

A Student's Guide to

Distance Learning

At

Saint Peter's College

October 2007

Table of Contents

Is Online learning for you at Saint Peter's?	3
Type of Distance Learning Classes	4
Steps to taking a Distance Learning Course	5
Minimum Requirements for Your Computer System	6
Getting Your Computer Ready	7
Free Plug-Ins	12
The First Day of Class	17
Academic Conduct	18
Important Telephone Numbers	19

Is Online Learning for You at Saint Peter's?

Learning online is a new experience for all of us: however it is a way of learning that will increase in the future as more schools, colleges and organizations use the internet for education and the transmission of information.

This exciting environment for the delivery of course is not for everyone. Some students are more successful than others. Certain attitudes, study and work habits and skills are needed.

Some of the benefits to students include:

- Reduce commuting time
- Increase time and scheduling flexibility
- Access to online course material for review
- Facilitate more interaction for students that are not likely to participate in large lecture situations
- The same qualified faculty teach the Distance Learning courses as well as the in-class courses
- Students are able to utilize different learning styles such as both oral and written presentation and participation in both onsite and online discussions

Online students need to:

- **Feel comfortable with technology** and know how to use it properly (email, saving a file on their computer, attaching a file, cutting and pasting from one document to another, downloading software, etc.).
- **Be mature independent learners** who can take responsibility for their own learning.
- **Exercise self discipline** to finish the readings and complete assignments on time. It is easy to fall behind and almost impossible to catch up.
- **Possess strong reading and writing skills.** Students with weaknesses in these areas who would still like to take an online class will probably need to seek help.
- **Commit at least 7-10 hours a week per three credit class.** Most students feel that an online class requires much more time and commitment than a traditional face-to-face class.

- **Be open to a new learning environment.** Flexibility and adaptability is critical. New experiences are not always comfortable at first.
- **Actively seek help** when needed.

Types of Distance Learning Classes

Distance Learning is a convenient and flexible way to take courses for college credit. Students can take classes to help earn a degree or to explore personal interests.

There are two different types of Distance Learning courses for college credit at Saint Peter's. The two types are Online and Hybrid. Following are their definitions:

- Online: the instructor will meet in person/in class with students for an amount of time less than 50% of total class hours.
- Hybrid: the instructor will meet in person/in class with students for an amount of time greater than 50% of total class hours.

You must be admitted to the College to take a Distance Learning course.

You must be a Sophomore, Junior, Senior or Graduate Student to take a Distance Learning course.

Maximum of 20 students per Class.

Distance Learning classes will be offered on a Semester and Trimester basis.

You are allowed to take one Distance Learning course per Semester/Trimester.

No Distance Learning class will be offered during the Summer Inter-sessions (3 week classes).

Saint Peter's Online Classes

Online classes take place via the internet using a software tool called Blackboard. Blackboard provides a way for faculty to provide course content to students. Only those students enrolled in the class have access to the class. Students may use their home computers, dorm computers, lab or work-place computers to obtain and complete assignments, view lecture materials, and to participate in discussions with the instructor and fellow students. Saint Peter's College email is used as the main communication tool. Online classes are NOT self-study. The class is structured with strict deadlines for assignments, projects and tests.

IMPORTANT: Faculty may/will require students to come to campus for special course orientations, projects and tests.

Steps to Taking a Distance Learning Course

1. Make sure Distance Learning is really for YOU!
2. Read the technical requirements needed for your computer carefully.
3. Apply for admission to the College if you are not a Saint Peter's College student by contacting the Admissions Office in Jersey City at (201) 761-6000 or in Englewood Cliffs at (201) 568-7730.
4. See your academic advisor for help with planning your classes.
5. Find a schedule of online courses available at the Registrar's Office or on the Saint Peter's College website.
6. Register for your class through the regular Saint Peter's registration procedures. Contact Registration at (201) 761-6050 if you need assistance.
7. Purchase your books. Make sure you have the correct section number.

I Have Registered, so What Happens Now?

Online Classes:

- Check out the distance learning web site <http://www.spc.edu/pages/1271.asp> for orientation information.

Please be sure to note if you have a course specific orientation.

- Download any plug-ins needed and perform the browser check.
- Disable anti-popup software if applicable.
- Login to Blackboard at <http://www.spc.edu/pages/990.asp>

Note: Check course schedule for the starting date of Online classes for the semester or trimester.

Minimum Requirements for Your Computer System

To participate in an online class at Saint Peter's College students are expected to be familiar with their own computer and the Internet. Students are responsible for their own hardware and software. It is not a good idea to install any new system upgrades during the semester you are taking an online class.

Contact your instructor **immediately** if your computer is down during your online course! It is your responsibility to find another alternate way to submit your work. In this case you might have to use a computer here at Saint Peter's, a friend's system or submit your assignment by snail-mail, fax or hand delivery.

TIP: Write down the email address and telephone number of your professor and keep it in a safe place. You will not be able to access this information from your online class if your computer is down!

Online students must have access to the following equipment:

- A PC running Windows 98, ME, NT or 2000 (a Pentium or equivalent processor at 166 MHz or better) **OR** a Macintosh system 7.5 or higher.
- 64 MB is highly recommended with at least 50 MB of available disk space for assignments.
- A modem or other device capable of connecting to the internet at 56K or better. If you are going to take a number of online classes, we

recommend that you invest in a high speed cable/DSL service to take advantage of audio and video clips and to participate in online chats.

- An ISP (Internet Service Provider)
- Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher. Many of the online classes use video, audio, and multimedia presentations. You will not be able to view these learning materials if you are using an old browser. If you are updating your browser, do so far in advance of the start of the class to troubleshoot any problems that might result.
- A Saint Peter's College email account and Word Processing software (Microsoft Word).
- A sound card and speakers.
- Virus Software that has been updated.

Getting Your Computer Ready

Browser Compatibility

Access to your online class is through a web browser. You should understand the difference between a web browser and an ISP (Internet Service Provider).

An **ISP provider** is a company that provides you access to the World Wide Web for a fee through their network. Examples would be AOL, AT&T, EarthLink and Verizon. You access your ISP provider's network via your computer's modem, cable or your telephone.

The **web browser** is the software that you use to read a web page. The most widely accepted and used software programs are Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. If you have purchased your computer recently, this software has most likely already been installed. It is free to the public and updates are available to all to download at no charge via the Microsoft or Netscape web site. Online classes at Saint Peter's, use Internet Explorer and Netscape. You can use other browsers but you may run into problems that we might not be able to help you with. Students and faculty access online classes at Saint Peter's using a software package called Blackboard. Via your ISP provider, using Internet Explorer or Netscape, you use the World Wide Web to access the server at Saint Peter's where the course resides.

We recommend that you use the latest browser versions available to access your class. If you have an old version on Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator, updates are available to download for free Online. You will want to use all the tools available to you to enhance your learning experience.

To obtain Netscape Navigator:

- Go to Netscape web site download section at www.netscape.com/download/
- Select either Netscape Communicator or Netscape Navigator (a smaller browser only version, if you have limited memory on your system) from the list
- Select the correct version of your computer. This will take you to the download page.
- An installer will walk you through the installation process. Make sure you choose a version number higher than 4.05 and lower than 6. If you run into problems, there are very detailed instructions for installing Netscape Navigator on the web site.

To obtain Internet Explorer

- Go to www.microsoft.com/downloads/
- Find Internet Explorer in the dropdown list of products and select the appropriate version for your computer. Also make sure to select your operating system from the lower drop down list.
- Click the “find it” button to proceed to the download page.
- An installer will download that will walk you through the installation process. Make sure you choose a version number higher than 5. If you run into problems, there are very detailed instructions for installing Internet Explorer on the download page.

AOL Users

If you are an AOL user you may or may not have problems. You will need an AOL version 4.0 or higher and Internet Explorer 6.02. Do not use earlier versions of AOL with earlier versions of Internet Explorer as you will have difficulty accessing many of the Blackboard features. Saint Peter’s does not support AOL. This means that our experience with this browser is limited and we might not be able to help you if you have a problem.

For Best Results with AOL:

- Connect to the Internet using AOL version 4.0 or higher
- Open a private chat within AOL (this allows AOL to remain open, without asking if you wish to disconnect while minimized)
- Minimize AOL
- Launch Netscape or Internet Explorer

Accessing Your Online Class from Work

There may be times when you would like to access your class from your place of employment on your lunch hour. Please note that some employers block sites that require you to type in a username and password. **This is a firewall issue.** If it is absolutely necessary to access your class from work and your company has set up its firewall to prevent you from accessing the Saint Peter's server, you will have to speak to your network administrator to have the port or the firewall open.

Operating System

The two supported operating systems for accessing online classes at Saint Peter's are:

Microsoft Windows 98 or higher
Apple Macintosh 7.5 or higher

Chances are good that your computer is running on one of these platforms. If you do not have one of these operating systems, you need to use a computer that has one or upgrade your existing computer in order to take a Distance Education class. Consult www.microsoft.com for Windows machines, www.apple.com for Macs or your computer manual for more information.

Note:

It is not a good idea to upgrade your computer's operating system during the middle of the semester you are enrolled in an online class! Give yourself plenty of time to troubleshoot problems that might come up. If your computer is down during the semester, notify your online instructor immediately via phone or email from another computer!

Anti Pop-up Software

Blackboard uses certain features such as email, discussions and quizzes that open another browser window. If you have problems accessing these windows, it might be due to a program that you have installed on your computer which blocks pop-up windows. We hate these annoying advertisements but ***Blackboard uses pop-up windows extensively.*** You need to disable this software while you are accessing your online class. The same problem will occur if you are using any Internet security programs such as firewalls that protect against Java Scripts. You might have to disable the “anti JavaScript feature”. Pop-up windows used for email, discussions, etc. in Blackboard use JavaScript. Also, some Internet Service Providers (ISP) are now providing anti-popup features.

Are you an EarthLink user?

EarthLink comes now with a built-in anti pop-up feature automatically turned on. You need to turn it off while accessing your online class! If you need help, see the EarthLink support website or call them at 1-800-719-4660. Some software can be configured to reject or accept pop-up screens depending on the site accessed. Pop-Up Killer is an example.

Cache

Computers have many different types of cache, but they all have the same purpose. Cache stores information that was used recently. For example, a web browser will use cache to store pages, images, sounds, etc. of web sites you visit on your hard drive. This will allow your computer to reload the web page information from your hard drive rather than downloading the information again from the website when you revisit the site. Loading the information from your hard drive will allow the web page to be displayed faster; this usually speeds up web browsing.

You can see cache in action by accessing your favorite web site. Notice how long it takes for the site to be displayed on your computer. Exit the site. Go back and revisit the site. The display should come up on your monitor much faster.

Your computer also uses disk caching, which stores information you have recently read from your hard disk in the computer's RAM. Since accessing RAM is much faster than reading data off the hard disk, this helps speed up common functions on your computer. One other type of cache is processor cache, which stores small amounts of information. This helps make the processing of common instructions much more efficient, thereby speeding up computing time.

The cache on your computer is cleared out when you reboot the system.

We ask that you set your cache to always reload so that you will always see the latest version of your online class.

Set Cache to Always Reload a Page:

Netscape Communicator (Navigator 4.5 and higher):

- Select Edit > Preferences
- Click the + sign next to Advanced to see more options
- Select Cache
- Select the Every Time radio button at the bottom
- Click OK

Internet Explorer 4.0 and higher:

- Select Tools > Internet Options
- Select the General tab
- Select Settings from Temporary Internet Files
- Select the Every Visit to the Page radio button
- Click OK

Java

Java is a technology that allows your computer to run small “programs” that reside inside of web pages. They are commonly used for pop-up windows and for features that allow users to interact with the software. Blackboard uses this technology for tests, quizzes, email and discussions. Usually, upgrading to a supported operating system and browser version will take care of this automatically, but you may have turned this off in your browser's settings.

To turn Java on:

In Internet Explorer 4.0 and higher:

- Tools > Internet Options
- Select the Advanced Tab

- Locate Microsoft VM
- Make sure the Java console enable and java logging enable boxes are checked
- Click OK
- Restart your computer

In Navigator 4.5 and higher:

- Edit > Preferences
- Select Advanced
- Make sure that “Enable Java” and Enable JavaScript boxes are checked
- Click OK

Free Plug-ins (Required)

Plug-ins are software programs that extend the capabilities of your internet browser and allow you to access and view many of the materials and multimedia presentations in your online course. **Each of these programs can be downloaded directly to your personal computer for FREE.**

Adobe Acrobat Reader

The Adobe Acrobat Reader is used to view documents that were saved in the .PDF file format by the author or course instructor. This format is used frequently to present articles and documents in their original format and is common on the Internet. The free reader is available from the Adobe site. Update the version of your Adobe Acrobat Reader yearly.

Downloading or Updating the Adobe Acrobat Reader:

- Go to the Adobe web site download section at:
<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>
- Choose the appropriate Platform that matches your computer.
- Click the red Download button.

Macromedia Flash

Macromedia's Flash is used by web developers to add animations, sound and interactivity to web pages. Not all of our online classes have Flash components but many of the online classes that use material supplemented by a book publisher do. These sections are rich in multimedia. The Flash plug-in is probably already on your computer. All of the newest versions of browsers have the Flash plug-in included.

You can download the free Flash Player plug-in from the Macromedia site. We recommend that you return to the Macromedia site on a yearly basis to keep your software updated.

Downloading or Updating your Flash Player

- Go to the Macromedia web site download section at:
<http://www.macromedia.com/downloads/>
- Click on the Macromedia Flash Player link under the Macromedia Web Players heading.
- Click on the Install Now button, or follow the instructions at the bottom of the page.

QuickTime

QuickTime is a program for handling video, sound, animation, graphics, text, music, and even 360-degree virtual reality scenes. The QuickTime Player allows you to download and use audio and visual clips. Unlike Real Player, QuickTime is designed to handle movies that you download. This allows you to store the movies and view them at a later date without having to reconnect to the Internet. The free QuickTime Player plug-in can be downloaded from Apple's web site. Both Macintosh and Windows versions are available.

Downloading the QuickTime Plugin

- Go to the Apple web site download section at:
<http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/>

(Macintosh and Window versions are both available)

- Follow the instructions provided to download the free player.

Real Player

Real Player is one of the programs that allow you to listen to streaming audio or view streaming video clips. "Streaming" refers to multimedia files that can be viewed on your computer without having to wait for the entire file to download. When the audio/video file size is large, or your modem speed is slow, streaming the clip can dramatically reduce the amount of time that you spend at your computer waiting for the file. If you have a DSL or cable line installed at home, these files will load more quickly. If a streamed file was produced in the Real Player format it can only be viewed if you have the Real Player plug-in. A number of online courses use Real Player clips.

The Real Player web site is a little confusing. You do not need to pay for the Real Player Plug-in. To make sure you download the correct Real Player plug-in for your computer, follow these instructions:

Downloading the Real Player Plug-in:

- Go to the real.com web site download section at:
<http://www.real.com/player/>
- The page features many advertisements for purchasing Real Player. **You do not need to pay for the plug-in.** The required plug-in can be downloaded for free. Look for the link in the upper right corner of the page: **FREE RealOne Player.**
- After selecting the link, follow the instructions provided to download the player.

Shockwave

Shockwave is a plug-in used to view multimedia presentations created with the Macromedia product Director. Director allows the developer to create very powerful interactive full featured movies. This program is often used for

the creation of CD's and DVD's and allows for 2D-3D animations and special effects. It differs from Flash in that it allows for the integration of more file types. Flash is a creation tool while Director is used to put multimedia presentations together into a coherent presentation.

You can download the free Shockwave plug-in from the Macromedia site.

We recommend that you return to the Macromedia site on a yearly basis to keep your plug-in updated.

Downloading or Updating the Shockwave Plug-in

- Go to the Macromedia web site download section at:
<http://www.macromedia.com/downloads/>
- Click on the Macromedia Shockwave Player link under the Macromedia Web Players heading.
- Click on the Install Now button, or follow the instructions at the bottom of the page.

PowerPoint Viewer

If you do not have PowerPoint on your computer this viewer will allow you to open and view Power Point presentations from your online class.

- Go to the Microsoft web site download section for the Power Point Viewer at:
<http://www.microsoft.com/office/ork/xp/appndx/appa13.htm>
- Click on PpView.exe.
- Follow the instructions for downloading.

Free Plug-ins (Optional)

Adobe e-Book Reader

This reader by Adobe might be needed to open electronic books from the

library. It allows you to download library resources.

- Go to the Adobe web site download section for Adobe e-Book at:
<http://www.adobe.com/products/ebookreader/register.html>
- Choose Download the English Version
- Fill out the registration form. Remember to hit the red Register button at the bottom.
- Find the correct installation instructions and select the correct format displayed on the left.

WinZip

Zip files are “sets” of smaller files that have been “packaged” together in a compressed form to save space. Packaging files like this allows files to be archived, copied and transported easily because they are kept together. Normally, you can not view these files unless you “unzip” them. WinZip’s Internet Browser Support add-on allows users of Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator to download and open zip files with a single click. With the add-on installed, there is no need to save to disk and then switch to WinZip or to Windows Explorer or File Manager to open the downloaded file. All files that have been downloaded are automatically copied to a folder of your choice; this ensures that a permanent copy of the download is saved on your system. We suggest that you save zip files in a Downloads folder that you probably already have on your computer.

- Go to c/net Download.com at:
<http://download.com.com/3000-2381-2760395.html?legacy=cnet>
- Make sure you are on the WinZip Internet Browser Support Add-on (32 bit) 4.0 build 3234 popular screen.
- Choose Download Now.

Microsoft Word and Microsoft Word Viewer

We recommend for your work at Saint Peter's that you purchase a copy of Microsoft Word (not Works) for your computer. This will allow you to easily view documents in your course, share files with your fellow students and submit work to your professor in a format that can also be viewed on their computer.

If this is impossible for you, this plug-in can be downloaded to view and print documents created in Microsoft Word with the limitation that you can not create Word documents of your own. Word Viewer can open documents created with all previous versions of Word (Windows and Macs).

- Go to the Microsoft Support Center web site at :
<http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;EN-US;q165908>
- Make sure you have the page titled: WD: How to obtain Microsoft Word Viewers
- Find the documentation for the operating system on your computer and then download the software according to the instructions.

E-mail Accounts

A Saint Peter's College e-mail account is required for your Distance learning course. If the Blackboard server is down for any reason or you can not access your online class, your College email account will be the only way for you to communicate with your professor.

Make sure you have an email account with Saint Peter's. If you do not have an email address or your email ID and/or Password is not working, contact the Saint Peter's College Help (201) 761-7800.

The First Day of Class

On the first day of your online course:

- Type <http://www.spc.edu/pages/990.asp> in the address window of your browser

- Click on “Blackboard Login” link in the left hand side of the screen.
- Enter your user name: (first initial of first name then your last name)
- Enter your password (SPC then last 4 characters of your social security number)
- Click on the “Login link”. Your class will appear on the top right side of the page.
- Click on the course to enter your distance learning class.

Academic Conduct

In order to maintain academic integrity at Saint Peter’s College, the college community will not tolerate any forms of academic dishonesty. Examples of unacceptable forms of dishonesty include cheating, copying, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, submitting someone else’s work as one’s own; dishonesty through the use of technology such as sharing disks, files, or programs; access to, modification of, or transfer of electronic data, system software or computing facilities. The intent of this policy is to promote academic integrity, and to arrest all forms of academic dishonesty.

When incidents of academic dishonesty occur and the faculty member chooses to submit a formal complaint of the incident to the Academic Dean, the Dean will refer the complaint to the Academic Integrity Review Board, which is composed of faculty, academic administrators, and the Dean of Student Development.

The Academic Integrity Review Board will review the circumstances surrounding the incident and make a recommendation of appropriate disciplinary action. Penalties imposed on the student who violates this policy may vary from failing the unit of work to expulsion from the college.

The most important tip we can give you to ensure your success in your online class is to “stay connected” and on schedule.....

Important Telephone Numbers

Call The Right Place!

Main Number - Jersey City (201) 761-6000
Main Number - Englewood Cliffs (201) 568-7730
Registration (201) 761-6050
Admissions (201) 761-7100
Academic Advising Center (201) 761-6038
CALL Center (201) 761-6260
Library (201) 761-6461
Bookstore (201) 761-6490
Help Desk (201) 761-7800