Classroom Management Issues

If students resist the class.
1. Sell the course. During the first class, sell the students on the benefits they will receive from taking UK 101. Talk about what they can gain both personally and academically. Refer to “1st class” lesson plan for more ideas.
2. Stress the transferability of skills and techniques. Many of the skills and techniques students learn in this class will help them build successful academic careers, form positive relationships, etc.
3. Distinguish between “liking” and “benefiting.” We don’t always like what is beneficial for us. Most students find something about the course that they don’t like. At the same time, it is almost certain that there will be beneficial suggestions or tips. Even if students find only a few ideas that work for them, their performance can improve significantly.

If students think they don’t need the course.
1. Acknowledge their viewpoint. Remind them that there is always room for improvement. Ask students to consider the possibility that learning and adopting a few effective strategies can save time, improve their performance, and make a significant difference in the quality of their time at UK.
2. A student does have the option of dropping the course.

If students are failing.
1. Talk with the failing student “face to face” about your expectations and the student’s expectations for the class. Create an agreement for the student to pass the course.
2. As a prevention measure, be clear about your expectations and the attendance policy when discussing them on the first day of class.

If students don’t attend class.
1. Follow up immediately with the student via email about his or her absence.
2. Talk with the student individually about the attendance policy. Remember that as an instructor, you have the discretion to determine what an excused absence is. Use the first unexcused absence as a “teachable moment” to discuss the importance of class attendance and participation. Require a make-up assignment.

If students don’t participate.
1. Vary your teaching techniques. Use group work and appoint a different spokesperson for each exercise. (See materials from Dr. Derek Lane.)
2. Before and after class, build a relationship with these students through informal conversation. Ask your peer instructor to do the same.

Portions adapted and excerpted from University 101 Instructor Toolkit, University of South Carolina, 2007