

# CTL Bulletin

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A bi-weekly information sheet by the Center for Teaching and Learning

## Workshops for Faculty, Fall 2007

Welcome to the new fall semester. The Center for Teaching and Learning has put together a list of workshops for faculty and instructors wanting to broaden their horizons on a variety of issues: from critical thinking to sophisticated uses of Blackboard, incorporating writing, having students interact with reading assignments, and getting oriented to teaching and learning at NEIU. We hope you will take advantage of these offerings. The following paragraphs give a listing of these workshops. You can also find detailed descriptions on our website at: [www.neiu.edu/~ctl/](http://www.neiu.edu/~ctl/).

### Getting Started With Blackboard (Paul Heydenburg) *By Appointment*

This one-hour personalized training will provide you with the tools to begin using the Blackboard Learning Management System in your courses. Contact Paul Heydenburg at ext. 4463 (773-442-4463) to make an appointment.

### What does Critical Thinking mean in your Course? (Dr. Edmund Hansen) *Wednesday, Sept. 12, 1:30-3:00pm – Library, Room 310*

Every faculty member teaches students to think critically. Critical thinking is part of the nature of academic work, and yet it is also one of the more difficult concepts to define. Theorists on critical thinking claim that the concept is inherently discipline-specific, which explains why so many people say, "I know it when I see it." This workshop will build on what its participants bring to the meeting. We will compare what each one of you considers to be critical thinking in your class and discipline. Then we will talk about some of the more generic structures of critical thinking and how you can use them to be more focused in your pursuit of it in your own classes.

### Blackboard Intensive Academy (Dr. Anthony Piña) *Friday, Sept. 14, 9am-4pm – CLS 4066 or Friday, Oct. 12, 9am-4pm – Library Room 349*

We have taken Blackboard's 18-hour \$975.00 training and have distilled it into in a free one-day intensive academy. You will gain a thorough knowledge of the features of the Blackboard Learning System and how to enhance your course with these online tools. Topics to be covered include the following: Copying content between courses; Working with multimedia content; Creating and managing groups; Managing the grade book; Using asynchronous & synchronous communication tools; Creating and deploying tests, surveys & test item pools; Viewing course statistics & tracking student activity; Exporting, importing, and archiving your course.

### Orientation for New and Old Instructors (Drs. Kate Hahn, Edmund Hansen, & Anthony Piña) *Saturday, Sep. 15, 10-11:30 a.m., or Tuesday, Sep. 18, 5:30-7:00 p.m. – Library, Room 310*

You will receive a binder with instructor resources for your teaching duties at NEIU, including information about how to do things on campus and short handouts with teaching tips on many classroom tasks. We will describe key characteristics of our new and continuing students. The workshop ends with a question-and-answer session on technology issues and anything else you always wanted to ask.

### Creating Informal Writing Activities (Dr. Kate Hahn) *Wednesday, September 26, 2:00-3:30pm – Library, Room 310*

*Would you like to help students improve their writing without increasing your grading load? One way to do that includes a short burst of writing on a topic that will be covered that day in class to get the juices flowing and/or check for understanding of assigned readings. Another possibility is to require guided journal entries to be done outside of class. Such entries can be assigned regularly but collected randomly. Students write for about fifteen minutes once or twice a week by responding to prompts such as "Describe the pH-scale in a way that your grandmother would understand." This forces them to think and write about topics in their own words. - Workshop participants will learn more about these activities and explore several more ideas that are adaptable to virtually any class.*

### **Helping Students to Interact with Assigned Readings** (Dr. Kate Hahn)

***Thursday, October 11, 2:00-3:30pm – Library, Room 310***

*A common frustration among faculty is the difficulty in getting students to complete assigned course readings. We can help students to interact with the assigned readings and better understand the content with a number of different activities. A few tips from the workshop: Require your students to write their own multiple-choice quiz questions for each chapter or section to compel them to interact with the content on a deeper level. Ask your students to put away their highlighters and instead write why they wanted to highlight a selection of text. - Workshop participants will hear the details on these and other activities that can be tailored to various types of reading assignments.*

### **Assignment-centered Teaching** (Dr. Edmund Hansen)

***Tuesday, Oct. 16, 1:30-3:00pm – Library, Room 310***

Most of us learn by doing. Therefore effective teaching depends less on polished presentations than on actively engaging students with the material. Assignment-centered teaching plans the major learning opportunities of the course around carefully sequenced tasks on which students work over the course of the semester. Given a course you are teaching, you will learn to design building block assignments through which students will gradually become more proficient in the complex intellectual tasks that characterize authentic performance in your discipline.

### **Hybrid Course Development** (Dr. Anthony Piña)

***Monday & Wednesday, November 5 & 7, 1:00-4:30pm***

In a "hybrid" course, a significant percentage of a course's class sessions occur online, not in a classroom. This workshop is for those who wish to develop online class sessions for hybrid courses. Participants will engage in a number of hands-on activities, including: how to determine which session(s) to put online; how to structure an online session; strategies for teaching online; using un-graded Blackboard tests for student practice and feedback; creating narrated PowerPoint and other multimedia materials; facilitating student interaction and how to keep from getting "buried". Participants are to be experienced Blackboard users, as advanced Blackboard features will be covered.

### **Responding to Student Writing** (Dr. Kate Hahn)

***Tuesday, November 6, 2:00-3:30pm – Library, Room 310***

You assign a stack of writing tasks to help your students interact with course content and improve their writing, and *you end up stuck with a pile of papers. What to do?* Create a glossary of the notes and symbols that you commonly use on student papers and distribute the glossary to students. You can then use this mutual shorthand to efficiently respond to student work. *Write your initial feedback as a reader and not as an instructor.* Ask questions about the content or make suggestions about the organization of students' drafts rather than comment on or correct all aspects of their work. - Workshop participants will explore ways to efficiently respond to various types of writing assignments.

### **Defining the Key Themes of Your Course** (Dr. Edmund Hansen)

***Friday, Nov. 16, 1:30-3:00pm – Library, Room 310***

Students feel often overwhelmed by the quantity and sheer detail of the material to be learned in a given course. The amount of information available in the textbook can make it difficult to see the larger picture and focus on learning that will stay with the student long after the course has ended. Workshop participants will take one of their courses and identify a few core themes under which students can organize the course content. You will be led through a systematic process that allows you to focus your course on the conceptual understandings that students need in order to build a framework of the discipline. This will streamline your course planning and increase student learning.