Spring 2021 Distance Learning at EPCC...Stay Safe and Supported!

The spring semester is just around the corner and we want to share some important information to help you off to a successful start...and finish.

About Spring Courses

Courses will be offered in 3 formats this spring semester:

– Online asynchronous– teaching and learning will take place entirely online and you *will not be required* to meet your instructor at specific dates and times. You do, however, need to log into your course daily to check for communication, feedback, complete course work, and meet the deadlines set by your instructor.

– Online synchronous – teaching and learning will take place entirely online and you *will be required* to meet your instructor virtually on the days and times indicated in Banner. Your instructor will provide more information in the course syllabus.

– Hybrid – teaching and learning will take place both online and face-to-face on the days and times indicated in Banner. Your instructor will provide detailed information in the course syllabus. **NOTE**: *Students will be meeting in small groups to ensure safe social distancing.*

The spring semester begins on Tuesday, January 19 and ends on Saturday, May 15. Most courses are either 16 or 8 (minimester) weeks in length. However, other courses vary in the length of term and their start and end dates. *Check Banner to confirm your course(s) start and end dates.* Visit the [EPCC Spring 2021 Academic Calendar](#) for more important College dates such as payment deadlines and institutional holidays.

	Start Date	End Date	Last day to drop with a "W"
16 Week	January 19	May 15	April 16
MM1	January 19	March 12	February 12
Late Start	February 1	May 14	April 16
MM2	March 22	May 14	April 16

IMPORTANT: Blackboard courses open at 12:01 am on the first day of the course and close at 11:59 pm on the last day of the course as indicated in Banner.

If Your Courses Do Not Appear in Blackboard:

1. Log into Banner and confirm you are registered for the course(s). If the course appears in Banner then…
   a. Check the course start date. The course will not appear under **Current Courses** in Blackboard until the course start date.
   b. If the course appears in Banner and the start date has passed, contact DLSS.
2. If the course does not appear in Banner, contact your counselor/advisor or the Registrar's Office using the EPCC Online Assistance page.

Dual Credit students should confirm their EPCC class registration with their high school dual credit contact.

Know Your Online Learning Tools

Make sure you have the resources to help you prepare and be ready to participate in your courses.

1. Check your Learn Remotely Toolkit and learn about important services:
   - **EPCC Website**. Visit epcc.edu to connect to College resources such as Financial Aid, Tutoring, and more! You can also get the latest information on EPCC's response to COVID-19.
   - **MyEPCC**. The online portal through which you access College email, Blackboard, Web Banner, and more.
   - **EPCC Email**. An official mode of communication for the College, you are responsible for reading your EPCC e-mail daily and for recognizing that certain communications are time-sensitive.
2. **Blackboard**. The learning management system (LMS) used to deliver online instruction at EPCC. Review **Blackboard's** basic computer and technology requirements:
   - Windows or Mac Operating System
   - Internet connection with a compatible browser

	Desktop Browser Versions	Mobile Browser Version
Google Chrome	63+	63+
Edge	42+	38+
Firefox	57+	57+
Internet Explorer	Unsupported	Unsupported
Safari	12+ (Mac OS only)	With iOS 11+

Access Blackboard & Courses

A. Log in to **my.epcc.edu** using your EPCC email (username@epcc.edu) and email password.
   - You can log into Blackboard before your courses begin but you will not be able to access your courses until the first day of class.
   - If you need login assistance visit the EPCC Account Recovery page or call EPCC IT at 915-831-6440.
B. In **MyEPCC**, click on the **Blackboard** link on the menu on the left or at the top of the page.

C. Log in again using your EPCC email and email password.

D. **You're in!** If accessing Blackboard for the first time, you'll see a welcome message. Scroll down the page and click **Get Started**.

E. Click on the **Courses** link on the menu on the left. Courses you are taking (based on dates in Banner), will appear under **Current Courses**.

- If the semester has not yet started, you will find your course(s) under **Upcoming Courses**. You will not be able to access them until the course start date.

F. Click on the course card to access the course. Find your syllabus and follow any instructions provided by your instructor.

3. **Respondus LockDown Browser & Monitor** may be required to take proctored online tests to ensure a level playing field. Monitor requires the use of a webcam to confirm your identity and ensure you are not using unauthorized testing materials. Rest assured that no one, except your instructor, will review the video and your video will remain safe on the Respondus server. Learn more about LockDown Browser & Monitor, how to download and install it, and how to take your tests using the application by downloading the [Respondus LockDown Browser & Monitor Guide for Students](#) (you may be required to log into MyEPCC).

4. You may need to purchase a **Student Access Code** to access textbook publisher course materials in the course. Your instructor will provide more information.

5. The **Blackboard mobile app** can be downloaded free from the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store. Log in to the app with your EPCC credentials. In the Blackboard app, you can perform these tasks:

- View course items and course announcements
- Take assignments and tests
    - *Except for tests that require LockDown Browser*
- Participate in discussions
- Interact with your instructor and class in Blackboard Collaborate
- Access both Original and Ultra courses

Watch an [introduction to the Blackboard app](#).

New To Online Learning?

New to Blackboard and online learning? Enroll in the **Blackboard Student Tutorial** to help you learn how to navigate the LMS. Here's how:

1. Log in to [MyEPCC](#) and access **Blackboard.**
2. Click the **Organizations** link on the left-hand menu.
3. On the Organizations page, click **Organization Catalog** located in the top right-hand corner.
4. In the **Search Catalog** field, type **Blackboard Student Tutorial** and click **Go.**
5. The tutorial will appear as a blue link. Hover your mouse over the link and trigger the menu that appears (grey circle with down arrow). Select **Enroll**.
6. On the **Self Enrollment** page, click **Submit**.
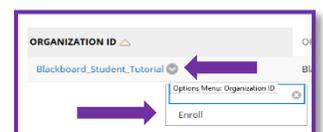
7. You'll receive a confirmation indicating you've successfully enrolled. Click **OK** on the bottom right-hand corner and you're in!
8. Read the **Welcome** and then start with Lesson 1.

The [Instructional Continuity Blackboard Guide for Students](#) also provides a quick overview on how to log in to **Blackboard**, and navigate a course to:

- Use various tools to communicate with your instructor,
- Review your grades and feedback,
- Post assignments, and
- Participate in discussions.

NOTE: There are no additional costs associated with verification of student identity for online courses related to compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Opportunity Act of 2008.

Blackboard Learn Ultra

You may notice that some of your courses look different from others. That is because EPCC is beginning the transition to **Blackboard Learn Ultra**. Ultra is the new user interface and workflow in Blackboard that uses a modern design to provide intuitive and fluid interactions. Ultra is responsive and adjusts to fit on any computer, tablet, or smartphone. Watch [Blackboard Learn with the Ultra Experience for Students](#) for an introduction.

How will you know if your course is in the Ultra course view? Look at the image below. Ultra course cards *in the list view* have a designated color bar on the left. Courses in **Blackboard Learn Original** will be in grey and will include an **Original Course View** label.
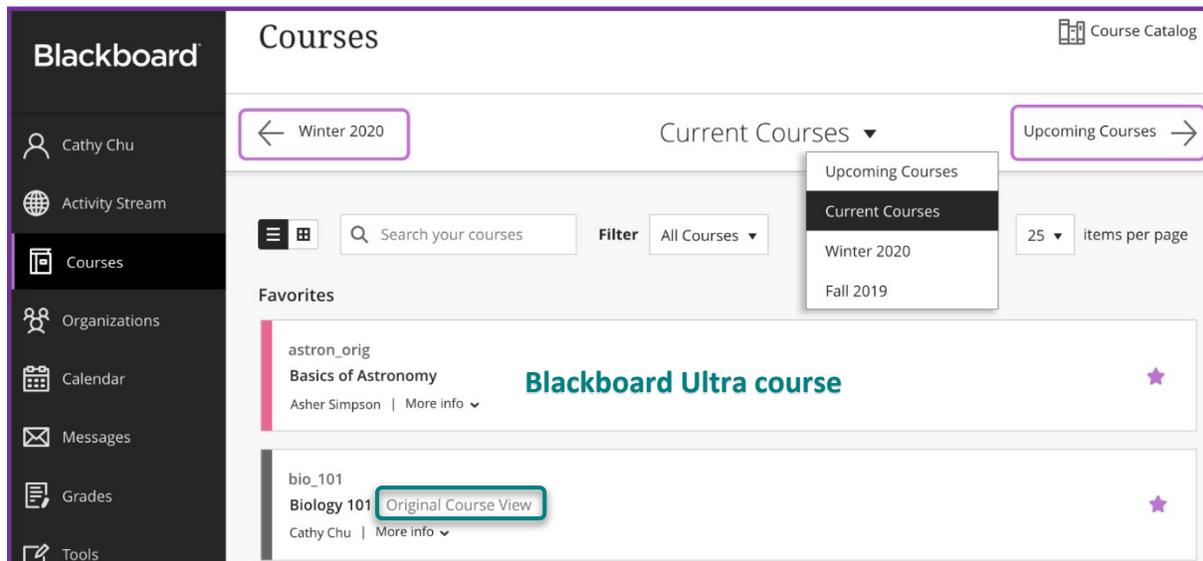

Blackboard Ultra Student Tutorial

A **Blackboard Ultra Student Tutorial** has been created to teach you about the new course interface. You can experience the Ultra view, learn how to navigate the interface, and practice using different tools.

To enroll in the Blackboard Ultra Student Tutorial email dlss@epcc.edu **from your EPCC email** to submit a request. We will enroll you within 24 hours of your request. ***Requests from personal email accounts will not be accepted.***

Ally

Ally is an application in Blackboard Learn Original and Ultra that allows you to download your course files in different formats that fit your device, need and learning preference. Click the "***A download***" icon next to your course files to view **"Alternative Formats"** of your course files. The file may take a few minutes to download, so continue with your work while you wait. The quality of the alternative formats can vary based on the original file, so if something looks out of place, consult the original file. Depending on the type of file, you will see the following options:

- A **Tagged PDF** for Word and PowerPoint documents or for improved navigation with screen readers
- An **HTML** version that will be simple and responsive to mobile devices with zoom-in capabilities
- An **ePub** version for use with ePub readers that allows for font customization, contrast adjustment, and annotation/highlighting
- An **Electronic Braille** version for your Refreshable Braille Display
- An **Audio MP3** for listening to your content on the go
- **BeeLine Reader** for faster reading speed and color-adjusting settings
- **Translated version** provides a machine-translated version of the instructor's original into a total of 50 different languages and supports PDF, Word, PowerPoint, and HTML documents.
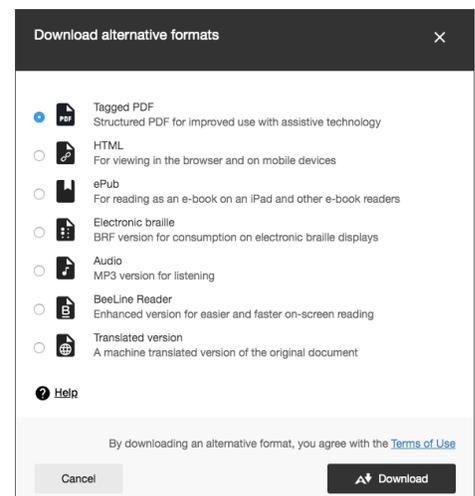
Watch [Ally for Students in Blackboard Learn](#) to see it in action!

Steps to a Strong Start

The first week can set the tone for the rest of the semester so start strong!
1. On the first day of class, log in to Blackboard and access your courses.
2. Read the syllabus and reach out to your instructor if you have any questions.
   a. Pay attention to the course calendar and note due dates.
3. Familiarize yourself with the course layout and reach out to your instructor if you have questions.
4. Access/purchase your needed course materials.
5. Download the Blackboard app and set up your notifications.
6. Complete any course work due that week.
7. Set a plan for success for the rest of the semester.

Plan for Success

- Online courses require discipline and dedication just like any other course…maybe more. While online courses provide flexibility allowing you to choose when to log in and how often, **you can't procrastinate**. So think about "showing up" to your online courses just like your face-to-face courses. You'll need to start strong to finish strong.

- "The price of greatness is responsibility." **Hold yourself accountable** by setting goals and checking in with yourself weekly. If you're struggling, **ask for help**; pair up with your classmates and form a study group, go to online tutoring, and reach out to your instructor. **Be organized, be proactive, and be mindful.**

- **Manage your time wisely**. Don't let the flexibility of online courses allow you to procrastinate. Technology can be unreliable so give yourself enough time to complete and submit work. Set up a weekly routine to log in to Blackboard, read your textbooks, and study. Set reminders on your calendar and use the Blackboard app for push notifications.

- **Set up a study space where you can eliminate distractions.** This can be tough since we're all at home, but find a time of day where you can sit in a quiet place to focus on school work. Ask your family and roommates to give you some study time if possible. Turn off the TV and put your mobile device away. Use headphones to listen to video lectures and resources. Review the videos on Crash Course: Study Skills for tips on studying, note taking getting organized, and more!

- **Figure out your learning preferences.** Maybe you're a visual learner. Perhaps you prefer to hear information as an auditory learner. Whatever your preference, use Ally to help you access content in a format that fits your needs. Read your textbooks out loud. It will help you focus, improve your comprehension, and will sharpen your listening and reading skills.

- Use your voice! **Be an active participant in your courses.** Engage with the course content, engage with your classmates, and engage with your instructor. Use the communication tools in Blackboard; messages, announcements, discussions. Use your EPCC email to connect with your instructors. **Ask questions. Ask for help.**

- **Make time for self-care**; it's not optional! Take steps to eat right, get enough sleep, incorporate physical activity into your daily routine, and practice stress management techniques. Don't let your battery wear all the way down.

EPCC Resources

There are resources available to help and support you! Each of the following departments provides live online support services. Simply visit their webpage and click on ***Get Connected***:

- Admissions & Registration
- Campus Life
- Career & Transfer Services
- Center for Students with Disabilities
- Counseling

- Dual Credit
- Financial Aid
- First-Year Experience
- Libraries
- Mental Health Resources
- New Student Orientation

- Tejano Food Pantry
- Tutorial Support Services
- Veterans Affairs
- Veterans Resource Center
- Writing Center

Course and Technical Help When You Need It

It's important to know who to contact when you need assistance. Here's a guide to help.

Distance Learning Support Services	EPCC IT Department	Your Instructor
Contact DLSS if you need help with: • Blackboard • Respondus LockDown Browser & Monitor • Collaborate • SmarterMeasure **The EPCC Blackboard Help Desk** is available toll-free at 1-888-296-0863 to assist you with technical issues 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Join our [Distance Learning Online Office Hours](#) through [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra](#). We are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Send us an email: dlss@epcc.edu. Please understand that we may not be able to provide the assistance you need via email and that you may be asked to call the EPCC Blackboard Help Desk or visit us during our Online Office Hours.	Contact the EPCC IT Department if you need help with the following: • MyEPCC • EPCC login credentials including Blackboard login • EPCC email • Web Banner • Microsoft Teams • Microsoft Office 365 • OneDrive	Contact your instructor with any course-related questions or issues such as: • Course work instructions or directions. • Missing or unavailable course content. • Technical issues that prevent you from submitting course work (assignments, tests, etc.) • Missed deadlines. • Issues with publisher content, access codes, or websites: your instructor should provide you help desk information to the publisher(s). • Required course materials. • Required meeting dates and times/locations (if hybrid). • Required 3rd party software or applications

Have a successful semester!

Distance Learning Support Services

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