Distance Learning at EWC – Orientation Module: Class Access

Greetings. Thanks for watching this module about accessing online classes at Eastern Wyoming College. I'm Aaron Bahmer, Instructional Technologist for EWC, and my job is to support faculty as they deliver distance instruction to you and to support you in using the technology necessary to learn at a distance.

After viewing this segment, you should be able to access online classes, observe class notifications, view the class welcome page, access course content, respond to a message board posting, upload an assignment, complete an assessment, and communicate with your instructor using the Journal tool.

If you are unsure about logging into LancerNet, please view the video that introduces LancerNet. Once you've logged in to LancerNet and arrived at your dashboard, you have at least three ways to navigate to your classes. The easiest of these options is to click the title of your class from the My Classes channel on your dashboard. You can hover your mouse over the quick links icon for classes, then click your class. Finally, if you click the Academics link on the black navigation ribbon, it will show only the list of your classes.

Before we click the title of our class, let's take a moment to notice that from either the My Classes channel or the Academics page, you might see notification icons just below the class link that indicate new elements to the class – things like new message board postings, assignments due, new assessments, or new journal messages. If you click a notification, it will take you directly to the class tool with the new information. For now, let's just click the title of our class.

This first view is called the class welcome page. To the left is the shortcut bar featuring links to various class tools. The rest of the page has channels of information as desired by the instructor. There will likely be some kind of banner at the top of this area, welcoming you to class. This banner may change throughout the term, providing an area for updates and messages about the work to be done. Below that, you should see several large icons. These icons will lead you to the content of the course and to other important information for your success in the class.

Clicking any of the icons will open a new window called "Course Playback." It features a list of links on the left and content on the right. If you click a link from the left side, the right side will display that content. You should notice that the primary links on the left match the icons from the class welcome page. Links with a small triangle next to them have more links nested below. You can progress through the course content either by clicking one of the links on the left or by clicking the [Next] button at the top of the right-hand page.

The Get Started unit will provide more detailed information about the class, similar to what you might hear on the first day in a live classroom. Be sure you read the entire unit carefully. The Syllabus and Schedule units are very important to your success in the class, so be sure to read those to make sure you understand the expectations of your instructor and make note of important deadlines for your coursework. It is suggested that you print and save the syllabus in case you need it to confirm transfer credits. Other units in the class will guide you through the learning material and activities for each week or module in your class. These may include online readings, videos, visits to other websites, message board postings, assignments, quizzes, and tests, as well as readings from your textbook.

Let's look at a message board posting. This is like an in-class discussion where the instructor poses a question and each student is expected to respond. To post your thoughts, click the [Add Post] button. This opens a new window where you can type a subject line and then a message. It's very much like email, except the entire class will see your posting. Note that there is a tab where you can read the original message without losing what you have written. You can also attach files to a posting. When you are done, click the [Submit] button to save and finalize your post. For long responses, it is recommended that you compose them offline, using a word processor so you can save your message. Then, copy the text from your document and paste it into the reply.

In order to make the discussion more like a classroom experience, you should read other student postings and reply to any that interest you. To start the reply, hover your mouse over the message you want to reply to and click the [Reply] button that appears below the text. Be sure to form a well-structured reply, explaining why you agree or disagree with the comment using polite, complete sentences. It's OK to express differing opinions but not OK to attack the student for their own beliefs.

Most of the assignments you submit online for your class will be simple document files. Access the assignment tool for instructions, then compose your answers using a word processor, and save the file on your computer where you can find it easily. Use the assignment tool again to attach and upload your file for grading. Some classes may require you to scan drawings or math homework, so be sure you know what you need for your class.

Assessments such as quizzes, tests, and exams can be completed online. Completing an assessment is as simple as filling in an online form. Multiple choice, true/false, matching, and fill-in-the blank question types can be graded by the system. Short answer and essay questions will have to be graded by your instructor after the assessment period is over. Be sure you are prepared and that your computer has a reliable connection to the Internet before starting to take an assessment. For most instructors, you will not be able to restart the assessment if you exit out of your first attempt.

Although you should access all course content, including assignments and assessments through the course playback icons, you may be able to access those through the Student Tools shortcut. Links for My Assignments and My Assessments may allow you to access those items. One important tool that is found here is the Journal. Much like the message board, the Journal allows you to post and respond to messages from your instructor, but those messages are private between you and your instructor. For most classes, you should use the Journal, rather than e-mail, to contact your instructor.

I hope this brief introduction to online classes has helped you to access your class and become acquainted with class notifications, the class welcome page, course content, the message board, assignments, assessments, and the Journal tool. Accessing and using all of these things will help you succeed in your distance classes.