

COURSE GUIDE



EME 6936 Distance Learning &
EME 7458 Research in Distance Learning

University of South Florida
College of Education
Instructional Technology

We are looking forward to working with all of you! Please take a few minutes to look over the following information before the semester begins. We have a lot of ground to cover and want to make sure you are ready to participate. The following information is provided to help you prepare.

For some of you this will be your first experience with distance learning. For others, it will be very familiar subject matter. Due to the fact that this course is being taught via the Internet, your education will include course materials about distance learning, as well as experiencing the trials, tribulations, and triumphs associated with distance learning.

If you have questions about this guide, please address them as soon as possible so that we are all on the same page as we begin the semester. We are glad to have you in the class!

ACCESSING THE COURSE

In order to participate in this online course you must have access to a computer, an e-mail address and Internet access. All USF students are eligible for a university e-mail address without charge. To find out how to activate your USF e-mail account, go to the [Academic Computing Technologies](#) site. Here you will set up a NetID and password which will allow you to access the course through USF's Blackboard Portal.

My USF is the Blackboard Portal. Go to <https://my.usf.edu> and you will be prompted to enter your NetID and password. These will open your personal page within Blackboard. Click on the Courses Tab to see a list of courses in which you are currently enrolled.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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E-mail is the best, and probably fastest, way to reach us. Expect a response from email requests within 48 hours during the week.

IN WHICH SECTION ARE YOU ENROLLED?

Master's level Instructional Technology majors or non-degree-seeking students should enroll in EME 6936.

Ed.S. or doctoral students in Instructional Technology must enroll in the 7000 level counterpart, EME 7458 (Research in Distance Education). This class uses a variable credit prefix/number, and may show up as 1 credit in OASIS. Please be sure to register for 3 credit hours for this particular class.

Ed.S. or doctoral students in majors other than Instructional Technology may choose either the 6000 or the 7000 level option. (Please consult your advisor for more information.)

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this semester, students who have participated fully in this course should be able to:

- Describe examples of various **distance learning delivery systems** and explore their implications for teaching and learning.
- Use professional journals and established distance learning references as resources to identify **historical and contemporary trends** in the field and to suggest areas of emerging interest for teachers, students, and administrators.
- Compare and contrast the nature **of interactivity in traditional and virtual classrooms**, including both synchronous and asynchronous environments.
- Review representative **literature in distance and distributed learning** and propose a research agenda (EME 7458 students only), to challenge conclusions reported, suggest replication, or modify an existing line of inquiry.

COURSE PREREQUISITES

Graduate standing is required for students enrolled in this three-credit hour graduate course.

The technical prerequisites for this course are the ability to send and receive e-mail with attachments, comfort using a Word Processing program such as MS Word, and the ability to create a presentation in some electronic medium (i.e. PowerPoint, Web Page, etc.). It is very important that you are comfortable using the Web as all your assignments and readings involve the Internet. You should also be able to install software on your own machine as we may from time to time ask you to install a plugin for your browser. Additional handy skills are proper Internet searching and self directed learning readiness. Any other technical skills required will be taught via written instruction as you need them.

COURSE DESCRIPTION & PURPOSE

The main goals of this course are to:

- Provide an overall view of distance learning from both historical and current viewpoints, and
- Provide an overall view of the research and theories that are used to support distance learning endeavors.

This course is designed to provide an integrated framework to explore theory within practice. The course will explore all types of distance and distributed learning, not just *online* learning.

Topics include:

- Distance technologies
- Implications for teaching and learning
- Issues and trends in distance learning
- Research in distance learning

This is NOT a production course on developing distance learning materials, courses, or websites. The nature of the course is to make you aware of the big picture of distance learning in many different environments using various media or combinations of media.

FORMAT

Readings

All coursework and readings will be available online within the Blackboard portal for this course.

Discussion Forum

Online, asynchronous discussions will take place in Blackboard. These will be more productive if everyone participates, offers feedback to others, and completes the reading assignments. Discussions can take place very quickly. Be sure you are checking in and keeping up as we move through the course content.

Group Work

In the third week of class, you will form small groups and determine times and dates for the collaborative sessions you will need to complete your project throughout the semester. This added interaction is important for building relationships in our virtual learning community. We hope that they will not only be fun, but also rewarding! We will attempt to do this synchronously to make it easier to form groups and for everyone to get to know one another.

MODES OF COMMUNICATION

Since this course is truly a distance one, we are not scheduled to meet face-to-face at any point during the semester. With this in mind we will be interacting in a number of different ways using different methods and technologies. Here's some of what you can expect to experience:

Blackboard – Announcements – Plan on checking in with Blackboard frequently. Any important class changes or special announcements will be posted here. Blackboard will also be home to our Discussion Forums, Group Workspaces, PowerPoint presentations, and Student Homepages.

Synchronous Virtual Classroom - In order to successfully accomplish some of our tasks this semester, it will be necessary for us to meet synchronously online with both small groups and the whole class. This will be facilitated through virtual chats, collaboration tools and Elluminate Live! a virtual classroom software. As you decide whether or not to take this course please determine if your schedule will accommodate several of these synchronous sessions. In the first two weeks of classes we will set some whole class dates and times – so, determine the times when these interactions can occur in your busy schedules.

E-Mail – Each student at USF is eligible for a university e-mail account without charge. To find out how to activate your USF e-mail account, go to the [Academic Computing Technologies](#) site. Students preferring to use a different e-mail account for course communication may do so, but **you will be responsible for making sure the USF portal has your correct e-mail address.** Directions for using Blackboard and changing your Portal preferences can be found from the [Academic Computing Technologies](#) site. Please be sure you read and understand them as it will make your life much easier throughout the semester.

A very good resource for assistance, both from us and from your peers, will be the **Ask the Guru** discussion in Blackboard. This is to be used for any questions you feel comfortable asking in front of your peers and may actually get you an answer faster, as others in the class can also reply. Use of this forum will help to alleviate my answering popular questions many times. Therefore, if a question is asked that we feel may be good for everyone to see, we will post it and the answer in the Guru discussion. Look here first if you are trying to accomplish something and are having problems. Some questions that came up in previous semester are already there to get us started.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & MATERIALS

Textbook – There is *no textbook* requirement for this course! Several books will be recommended to you for reference and further exploration of distance education topics, but you will not be required to purchase a textbook for this course. Many articles and other online resources will be made available to you through links in the course on Blackboard.

Synchronous Virtual Classroom – We will be scheduling several online synchronous sessions this semester. These sessions are “same time, any place” events using Elluminate Live! Software. This will involve downloading free software and plug-ins to your computer and the use of a headset, or separate speakers and microphone attached to your computer. A **headset**, featuring headphones and an attached microphone, is recommended and can be purchased in various locations ranging from discount stores to office supply and computer stores, as well as the USF Bookstore. Prices vary, but an inexpensive set will work just fine. Once you have these items, log on to the Elluminate website <http://www.illuminate.com/support/> to download the free software and test your equipment.

Computer Technology – In order to fully participate in this online course, students must have:

- A computer
- An e-mail address
- Internet access

Students must be able to:

- Send and receive e-mail messages with attachments
- Use a word processing program such as MS Word
- Create a presentation using an electronic medium such as MS PowerPoint or a Web Page
- Install software and plug-ins

There are minimum suggested requirements for accessing this course and the materials online:

- Internet Connection - minimum 56 kbps dial-up connection is suggested. Broadband connection is recommended. For more information on USF Internet connection options: [connect to USF](#).
- Operating System and Browser - this table illustrates the combinations of operating systems and Internet browsers that are most successful.

Web Browsers		Windows Operating Systems		Apple/Mac Operating Systems	
		2000	XP	10.2	10.3
Internet Explorer	5.2	*	*	*	*
	6.0	*	*	*	*
Netscape	4.78				
	7.1	*	*	*	*
Safari	1.0			*	
	1.1				*

* compatible with Blackboard and should function properly.

- Screen Resolution - Minimum 800x600 screen resolution; 1024x768 recommended. Reference the documentation that came with your computer and monitor for instructions on changing your screen resolution.

EXPECTATIONS - What We Need from You

The distance format gives us some flexibility in time and place for our interactions, conversations, etc. Time management will be key to your success. You will be provided with an assignment checklist to help you track your progress in the course as we progress. The two most important things we need from you are:

- Your initiative to **be proactive** in getting things done on time, and
- Your initiative to **make us aware of any problems** you may encounter, questions you may develop, or concerns you may have. If we don't know about it, we can't help.

Students are expected to be **actively involved** in all interactions with the content, the instructors, and other students in the course in order to fulfill the requirements of this course.

Deadlines will be imposed to keep us all on track during the semester. If you find yourself in a situation where you will not be able to meet a deadline for any reason (i.e. business trip, you were in the hospital, your dog ate your computer) it is your responsibility to let the instructors know, prior to the due date! Accommodations can be made if everyone is aware of the situation.

Although this course does not meet face-to-face, it still has a requirement for hours of instruction. For this reason, you should expect to spend the three hours you would normally spend in a classroom each week, plus the time you would normally spend studying on your own in a graduate

level three credit course. This **time requirement** is a guideline – you may need more or less time depending on your learning style and your experience. You will also need time to accomplish the assignments and reflect on what you are learning. Please be sure you plan the time necessary to successfully complete this course.

ARE YOU READY?

Students often find that their expectations of online classes are different from the actual experience of taking an online class. Before you get started, take the Readiness Assessment at the link provided below.

This self-assessment from the University of Oklahoma is for you only - your instructors won't see your results. Figure out where you are in terms of:

- **Time Management**
- **Technology**
- **Class Preferences**

Click on this link to find out more about you and your characteristics for online learning...
<http://casweb.cas.ou.edu/olr/starting/readiness/index.htm>

The following websites will introduce you to the world of distance learning!

- The Distance Learning Clearinghouse
<http://www.uwex.edu/disted/>
 - Instructional Technology Council – Distance Education Reports and Abstracts
<http://www.itcnetwork.org/reports.htm>
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QUESTIONS & CONCERNS?

Please let us know if you have any questions about the course, content, format, expectations, etc. at this point.

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