

# Course Introduction

## *ISTU 101: Momentum - Success in the University*

Welcome to ISTU 101: Momentum! This course lays a strong foundation for a successful transition to college by increasing critical thinking, curiosity, goal setting, and motivation. It provides an orientation to our university, the Moodle Learning Management System, digital library services, and other support services. You will be introduced to the concept of Christian faith integration, a strengths approach to learning, and opportunities to develop practical skills and strategies for addressing the challenges of college.

This course is designed to cultivate essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can inspire hope through learning. As a university that is driven by hope, we believe that what and how our students learn makes a significant difference in how they live meaningful lives. We want graduates who have hope for a better vocational future *and* who have an ultimate hope in the work that God is accomplishing in and for the world.

Take a moment to introduce yourself in the **Community forum**. We all come to this course from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences, and the Community forum allows us to connect with each other on a more personal level.

Review the course syllabus, and pay particular attention to the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes guide our work and purpose for the course, providing a basic roadmap for our studies.

Please post general questions about the course within the **Ask the Prof forum**; for personal matters, contact the instructor directly.

Browse through the weekly folders, and note that the course is built around key activities - all aimed towards fulfilling the learning outcomes described in the syllabus.

To summarize:

- Each week, we will **read** from our textbooks in order to develop essential skills and perspectives for college.
  - *Success as an Online Student: Strategies for Effective Learning* will address many of your practical and strategic questions for how to approach the online learning environment.
  - *Uncommon Gratitude: Singing Alleluia for All That Is* approaches the Christian faith from a whole-life perspective, helping us to reflect on the connections between complex life situations and the reality of God's faithfulness in the world.
  - *StrengthsFinder 2.0* introduces a strengths-based approach to living and learning, and is a vital tool for gaining personal insight and initiating personal development.

Although unique in many ways, the textbooks are connected by the purpose of the course: to gain momentum for your educational journey. Success in college requires an integrated approach to faith, living, and learning. These resources work together to support your journey towards success with our university.

- **Presentations** reinforce the reading material and provide additional content and perspectives for reflection and analysis.
- The **discussion forums** provide opportunities for questions and engagement with the weekly topic. Forums are a safe place to try out new ideas and to work together to solve complex problems and questions. The purpose is not to provide one right answer, but to demonstrate engagement with the topic, share your personal experiences, and to work as a class to come to a fuller understanding and practice of key concepts and skills.
- **Reflective journal entries** encourage further consideration of issues raised in the readings and discussion forum. With the journals, you are asked to draw on your personal experience and reflect on the integration of your faith, life, and learning.
- Various **skills practice** assignments provide the opportunity to cultivate essential academic study habits.
- Finally, you will work towards compiling several essays and assignments into a Personal Academic Success Strategy Portfolio, i.e. a **PASSport**. The essays and worksheets that make up your PASSport represent valuable personal reflections, strategies, plans, and practical knowledge that you can refer back to as you continue on in your studies. Your complete PASSport will contain the following:
  - Essay #1: Who am I?
  - Essay #2: What are My Goals?
  - Essay #3: How Will I Get There?
  - Graduation Road Map
  - College Financial Planning Worksheet
  - Annotated Bibliography

This course is designed to help you articulate your goals, develop essential study skills, create a customized plan, and harness your personal strengths and experiences towards success in learning and in life. Together, we will create momentum for your journey!