

Tutorial on Using Blackboard Collaborate

We will be using a feature on BB called “Blackboard Collaborate Ultra” for the rest of the semester. This feature allows us to teach/learn “synchronously” – meaning we can continue to meet as a class live during the class period. So, think of Collaborate as web conferencing with audio, video, ability for me to use a white board to type out as I would write on the board in a classroom and to share power point files.

As neither of us have used this feature before, we are going to have to be patient as we figure out what works for us. But before we officially start instruction, **it is important that you learn and become comfortable with Blackboard Collaborate.**

To use Blackboard Collaborate **you should have the following:**

1. Preferably have access to a computer where you can access the Blackboard website directly. Alternatively, have the Blackboard app downloaded on your devices
2. The preferred web browser for using Collaborate is firefox, although google chrome, I’m told works well too
3. Your devices (and most nowadays have this) should have audio/video capability. In collaborate, each of you will turn on the video function and audio function
4. Collaborate also has a feature where, for every class session, there is a phone number you can dial and type in a password in order to get “audio” access to the class. This can be used in case the in-built microphone/speaker on your computer/device isn’t working properly. You can participate in collaborate by video, while listening to the audio on the phone.
5. I would also recommend that you have a notebook handy. For instance, if you’re logging into Collaborate on your laptop, you might not also be able to take notes on it while participating in Collaborate (unless you can split your screen, which some devices allow)

Learning how to use Collaborate

Blackboard has made the following tutorial available.

<https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Participant>

As students, you will be joining the Collaborate session as a “**participant.**” Please review the tutorial to familiarize yourself with how to be a participant in a Collaborate class period. The Blackboard guide can be a bit wordy, so I have also listed some **steps below in how you can enter and participate in a Blackboard Collaborate class session**

1. Log into Blackboard <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/cis/core-functions/cuny-blackboard/>
2. **You have to join every class session on Collaborate. There are 2 ways to do this:**
 - a. The **easiest option** – In the “Announcements” tab on Blackboard, I will post a link to the “**Class session**”. The “class session essentially operates as a virtual class period and will be the same duration as the in-person class. I have set all the “class sessions” to be “open” 15 minutes before the start of the class period, so

you can “join the session” (enter the class) ahead of the class period and wait, just as you would in person. **Click on this link** at the start of the class period (whenever our class meets), and you can directly join the class. **Please note:** I will delete this link from the Announcements tab as soon as the class period is over to avoid confusion.

- b. **Another option has a few more steps, but is worth getting familiar with as you’ll need it to access recordings**
 - i. On the left-hand green menu option => click the tab **“Virtual Classes” (this tab is right below the Announcements tab)**
 - ii. This will take you directly into the Blackboard Collaborate course room.
 - iii. Once you are in the course room, you should **see the “class session” for the day**. The **class session will be titled with the date and the topic of the class period**. The “class session essentially operates as a virtual class period and will be the same duration as the in-person class. I have set all the “class sessions” to be “open” 15 minutes before the start of the class period, so you can “join the session” (enter the class) ahead of the class period and wait, just as you would in person.
 - iv. To the right of the class session, there is a drop-down menu, **click it and hit join session OR** just click on the class session, and hit “join session”
3. **How to function inside the class session**
- a. After you click “class session” you will be taken into the virtual classroom
 - b. At the bottom of the screen you have several icons:
 - i. The **icon with your photo** (if you uploaded a photograph of yourself) with a check mark against it, indicates you are in the session
 - ii. The **microphone icon** is to control your audio – (the BB link on pg#1 for how to check your audio/microphone settings). For us to be able to hear you, click the icon (the icon blinks to indicate it is working). **If there is a lot of background noise where you are based, I would recommend not clicking this icon, unless you want to ask a question/say something**
 - iii. There is a **video icon** - (the BB link on pg#1 for how to check your video settings). **Click this icon so we can see you**. Once you click the icon, you will be asked to “share video” (click on this) => your video will be moved to the left-hand bottom of the screen. A little eye will appear above it to confirm that we can all see you.
 - iv. There is a **raised hand icon** – You would click this icon if you need to ask me a question. Once you do that, I can see who has raised their hand on my screen, and call on you to make a comment/ask a question.
 - v. At the **bottom right hand corner of your screen**, you will see a **purple arrow tab** => when you click on it, you will see a **chat icon** => click on that if you’d like to send me a question/comment via chat. The last icon is a **settings icon** => click on that to “set up your microphone/audio”
 - vi. On the **left-hand top of your screen**, you will see a **black tab with three lines** => when you click on it, you will see the **phone number and PIN you can use to access the class session via audio**

1. At the bottom is also the icon to **“leave the session” after the class period is completed.**
 - c. Collaborate is set up for **us to conduct class live**. Therefore, I plan to use the “white board” function (which I have access to) to teach class I would in a classroom. I will also test out a powerpoint based class, where I show you’ll powerpoints and talk as I would in class.
 - d. **I will also be recording the class period so you have access to the recording after the period is done.**
 - i. To access the recordings – from the left-hand main menu => virtual class => takes you to the BB collaborate course room => on the black band on the top, in the left-hand corner => click the icon with three lines (menu) => recordings and select the class session recording
 - e. **I expect to take attendance on BB collaborate so the expectation is that all of us are present during the class period as we would in an in-person session**
4. I will also be **conducting office hours on BB collaborate**. To access this:
 - a. From BB homepage, on the left-hand green menu option => click the tab **“Virtual Classes” (this tab is right below the Announcements tab)**
 - b. This will take you directly into the Blackboard Collaborate course room.
 - c. Once you are in the course room, **click the link to Office hours => join session**. I will be present in the classroom for the entire time that office hours are available and will see students on a first-come-first-serve basis. **Office hours will take place on the same days/times as listed on the syllabus. I also plan to increase office hours to other days/times as we’re all getting used to being online. I will announce these increased hours as we go along.**
 - d. Once you enter the classroom => please **use either the chat icon or raise your hand** to indicate that you are in the classroom and ready to meet. I will message you back if you need to wait because another student is meeting with me OR I will lower your hand (please DO NOT leave, just wait, for me to call on you)
 - e. You are always welcome to email me if you’d prefer.