# **Best Class / Worst Class Blackboard Group Homepage Text**

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### **Instructor Notes**

On the next page you will find the text I place in each Group Homepage. I’ve noted in highlight and [brackets] where there are places you will need to add links or make changes specific to your course. *[Material in brackets should be removed before sharing with students.]*

You will likely want to make other changes as well, but I’ve provided the highlighted portions as extra reminders.

Any student names below have been changed.

# **Hello everybody!**

**If you have not watched this video yet, watch it NOW. The assignment won't make sense unless you watch the video.**

***[embed video here]***

# **Assignment Overview**

Last week I asked you to respond to a series of questions about the best class you ever had . . . and the worst. Everyone has had a lousy class at some point, and no one wants a repeat of whatever it is you described in your Worst Class Ever, and most everybody would probably welcome some version of the Best Class Ever.

So together, we are going to determine what is most important to this group, and then we are going to decide if we are willing to pledge to live up to these standards in this course this semester. Understand that you have the power at this juncture to determine what you expect from me, your classmates, and--most importantly--from yourself. Bring your best and highest selves to this assignment, and you will reap the benefits all semester long. I've done this activity with everything from freshman seminars to graduate courses, and it has always amply repaid the efforts we put into it!

Whatever we decide during this assignment will affect how I assess your work over the entire term. Take this seriously, and you can shape the outcome of this course positively for yourself and others.

## Assignment Goals

1. To review and discuss the standards of behavior and interaction you are willing to adopt for yourself and that you would like to depend on from others in a Discussion Forum with your classmates;
2. To articulate clearly those standards for Dr. Hart on a Summary Handout.

## Assignment Details

Attached you will find the results of the Best Class / Worst Class assignment from last week. *[Provide link to results of survey here.]*

With your group members, review the results, and decide amongst yourself on what you think should be the top 3-5 items for each of these  categories. Enter the final results of your discussions on a sharable version of the Summary Handout.

The six categories you will be working with--the characteristics, expectations, attributes of the following:

* 1. Professor in the Best Class Ever
  2. Professor in the Worst Class Ever
  3. Classmates in the Best Class Ever
  4. Classmates in the Worst Class Ever
  5. Me in the Best Class Ever
  6. Me in the Worst Class Ever

In your discussions, consider carefully:

* That this is an online class: what expectations do you have for me, for your classmates, and for yourself in this particular learning environment? Are there things about an online class that warrant particular attention from me, your classmates, from you in ways that they might not in a face-to-face class?
* That this is a writing-intensive class: what expectations do you have for me, for your classmates, and for yourself with this particular subject matter? Are there things about this subject matter that warrant particular attention from me, your classmates, from you?
* Where you are in your WT educational journey: what support, information, knowledge, or resources might you need from me and/or from your classmates at this time? What do you need to do for yourself to make sure you are functioning at your best? What are some challenges that you imagine you might encounter? How can you equip yourself to meet them?

## Roles

To help move the group get started and stay organized, I'm assigning roles to each group member.

**Facilitator**, the person charged with keeping the group on task and making sure the discussion stays on topic. Any self-imposed deadlines the group decides to set for this assignment will be recorded and overseen by the facilitator. (In other words, if the group decides that by Friday evening, certain things need to be accomplished, the facilitator will check to make sure that these things are in progress, that they have been accomplished, and if they have not, reach out to those not participating. If the facilitator would like to call me in to intervene in the case of non-participation, that is completely acceptable.)

**Recorder**, the person charged with setting up a shareable version of the Summary Handout *[provide a link to the Sample Summary Handout here]* (via Word, Google Docs, etc.) that all group members have access to and can view/edit during the discussion. The recorder should monitor the discussions and keep a running tally on the chart of what items surface as important during discussion. The recorder is also charged with submitting the final Summary Handout to me by the deadline after a group consensus has been reached. Your starter post in the discussion forum should include a link to the sharable document.

**Thread leaders**, individuals charged with getting specific topics started on the discussion forum. For each of your assigned topics, start a discussion thread and get the ball rolling. Something like: “I was surprised to see how many people said X for this section. I thought Y was more important than this. What do you guys think?” or “I would definitely put Z on the list. What are everybody else’s top picks?” or “I would never have even thought of ABC! Do you think this is essential? More or less so that XYZ?”  Your role is not to make the decision for the group, but rather to get the group started thinking and discussing.

## Here are your assigned roles

* + **Bryan (listed as William in Discussions, but goes by Bryan):** Facilitator
  + **Maria:** Recorder
  + **Harry** 
    - Thread Leader for Professor in Best Class Ever
    - Thread Leader for Professor in Worst Class Ever
  + **Joseph:**
    - Thread Leader for Classmates in Best Class Ever
    - Thread Leader for Classmates in Worst Class Ever
  + **Suzanne:**
    - Thread Leader for Me in Best Class Ever
    - Thread Leader for Me in Worst Class Ever

## What Is Expected of Everyone

* Everyone should post starter threads for the board no later than THURSDAY at 11:59 p.m.
* Everyone will contribute to the different threads on the discussion board, moving discussion forward toward the goal of reaching consensus on the six different areas.
* Do not simply pick a few of the items from the results and say, "Yeah, these three look fine. We're done." You should evaluate the results, discuss their relative merits, and reshape them--or come up with new ones!--as your group sees fit.
* Please note that responses like “I agree with you” or “Super!” are sweet but don’t really move things forward. Responses like the following move the discussion forward by a) making it clear to whom the writer is responding and b) responding clearly and concretely in a way that:
* “I think what Sally said about everyone adhering to deadlines is crucial. If one person is late contributing, it can affect everyone else’s participation and grade, which isn’t fair. I’d rank ‘adhering to deadlines’ above everything else in this category."

## Grading

### Items you will produce for grading

* The Discussion: Together, you will review, discuss, debate, synthesize, and come to consensus on the six categories above (Professor in Best/Worst Class, Classmates in Best/Worst Class, Me in Best/Worst Class). This discussion will take place in this discussion forum.
* The Summary Handout *[provide a link to the Sample Summary Handout here]* (: Together, you will write, edit, and finalize your top 3-5 items for each of the six categories on a sharable document (using Word, Google Doc, etc) and submit that document on WTClass by the deadline.

### Everyone will be assessed on

* how well you fulfill your *assigned role* in the *discussion forum*
* the *quality*and *frequency*of your participation in the *discussion forum*
* the *quality* of the collaboratively produced *Summary Document*

## Deadlines

### THURSDAY, no later than 11:59 p.m. Starter Posts due from everyone in the group.

* + **Facilitator:** Introduce yourself to the group; tell everyone what you understand your role to be, and how you're going to proceed. Have a look under Group Tools below and familiarize yourself with what's available to help your group proceed.
  + **Recorder**:  Introduce yourself to the group; tell everyone what you understand your role to be, and how you're going to proceed. Here is a sample Summary Handout *[provide a link to the Sample Summary Handout here]* (you can use/adapt for the group. The dropbox for submitting the Summary Handout is at the bottom of this screen.
  + **Thread Leaders:**  Introduce yourself to the group; tell everyone what you understand your role to be, and start thread(s) for the area(s) you are leading.

### TUESDAY, no later than 11:59 p.m. Discussion concluded and Summary Handout uploaded by Recorder to appropriate dropbox on WTClass.

### The group may set deadlines of its own in addition to those I've set here.

## Group Tools

If you scroll down to the bottom of this screen, you'll see a collection of Group Tools. The only one I'm requiring you to use is the Discussion, but the others are here to help you. Talk amongst yourselves and decide how best to use them.

* **Zoom:** Discuss and collaborate in real-time
* **File Exchange**: Share files among your group members
* **Group Discussion:** Where you will have your discussions
* **Group Tasks**: Any tasks or deadlines you want to assign to yourself and/or others in the group
* **Send Email**: Email your group members.

*[If you are not using Blackboard, customize the items above to your course LMS.]*