



SEPTEMBER 2015

# TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING REVIEW

TEACHING, LEARNING AND TECHNOLOGY'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## WELCOME BACK FACULTY

by Mendi Benigni

We are excited to have you, our faculty, back as we start another semester. As you are diving into your new classes don't forget about TLT; we are here to help. While TLT is well known for assisting with technology in teaching, we can help with pedagogical problems/questions as well. Just schedule a one-on-one consultation with your Instructional Technologist to discuss any instructional needs you have.

In addition to one-on-one consultations TLT also offers other great opportunities that you can take advantage of. Opportunities such as:

**Weekly small group training sessions** - these 1 hour professional development sessions are themed and designed to introduce you to new tools

and strategies to help you better reach your students. Our weekly training sessions are offered online and face-to-face. Here are this semester's themes:

- Disaster Preparedness
- Student Media Projects
- Flipping Your Classroom
- Increasing Student Engagement
- Maximizing Google Apps
- Assessment and Productivity
- Distance Education
- Innovative Technologies
- OAKS Integrations

**Tons of online tutorials** - for those of you who prefer to learn on your own time, we offer both video and text-based tutorials on a myriad topics and tools.

So as the semester progresses don't forget to take advantage of the services offered by TLT and your Instructional Technologists!



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## SOLVING YOUR STUDENT SCHEDULING PROBLEMS

by Laura Plotts

Solve your student scheduling problems with Google Calendar Appointment slots!

The Appointment slots feature lets you set one period of time on your calendar, divided into available time slots for

people to reserve. This feature is ONLY available with your CofC Google apps for education account. For steps on activating your CofC Google apps for education account, please visit: <http://goo.gl/hpLsju>

For step by step instructions on how to use Google Calendar Appointment slots, visit <https://goo.gl/OT50Nk>



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## TIPS TO PREPARE YOUR COURSE FOR CAMPUS CLOSURES

by Kaitlin Woodlief

As instructors, we try to anticipate problems and challenges that may come up in our courses. One thing we sometimes forget to plan for is weather and natural disasters. Do your students know what is expected of them in a situation when class must be cancelled? Of course it is impossible to predict whether our semester will go as planned, or if it will be interrupted by a single ice day or a long term emergency with a disruption to our College of Charleston services like email or OAKS. Jessica Smith, Instructional Technologist for School of Business, blogged about her firsthand experience

with a class cancellation last semester. Though we cannot plan for these unexpected events, we can prepare for them. Here are 5 tips to help you prepare for a worst case scenario:

### 1) Include a statement in your syllabus.

Do you have a statement about cancelled classes in your syllabus? What are students responsible for if class is cancelled due to weather? This statement should include expectations, an alternate communication

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## I Flunked Blogging...But Learned A Lot In The Process

by Louise Ackerman

Our guest blogger this week is Louise Ackerman from Health and Human Performance.

That might be a slight exaggeration. My experiment with blogging wasn't a total failure, but it also was not the resounding success I envisioned.

### Background

As the faculty coordinator for Public Health Internships one of the challenges I face is finding ways for students to share insights as they navigate their field experience. Internships by nature require students rarely to be in the same place at the same time. Yet on the few occasions when they do get together they benefit greatly from comparing notes

and "talking shop." After learning about blogging at the Summer 2014 Faculty Technology Institute, I thought I had found a way to bridge the gap.

Over the subsequent two semesters I implemented a class blog, the purpose of which was to provide students with a virtual "space to share experiences—discuss issues and ideas relevant to young professionals, help one another manage field-related problems, raise work-related concerns, and fill each other in on information and opportunities in the Public Health arena."

### Public or Private?

I knew what I was aiming for, but was not clear which platform would



be most suitable. With the help of TLT consultant, Laura Plotts, I settled on Google Blogger. Because internships are about preparing students for the real world, I wanted a platform they could easily adapt to life and/or work after graduation.

Google Blogger allows you to create a public blog, accessible to anyone with an internet connection, or a private blog, which is accessible only to invited viewers. I opted for the latter for two reasons: I thought students might speak more freely knowing the blog was for class eyes only, plus I was concerned that some might unthinkingly post comments that could jeopardize their internship should co-workers or a supervisor see them.

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*Lesson #1:* I now recommend not going private. If you're going to ask students to blog, let them get used to the idea that what they post may be read by anyone, anytime, and blog responsibly. Better to learn that lesson now than when a real job is on the line.

*Lesson #2:* If you want to have private conversations, you don't need a blogging platform. The OAKS Discussion tool will likely work just as well.

### If I Build It, Will They Come?

Developing the assignment was the next task. Normally when it comes to classwork, I'm all about crossing t's, dotting i's, and leaving nothing to interpretation. This assignment, however, seemed to call for a more free-wheeling paradigm. After all, blogging is essentially about finding your voice: having something to say, and saying it in a way that engages others. I wanted authenticity, and I had hoped that providing less-than-my-usual structure would spur honest, interesting, creative, provocative, and/or helpful posts.

It didn't.

After a couple rounds of vapid posts I revised the assignment, taking topic selection out of the hands of students, and instead provided prompts to which they were required to respond. While the quality of posts improved immensely, I sacrificed the authenticity I was looking for. The blog went from student-focused to teacher-led (exactly what I wanted to avoid).

*Lesson #3:* A student blog should be student-directed. In a traditional class setting students would have time to develop a blog that reflected their interests and concerns within the confines of the course. The structure of this course made that unfeasible.

### Topic Selection

Over the course of two semesters I played around with types of prompts, trying to find the ideal mix. I was never able to come up with a topic that generated a true discussion—a back and forth similar to what takes place in a classroom. At best students posted well-thought out comments; beyond that they rarely challenged each other or dug deeply into issues, despite grade incentives to do so.

*Lesson #4:* The prompts that led to the best posts were inspirational, thought-provoking, and/or relevant to students at this time in their lives. (TED Talks were a great resource.). Prompts requiring free writing yielded the least interesting

posts. (Students simply followed the lead of the person who responded first.). I had medium success with prompts that asked for helpful information (e.g. job search strategies and exploring solutions to common internship problems).

*Lesson #5:* Given the lack of meaningful back and forth, simple reflection assignments would be a viable alternative.

### Grading

To earn the minimum credit students had to respond to my prompts; they could earn additional credit by responding to their classmates' posts, which was my way of encouraging discussion. They were given guidelines for what constituted acceptable original posts and reply posts.

*Lesson #6:* Grading blog posts is challenging but doable. It's wise to set an approximate word length (I used a minimum of 250 words for an original post and 150 for subsequent posts), and details for what constitutes quality comments. For me that was:

- Thoughtful and/or provocative
- On-topic
- Well-articulated
- Add to the discussion (e.g. comments such as, "I agree" or "I had the same experience" do not count as moving the discussion forward)
- Respectful

### Bottom Line

I'm not sure if I'll revise the assignment and try again. While there is plenty of tweaking that could be done, I'm not convinced that blogging is suitable to my objectives for the Internship class. I am, however, thinking of ways I can utilize the technology in a traditional classroom setting.



plan, and information about student responsibilities and adjusted assignment deadlines.

### 2) *Determine alternate communication procedures.*

It is possible that there could be a disruption to campus services like faculty email. To prepare for this unlikely event, make sure you keep a hard copy list of student emails, or save a copy of the classlist to your home computer. Other options that some instructors utilize for class communication, even under normal circumstances, include Twitter, Facebook, Celly, and Remind. It may be beneficial to set up these communication systems early in the semester as an experiment to see if it is a good way to communicate with your students.

### 3) *Plan online methods of content delivery.*

If multiple class meetings are cancelled, you will want to be familiar with technologies that will make it possible to deliver course content to students. This may involve finding existing media online or creating your own online lecture. The library has resources to help you find suitable media, and TLT is here to help you navigate the technology options for online lecture delivery. Some options

include Kaltura, VoiceThread, MediaSite, and Explain Everything.

### 4) *Know OAKS.*

Assuming that all systems are functional on campus, but class is still not in session, you will want to be able to utilize OAKS. Do you know how to post content, embed videos, or create a dropbox for student assignments? If you feel that your OAKS skills could use a refresher, contact your instructional technologist to find out about upcoming scheduled trainings or availability for individual consultations.

### 5) *Back up your files.*

This is a no brainer. Make sure you are not reliant on access to the internet, OAKS, or email to prepare for your classes. Keep copies of important lecture or course materials on your computer or a hard drive.

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Protected information entrusted to the care of the College of Charleston must be maintained and managed as defined by the College of Charleston Privacy Policy. Use of 3rd party tools must not violate the College of Charleston Privacy Policy, or Peer-To-Peer File Sharing Policy.

## Organize Your Digital Life

by Mendi Benigni

There are a plethora of fantastic resources and applications online that many of us use everyday. As for me, I use Google Drive, Asana, Remember the Milk, OAKS, My Charleston, the TLT blog and the TLT Tutorials blog, Pinterest, and Twitter, just to name a few. I also like to keep a running list of applications that I'd like to research when I have time. I've tried everything to try to make it easy for me to access these sites quickly but nothing works well. I like Diigo but the interface is clunky. I've used browser bookmarks but I don't like those either. Most of time I can't find what I want because all the links look just the same. Recently I've found SYMBALOO and I think I've found something that will finally allow me to create the one-

stop-shop I've been looking for.

Symbaloo allows you to create icons for each of your links then group them on a page. You'll notice above I have all of the sites I use constantly on the left (including links to specific Google Docs) and TLT's social media on the right. I can create a link to anything on the web.

With Symbaloo you can create groups, called Markers, and add a colored background to create a visual barrier for the group (above you can see the markers on the left, one is orange and one is black). You can also add multiple tabs. In the image you'll see I have a tab for WORK links and one for RESEARCH



links. You can have as many tabs as you need. Lastly, you can even create folders of links. This is great for those links you don't access as often but want to still have available to you. Reorganizing the links is as easy as dragging and dropping them into a new space.

BEST PART...

Once you've created your Symbaloo page(s) you can easily make this your browser's homepage. So as soon as you open a web browser your Symbaloo page automatically comes up, giving you quick and easy access to the links and web-based files you use everyday!