Technical Requirements for Online Learning

Naturally, you will need certain equipment and capabilities to engage in online learning. Students who are well prepared before the start of a class will be able to focus on the content of the class rather than the required technology. Here are the basics of what you will need:

- Regular access to reliable Internet and computer
- A high speed (DSL or cable) broadband Internet connection
- An updated web browser – Google's Chrome is recommended for Blackboard and Blackboard Collaborate Ultra (for live meetings). Chrome is available as a free download. Click here
    - Javascript and cookies enabled in your web browser – If you have never changed the options inside of your web browser, these are likely already enabled.
- An office suite such as Microsoft Office or Google Docs – Some instructors may have a preference regarding format.
    - You should know how to download files and open them. Most commonly these files will be PowerPoint, Word or Excel documents.
    - You should have a video player for watching videos. If you have Microsoft Office, you probably have Windows Media Player but you should verify that you have some player to watch videos.
    - YouTube is self-contained and will not help you to watch videos that are provided to you in Blackboard or are downloaded to your computer. Many instructors will give you links to YouTube videos for which you will need the broadband Internet connection listed above.
    - A PDF reader: Adobe Acrobat Reader is a free download. Click here.

As an online learner you will primarily use Blackboard (to access content), Blackboard Collaborate Ultra (for live meetings and presentations) and Webex (for live meetings and presentations). Google's Chrome is the recommended web browser for these applications.

- Blackboard does not require any download of software. Please see our separate instructions for logging into Blackboard.
    - Blackboard Collaborate Ultra is used for many live meetings. It is accessed from inside your Blackboard class (listed in the menu on the left of your screen).
- Webex is a live meeting platform that offers exceptional security for our live meetings. If you are going to use Webex regularly you should download their app, also a free download. Click here. For occasional use the web version may be sufficient.

Hardware – Webcams and Microphones

To participate in live meetings in Webex or Blackboard Collaborate Ultra you should have a microphone and web camera. Most laptops and tablets and many desktop computers have them built in.

For those that do not, you can purchase relatively inexpensive webcam/microphone combinations that plug into a USB port. Look for a simple Plug and Play option that does not require additional software.

(Music students should consult our document on improving audio quality in Webex and Blackboard Collaborate Ultra before making a purchase). They generally look something like this:

Note: Some classes and instructors may have additional technical requirements. Confirm that you are prepared to meet the requirements of the class by contacting the instructor.