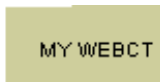


Preparing for Web Enhanced Courses

Welcome to the MSW Program! As students in our Valdosta based, "face-to face" cohort, you will usually not be taking web-based courses (with the exception of some electives). Your courses will often be "**web enhanced**," which means that you will be using, to some extent, the "course platform" of WebCT Vista. For you, this will mean that your instructors may ask you to use WebCT as a "**bookcase**" where you can find, save, or print any or all of the following for your course:



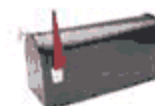
- Syllabus
- Assignment sheets
- Various handouts
- Course calendar



They may, in addition, ask you to use the **WebCT Vista Private E-mail** and **Discussion board** for some of your class communications, and perhaps **Assignments** to submit assignments electronically. You will be introduced to these tools and eased into their use in your SOWK 6100 course.



[Discussions](#)



[Mail](#)

Knowing that you probably are curious, excited, and perhaps a little anxious about the Program and how you will fare in a web enhanced environment, we have prepared a list of some **FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)**:

Q: What are the benefits of web-enhanced courses?

*A: As an **immediate** benefit, you will have a fast and direct connection with your classmates and instructor. You will also be able to retrieve, read, save, or print your course documents (e.g., assignments, calendar, etc.).*



*As a **continuing** benefit, you will become competent to work in a 21st-century social work service settings that increasingly require the ability to communicate, document, plan, strategize, and find resources online. Today's social work professional has these skills plus more. Social advocacy and even direct clinical work (i.e., individual or group therapy) is often conducted online.*



Q: Can I really "talk" to my classmates or instructors through a keyboard?

A: You already know that the "virtual world" differs from the "in-person" world! How and to what degree they differ depends upon your own characteristics and learning styles, and certain features of cyberspace. Obviously, when we communicate through "text talk," there is an absence of body language and facial expression. When you use e-mail, or if your instructor asks you to use the Discussion Board in WebCT, you may

feel inhibited at the beginning because you cannot have the immediate feedback of others' smiles, frowns, or subtle signs of approval from classmates. On the other hand, you may respond to "invisibility" with a tendency to feel less inhibited and to express yourself more openly.

With a little experience, you may find it exciting that you and your classmates have used your creativity to draw on one another's ideas and establish relationships. Within text talk you can experience a connection between your mind and another's not despite but because you do not have the distractions of sights and sounds that you would have in a face-to-face environment!



For further exploration into the psychology of cyberspace and learning online, see [John Suler's collection of online articles](http://www.rider.edu/~suler/psycyber/psycyber.html) at <http://www.rider.edu/~suler/psycyber/psycyber.html>

Q: What computer-related skills do I need?

*A: You will need **basic** skills in word processing (using MS Word). You will also need knowledge of the Internet and basic e-mail. You will be given a VSU e-mail address that you will be required to use. However, your mail reader can be any that you prefer (e.g., Outlook Express or Eudora). You will also be communicating within WebCT Vista.*



Q: Is there anything else that I can do to prepare?

A: Yes! We recommend that you practice searching and exploring the Internet in general (check out the search engine, Google at <http://www.google.com/>), and explore these recommended web sites in particular:



1. Tour our [Division of Social Work Home Page](http://www.valdosta.edu/sowk/) at <http://www.valdosta.edu/sowk/>, Take the time to explore our site and become acquainted with the Program!

*2. The [VSU Odum Library](http://www.valdosta.edu/library/) at <http://www.valdosta.edu/library/>
In addition, reference librarians will be available for questions at 229-333-7149. The Odum Library has off-campus services called "[Anywhere Library Access](http://www.valdosta.edu/library/any.shtml)" found at <http://www.valdosta.edu/library/any.shtml>*

3. APA Style of Writing.

From the beginning of the first course, you will be writing using the formatting guidelines of the American Psychological Association. You will be given APA example papers, guides, and check sheets. You should purchase and use the APA Manual. You will need this crucial reference guide in almost all your courses.

Q: How can I know that my computer is adequate?

A: You will relieve many "pre-program anxieties" by getting your computer "tuned up" and ready to go! The VSU ["Getting](#)



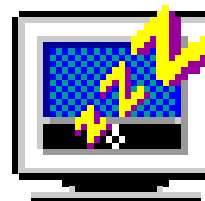
Started" page at <http://www.valdosta.edu/vista/GettingStarted.shtml> tells you the minimum requirements for a computer, as well as checking and configuring your browser (e.g., Internet Explorer).

The majority of instructors and computer labs here on campus are currently using Microsoft Office 2007 with an operating system of Windows XP. The [VSU Tech Shop](http://services.valdosta.edu/techshop/) at <http://services.valdosta.edu/techshop/> sells MS Office 2007 Standard Edition to students at "academic prices" (full upgradeable versions of Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, Excel, and Access) for \$139.99. There are other titles and manufacturers as well as these. A word of caution ... Some new computers are sold with MS Works -- you CANNOT open a Word document with Works and retain the original formatting.

The VSU Tech shop has links with information about software, hardware, and networking (i.e., wireless and VSU's Wireless Internet Program).

Q: What if my computer dies (or fails to cooperate!)?

A: Of course, there are problems! We seem to have "relationships" with our computers. We expect them to be faithful and reliable. Sometimes, however, hard drives die. Networks are down. Applications crash or in other ways fail to live up to their end of the bargain. There may be error messages or even worse, no response at all! At these times we may feel like we (or our documents) have just fallen into a "black hole." We need our computers, we depend on them, and we have been --"betrayed!" It is interesting how we can project intense feelings of anxiety and anger at these times! Whether in the summer or fall, someone usually will be available to provide help (or, perhaps, assurance that the "network will be up in just a few hours!").



Q: What kind of tech support is available from faculty or VSU?

- 1. You can get quick responses from VSU Information Technology by sending a message to: webct@valdosta.edu
Once you begin classes, you will want to call the VSU Help Desk t 229-245-4357 for computer and WebCT Vista questions. They are available by phone into the evenings and on weekends as well.*
- 2. Our faculty is ready to give support and will try to answer your academic, procedural, or technical questions.*

Prepared by Dr. Cindy Tandy, Updated May 2008