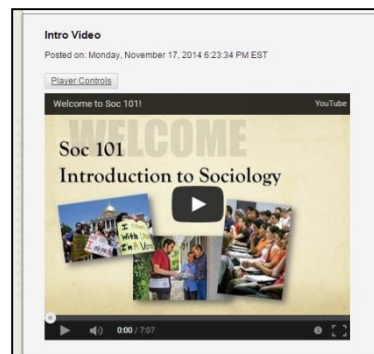# Creating an Introductory Course Video

Why create introductory course videos?

A video introduction to your course can potentially fulfill several aims. In an online course, they can provide a vital sense of your presence as instructor, and help personalize the learning experience, setting a strong foundation for your future interactions with students. A video can also lead students step- by-step through the navigation of your Blackboard course site, helping them to quickly get their bearings and get off to a strong start. And for all courses, whether online, hybrid or just Blackboard supported, introductory videos provide a means to excite students about the course and topics you will cover throughout the semester, and to convey your enthusiasm about the subject matter. Posted as a first announcement, in the instructor contacts area, in a course information area or under a "Getting Started" folder, introductory videos strengthen the connection between students and course material, and students with the instructor, and help to set the stage for what students can expect throughout the semester.

You may decide to make more than one introductory video—for example, a short personalized introduction to you as a faculty member for the instructor contacts area, and another providing an overview of the course content or a tour of the class site—or you may choose to combine several of these objectives in one video.

The good news for our busy faculty is that because of the development of new tools and new capabilities within Blackboard itself, in conjunction with the ability to upload and host video on YouTube, the task to make videos has become much easier. Some of you may already have a favorite tool for creating videos, but SPS Office of Faculty Development and Instructional Technology is providing this guide and additional resources for faculty to explore, and are also ready to support you with any training, tools, or feedback you might need. Whether you are brand new to making videos, need to learn how to make captions for existing videos, or want to improve on your past practice, you can join one of our scheduled trainings or just make an appointment for a one-on-one session with our staff—online or in-person. See the end of this guide for more details on training and support contacts.

The main categories of video creation tools we discuss below are:
- **Screencasting**—these capture your actions on the computer screen, whether moving through a website or Blackboard course site, narrating a PowerPoint slide show, scrolling through a document, or highlighting photos. They can also allow for an intermittent or continuous view of you speaking via a webcam. Examples of free screencasting tools are *Jing* (for up to 5 minutes) and *Screencast-o-Matic Pro* (available through SPS).

- **Webcam**—this refers to using your computer's built-in webcam or a peripheral webcam you connect to your computer to record audio and video of yourself and/or the world around you, as opposed to recording what's happening on the screen. You can even use the camera on your smartphone or tablet to capture footage for your video.

Types of introductory course videos

The following table lists some of the different types of introductory course videos and tools that can be used to create them. This is not an exhaustive list—videos can serve a single purpose or combine more than one objective.

Type and Purpose	Tools	Examples
Introduction to course content—highlight features of your course, clarify requirements and stimulate enthusiasm for the subject	PowerPoint and Screencastomatic Pro or Jing; optional: Blackboard Webcam Feature (not shown here under Examples)	Prof. Michael: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xW4oavtXTF4&feature=share&list=PLAzzv1Ff1A5wi50P3aLxHznD42ATZBGGx&index=23
Tour of Blackboard course site—demonstrate how to navigate course site, main features, layout, and any distinctive aspects of the course	Screencastomatic Pro or Jing	Prof. Baez: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jpgKPXC4gA&index=21&list=PLAzzv1Ff1A5wi50P3aLxHznD42ATZBGGx Prof. Williams (including captions): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQwkDnOo6cg
Introduction to course content and tour of Blackboard course site—combines the two previous objectives	PowerPoint and Screencastomatic Pro or Jing	Prof. Ellis: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZakVlPRhNY&index=16&list=PLAzzv1Ff1A5wi50P3aLxHznD42ATZBGGx
Personal introduction by instructor which may include narrated overview of course content—personalizes and establishes instructor presence; stimulates enthusiasm for the course	Webcam	Prof. Gardner: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdM3e87Ee1I&index=12&list=PLAzzv1Ff1A5wi50P3aLxHznD42ATZBGGx
Personal introduction by instructor and tour of Blackboard course site—personalizes and establishes instructor presence; orients students to course layout and navigation	Screencast-o-Matic Pro with Webcam	Prof. Berman: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVTaQx6eYWM&index=14&list=PLAzzv1Ff1A5wi50P3aLxHznD42ATZBGGx

See the following link for more introductory videos created by SPS faculty:
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAzzv1Ff1A5wi50P3aLxHznD42ATZBGGx

Tools and Resources

Screencast-O-Matic: a screencasting tool that allows you to easily capture and record videos on your computer. The SPS Pro account also offers a wide range of tools for editing your recordings and allows you to upload your videos directly to YouTube before embedding them into your course site. Please contact Antonia Levy (antonia.levy@cuny.edu) for log-in information.
- Find the Quick Guide on our tutorial website: http://spsfaculty.commons.gc.cuny.edu/quick-guides/

Jing: a free tool for taking screenshots and recording short screencasts (5 min max.) from your computer. For more information and to download Jing, see here: http://www.techsmith.com/jing.html
- Note: SPS does not own a license for Jing, which means we cannot offer technical support for this tool.

Webcam: use the built-in camera (or third-party peripheral camera) of your PC, Mac, smartphone or tablet to record yourself and the world around you as part of your course introduction video. Upload your video to your YouTube account and post the link into your course site.

New Tool for Displaying and Commenting on Videos and Slideshows

VoiceThread is a web-based program that allows you to upload pictures, videos, or documents, record accompanying audio or video commentary and invite your students to add commentary as well. SPS' educational license lets you link to a VoiceThread directly from your Blackboard course site. *In regard to using VoiceThread to create an introductory video, we recommend using VoiceThread as an interactive icebreaker assignment only if you plan on using the tool throughout the semester.*
- Find the Quick Guide on our website: http://spsfaculty.commons.gc.cuny.edu/quick-guides/

Tips for creating effective and engaging introductory videos

- Do a test run (or two) of the tools you want to use before starting to record your actual video.

- Keep it simple and start small. Narrated PowerPoint is a good beginning. Next, use screen captures or other images.

- Before starting to record your screencast or video, we recommend that you prepare a script outlining what you want to say and open all files / websites you will use during the recording.

- When using a webcam, consider camera angles and lighting. Backlighting, for example, will cast a shadow on your face, making it hard for your viewers to see, while upward-angled shots tend to be unflattering.

- When recording a screencast featuring text, small images or parts of websites, make sure to zoom in enough on the content so your viewers will be able to engage with the content you're showing them.

- Keep it short! While this depends on the purpose of the video, research has shown that longer videos do not hold viewers' attentions. Less than 6 min is ideal, and about 10 min should be the maximum length. If you need to cover more information, consider dividing your video into two or more parts.

- If you plan on re-using the video for subsequent semesters, avoid mentioning dates or any other semester-specific details.

- For ADA compliance for students with disabilities but also to provide all students with the information in multiple media formats, it is best to post a text transcript alongside your video in Blackboard and/or use the captioning feature for a narrated video. Creating a transcript is easily done if you start by working with a script because captioning via YouTube is now as easy as cutting and pasting text.
    - See our Quick Guide for instructions on how to add captions in YouTube

- Last but not least: You don't have to create a perfectly produced and polished video. While you can edit out major mistakes or retake shorter videos, don't feel you have to speak like a newscaster and avoid all "ums" and "ahs". Students feel more comfortable viewing a natural presentation. Get inspired by some of your colleagues' videos listed in the table above, each displaying a unique style and approach to the task.

Training and Support

Online Training: Creating Video Content for Your Course

This 1-hour training will cover how to create video content that will engage and help orient students to your course. You will learn about the different approaches to making such a video, easy to use tools for creating videos, and how to embed videos in your Blackboard course site. We will also provide practical tips and best practices for effective short videos.

Use this form to sign up for one of the scheduled training sessions: goo.gl/uvN7Rw

If you can't find a session that suits your schedule, you can schedule one-on-one training sessions at a convenient time (Mon-Fri, 9am to 7pm) here: goo.gl/8UEyIv

Please contact Antonia Levy at antonia.levy@cuny.edu for questions and training needs.