Judicial Education. The outcome of this action may involve academic and disciplinary sanctions, which could include (but are not limited to) such penalties as receiving no credit for the assignment in question, receiving no credit for the related course, or suspension or dismissal from the University.

Further information regarding academic integrity may be found in the following publications: “In Pursuit of Excellence - A Guide to Academic Integrity for the Brandeis Community”, “(Students’) Rights and Responsibilities Handbook” AND “Graduate Professional Studies Student Handbook”. You should read these publications, which all can be accessed from the Graduate Professional Studies Web site. A student that is in doubt about standards of academic honesty (regarding plagiarism, multiple submissions of written work, unacknowledged or unauthorized collaborative effort, false citation or false data) should consult either the course instructor or other staff of the Rabb School Graduate Professional Studies.

University Caveat

The above schedule, content, and procedures in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.