Hello, I’m Donna DiGiovanni, instructional designer at Northeastern Online. I’ll be presenting this webinar with the help of my colleague, Allison Ruda.

Before we begin, please note that there will be time for Questions and Answers at the end of the presentation. Type your questions at any time in the chat on the bottom left and we will address as many as we can during this time.
Welcome to Collaboration Online: Using the Discussion Board, Blogs, Wikis, and Journals!

By the end of this presentation you should be able to:

• Differentiate various qualities of these tools.
• Develop options for their use in your course.
One of the challenges in teaching an online course is to overcome obstacles of distance and time. The course is delivered asynchronously, meaning that students do not meet in a particular place at a particular time. So how can you engage and connect your students as a class?
Student collaboration is a fundamental element in a course at NU Online. It is one element that distinguishes a NU Online course from a self study course. We recommend a Constructivist approach, meaning that students take a more active role in their learning by collaborating with peers under the facilitated guidance of an instructor. This approach builds community and allows students to co-construct knowledge through peer collaboration.
There are tools available in Blackboard that can break down barriers of time and place and facilitate learning. The discussion board, blogs, wikis, and journals allow students in your course to connect with you and each other.
With these tools, your students can discuss, collaborate, voice an opinion, comment on other’s statements, perform peer reviews… in other words, do anything that they could do in a traditional classroom setting.

You, as the instructor can choose to use one or more of these tools in your online course. How do you choose? Well, first you need to see what each tool can do!

Be aware that no one collaborative tool is useful for all purposes and more than one tool may be applicable for your needs.
The most basic tool is the Discussion Board, which is a recommended element of an online course at NU Online. The instructor is the facilitator of relevant discourse on course topics. Students who are often reluctant to speak up in a classroom are more likely to voice their opinions in an online discussion. The challenge for instructors is to create open ended questions that spark responses. It is best practice to participate in the discussions and provide students with an evaluation rubric that lets them know what is expected for discussion board participation in your class.
I teach a course in Contemporary American History. One of my weekly objectives is for students to view an issue from different perspectives. They will write an essay about a state of ‘Cold War’ developed after World War II. I want to determine if students have, first of all, read the text and viewed the video in the weekly readings folder, and second of all, formed a personal opinion. My challenge was to write an open ended discussion question that would result in a variety of responses.
I chose to post this question.

“Which government, the USA or the Soviet Union, was most responsible for beginning and escalating the Cold War?

Cite the source that led to your opinion.”
I provided the class with a Discussion Board Evaluation Rubric. The rubric clarified my expectations for student participation and informed students of how their participation would be assessed.
Students responded with various opinions and commented on their classmates posts. I saw that they had read and viewed the week’s material. I made sure to provide positive feedback to exemplary posts and to ask questions of students who needed to reevaluate.
As an instructor, I see how providing a rubric helped facilitate a deep and productive discussion!
Individual blogs can be used as "podiums" from which a student can present work and view peer comments. Or, you can use blogs for supplemental and/or optional student writing assignments/brainstorming. How about using a class blog for brainstorming sessions? Or for presenting images, sounds, or movies within a single post? A course blog can be exported by students to use as a resource.
(Instructor) Since it is important for my students to practice taking field notes, I ask them to enter field notes and photographs in a class blog. I like that each student can comment on their classmates’ posts but that the original notes stay as written.
Blog entries are coming in! I can comment to correct inaccuracies, but most of the time, I leave it up to classmates to comment on their peer’s entries.
I do require that all opinions posted in the blog include the reasons behind them.
Wikis are web pages that students can edit. Wikis are very useful for group or team work; students can collaborate on projects in a Wiki. They can be used as a single repository for various file types and multimedia. Wikis can be used by students to present a portfolio for instructor and peer review. And, a class Wiki can be used for administrative purposes; for example, students can sign up for tasks in a class project.
(Instructor) I teach a course on Marketing Trends. Students are required to collaborate on a case study. Students are required to collaborate on a case study.

I created groups and created a Wiki for each group as a place for students to set a timeline and sign up for tasks within the project. Also, they can share sources by posting links to relevant web content. As the project progresses, they can post drafts for my comments.
Students reported that they found it easier to stay “on task” with the project and to contribute relevant submissions to the final paper.
Wow, I'm amazed at the quality of the group projects this term!
A journal is limited to one student and the instructor, although the instructor can choose to grant read only access to other course users. Students can use a journal to write and revise assignments and get instructor feedback. Instructors can solicit student reflections on course content in a journal, students can take note of insights and questions. A journal can be used for keeping research notes in a lab class, or for creative writing assignment drafts.

**Journals**

- Private to only the student and instructor by default
- Student creative writing assignments/assignment drafts
- Reflective journaling
- Keeping research notes
(Instructor) In my class on Human Resource Management, students are working on developing a case study as a cumulative project throughout the class.

I created an assessment rubric for students to understand how they will be assessed on this assignment.

I need to assess their progress as they create a first draft and provide feedback for revisions, so I created a Journal for each student. I can view revisions easily, the latest version is on the top.
I see that my student, Ben has a topic idea already!
Ben has come a long way towards completion of his project; I’m looking forward to reading the final version.
In conclusion, remember that a tool is just a means to an end. If you have written solid performance based learning objectives, the task of choosing the right tool, or tools, to provide a forum for student engagement will be an easy one.

And, if you let your students know how their performance will be assessed, you will encourage exemplary work.

Now that you’ve seen some possibilities, click the red square to test your knowledge.
As always, consult your Instructional Designer for help with developing strategies for the use of collaborative tools in your class.