

OCEAN320 Procedures for Course Communication

OCEAN320 is a large-enrollment fully-online upper-division general-education course . . . that is a lot of hyphenations. The first two pairs of hyphenated words are the most relevant here: *Large-enrollment* means that there are LOTS of you but only one of me. *Fully-online* means that we have left behind the “metronome” of regular face-to-face meetings that help keep many students on task and on track. In earlier semesters, these two aspects of OCEAN320 have conspired to suck untold hours of my life away through unnecessary or redundant email exchanges. Thus, if you want to communicate with me, I welcome it, but please first classify your communication into one of the following categories, and follow the appropriate procedure. Thanks for your attention!

Questions about course logistics (e.g., *grade calculation, course policies, quiz/exam times, etc.*): First ensure that your question is not addressed in the most recent version of the syllabus, recent announcements, or the learning guide for the given module. If it isn't, then read the “Course Logistics” Discussion Board (DB) to see if your question has already been answered. If it hasn't, then PLEASE DO post your clearly written question as a new posting with a short informative subject line. I will reply to your posting usually within 24 hours or less. *Executive summary: Emails to me about course logistics will not be answered; check for answers in the syllabus, announcements, and DB; if your question isn't answered anywhere, please post it to the “Course Logistics” DB for a response.*

Assistance with course content (e.g., *module content, quiz/exam questions, etc.*): Check the discussion board (DB) of the appropriate module to see if your question has already been posted and answered. If not, then please post your clearly written question with a short informative subject line. *Please do not post quiz/exam-related questions until the quiz/exam has closed for all students!* Appreciate that the more information you provide about what exactly is unclear or confusing, the better I can respond to your posting – let's strive to avoid a multi-round guessing-game of what exactly is being asked! Alternatively, you are most welcome to attend Wimba office hours (see Learning Guide for current module for times). The DBs for each module are also an excellent place to post topic-related links, comments, etc. – just keep it clean and professional! *Executive summary: Emails to me about course content will not be answered; post these to the appropriate module DB for a response!*

“Crashed” Bb quizzes and exams: See the “Student Procedure for Blackboard-Based Assessments” item in the “Assessments” folder to avoid falling into this situation. If you do somehow manage to crash your quiz or exam, email me immediately – I will check my email frequently during quiz and exam time-windows.

Issues involving personal situations and events: This is one category where you should email me as soon as possible and I will strive to respond in a timely manner. *If emailing outside of Bb, be sure that your email subject heading includes “OCEAN320” or your email may be filtered to my junk-mail folder.* I will work with you and your situation on a case-by-case basis in the most consistent and equitable manner possible. If I do not

respond within 24 hours, please re-send your email, preferably from within Bb via the email link. That said, I feel obliged to give examples of situations that DO NOT fall under this category, and will lead to me to simply refer you back to this document . . .

Question: “I forgot that <xxxx> was due by <xxxxxxx> and now it isn’t accessible . . . can I take/do/submit it now?”

Answer: No, this opportunity for credit was on the syllabus or in the module LG, so allowing you to access it now equates to unequal treatment within the course. Do accidents/brain-farts/alien-abductions happen? Yes. Do I drop the lowest quiz and one missed feedback to allow for such rare events? Yes. What! You already wasted this generous allowance? Then I strongly suggest that you preclude similar problems in the future by investing in a day-planner, ensuring more robust internet access, etc.

Question: “Do you offer extra credit because I <xxxxxxx>?”

Answer: No, extra credit is what lead to the housing bubble. You should instead focus on earning the credit that I have spent untold hours developing for you. Do you appreciate that you are asking not only for special treatment, but also for me to create yet more work for myself to both develop and then assess something above and beyond what I have done for you and your fellow students? Really.

Question: “I am on the <insert SDSU organization/team here> and was <xxxxx> so I missed xxxxx, so can I take it now?”

Answer: No, you should advise me via email as soon as possible of any future official university activity that might preclude you completing/submitting a given course assignments during a given time-interval. Last time I checked, most teams and campus organization don’t spontaneously organize official events.

Question: “I really need time-and-a-half and/or <insert accommodation here> to do well on this assessment . . . can I have it now/tomorrow/etc.?”

Answer: You can’t have it retroactively or immediately, but you can certainly have it for future events if appropriate documents from SDSU Student Disability Services are presented to me at least three days in advance. See the “How to arrange accommodation for a disability” entry in the Bb FAQ folder for more information.

OCEAN320 PROCEDURES FOR BLACKBOARD-BASED ASSESSMENTS (QUIZZES AND EXAMS)

This document presents a sequence of student-based actions that have reduced Blackboard (Bb) assessment problems to essentially zero. Please read it carefully in advance of starting any Bb assessment!

Prepare your workspace for the assessment:

- Use only standard desktop or “full-function” laptops; avoid mobile devices (iPads, tablets, phones, etc.)
- Use only compatible- or certified-browsers; see weblink to current listing in the Assessment folder.
- Ensure that your internet connection is strong and stable; any “hiccups” will cause problems!
- Plug in your power supply if using a laptop
- Disable your browser’s “pop-up blocker”
- Close all other programs and applications
- Close all other browser windows
- Turn off any auto-updates or anything else that may interrupt your assessment session
- Resize your browser window to largest size and do not resize it during the assessment

Verify your workspace before the assessment:

- Following the steps below, complete the “Practice Assessment” in the Assessment folder
- Check your “Practice Assessment” score in My Grades
- If no problems arise, then proceed to the actual assessment
- If problems arise, then repeat steps above using another browser/computer
- Seek help from the SDSU Student Computer Center (<http://library.sdsu.edu/scc>)

Prepare yourself for the assessment based on the announcement posting and email:

- When will the assessment be available to you?
- How many and what types of questions (e.g., T/F, multiple answer, short essay, etc.)?
- Will the assessment have multiple parts (e.g., Part A, Part B)?
- Will questions be presented one at a time or all at once?
- Will you be able to return to questions once your answer is submitted?

For a given question:

- Read it carefully, noting the question type, question itself, and responses
- After answering, wait for the “Save Answer” box to change to “Saved”
- If you change your answer, wait for new answer to be re-saved
- Click the small arrow next to the “Question X of Y” to move to next question
- Again, note that you may not return to previously answered questions.

After completing the last question:

- Click the "Save and Submit" button once and once only
- Wait for the confirmation window to appear and click “OK”
- Check your score in My Grades

You are responsible for verifying that your assessment was successfully submitted well before its stated closing time. If a problem arises, you must email me immediately, describing in detail what happened. Typically, I will archive your completed questions, reset your assessment for you to complete the remaining questions, and then compile these two attempts for a total score. If you are having recurring problems with Bb assessments, I reserve the right to issue you a final warning after which your crashed assessments will no longer be reset! Let’s work together to avoid this!

Dear Students,

Welcome to Summer 2013 offering of OCEAN320 The Oceans! You are part of the new and growing convergence of technology and education – the fully online university course. Since some of you have not had a fully online course, this letter outlines some suggested preparations to “hit the course running”.

OCEAN320 will have *no* face-to-face meetings – that’s right, no dressing, driving, parking, or trudging across campus are necessary to succeed in this course. However, you *will* need consistent access to a computer with a high-speed internet connection and, ideally, access to a color inkjet printer for lecture handouts, readings, etc.

To capitalize upon this fully online format, I have redesigned the content of this course to focus on oceanographic issues that are timely and of broad socioeconomic impact, such as global warming and ocean acidification, overfishing and aquaculture, and oil exploration and the recent Deepwater Horizon disaster. Because this is a GE Explorations course, we will examine these issues from a scientific perspective as well as other perspectives (e.g., economical, social, political, etc.). Thus, we won’t be doing the usual “Chapter 1 through 23” march through an (expensive) textbook. In fact, *no* textbook is required! Instead, to complement and reinforce our lecture sessions, I have assembled a diverse collection of lecture handouts, readings, videos, and activities available to you as weblinks, pdfs, etc. through the Blackboard course site.

Action Items: Please do the following to prepare for the course:

1. Carefully and thoroughly review the syllabus posted in the “Logistics” folder: This syllabus is essentially our course contract for working together during the semester and should address all logistical aspects of the course. Since all of you can read, I won’t spend much time going over it here or in our sessions! If you have a question or comment about the syllabus or any aspects of course logistics, please post them to the “Course Logistics” thread in the Discussion Board folder.
2. Complete the “syllabus quiz” located in the “Assessments” folder as soon as possible: This quiz is intended to get you familiar and comfortable with how we will run quizzes and exams via Bb. I recommend having a printed copy of the syllabus handy prior to starting this quiz. You can take this quiz and many times as you like, but will need to get a 100% to have all of the content in the first module become available to you! Again, do this as soon as possible and ideally before the first day of class!
3. Spend some time exploring the course’s Blackboard (Bb) site: Once you have completed the syllabus quiz, I encourage you to explore the course structure, particularly how the first module’s (M01) content is arranged. M01 has quite a bit of stuff in it since this serves as the introductory module that frames the rest of the course. The subsequent M02 through M08 will be “rolled out” as the course progresses. Pay particular attention to the first item in M01, the Learning Guide, which is essentially a combined schedule and roadmap for that module and all of its content and activities. You can read more about the role of the Learning Guides in the syllabus.
4. Install and use only version of browsers that are listed as compatible (good) or certified (better) in the “Link: Compatible and certified browsers for Bb 9.1. (Service Pack 7)” provided in the “Logistics” Bb folder. **I strongly recommend using Firefox for the course and particularly for Collaborate (see below).**
5. If you are new to Collaborate (and most of you probably are), I encourage you to attend a short practice sessions at 9 PM on Monday (20 May) or Tuesday (21 May). To enter the live Collaborate classroom, follow the direction on the first two items in the left-menu “Collaborate” folder in the Bb course site.

6. Live Collaborate sessions will be scheduled for many, but not all, Mondays through Thursday from 10:00-11:30 AM – See each module’s Learning Guide for exact scheduling. Note that you are ENCOURAGED, BUT NOT REQUIRED to attend these live Collaborate sessions. If you can’t make the live session, please be sure to watch its archive soon after to avoid falling behind!!!! These archives can be accessed

7. PDF versions of the powerpoint slides used in Collaborate session will be posted in their respective module folder. I encourage you to print out these slides out at four to six per page prior to their coverage in Wimba or Camtasia sessions, which will allow you to make notes, comments, etc. directly on the visuals.

9. Finally, get ready for a fun, engaging, and informative online course. I have spent an immense amount of time and effort designing, revising, and preparing this course based, in part, on past student feedback. I hope that you will find it to be a rewarding experience, and very much look forward to your feedback throughout the course.

See you in Collaborate!

OUR FIRST LIVE SESSION IS WEDNESDAY, 22 JULY, STARTING AT 10 AM!!!!

Stephen Schellenberg
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