UK 101 PROFESSORS AND CLASSROOM DECORUM

I. Objectives
To help students understand: a. classroom decorum, b. appropriate communication and interactions with professors, c. responsibilities of professors, d. what professors value, e. academic freedom, f. differences between teaching assistants & professors.

II. Optional Opening Activity
Begin class with Classroom Etiquette and Behavior Exercise found on page 7.

Optional Faculty Panel Activity
After you and your peer instructor facilitate the discussion on classroom decorum and communicating with professors, use a faculty panel to cover the remainder of the material, reinforce decorum and communication topics, and answer student questions. Example questions on page 8.

III. Classroom Decorum
A. Understand the impact of student behavior. Highlight the following:
   1. Your actions tell the professor something about you and your attitude toward the class.
   2. Your behavior also affects the quality of instruction you receive.

B. Small-Group Classroom Behavior Activity
   1. Divide students into pairs
   2. Ask them to jot down their responses to the following 4 questions. Allow about 5 minutes.
   3. Ask each pair to share their responses with class.

Q#1: If you were a professor, what behaviors would you want students to avoid?
   1. Using cell phone to talk or text. (Professors can see you texting even when you think you are being discrete. It’s annoying and distracting!)
   2. Reading the Kernel in class or working crossword puzzle
   3. Surfing Facebook on phone
   4. Wearing ear buds or headphones
   5. Never looking at instructor
   6. Not taking any notes
   7. Using negative body language: slouching in chair, resting head on desk, looking bored
   8. Displaying negative facial expressions such as eye rolling or a scowl
   9. Arriving to class late or leaving early without notifying instructor beforehand
   10. Sleeping
   11. Talking with neighbor
   12. Doing homework for another class
   13. Wearing a hoodie or ball cap over your face
   14. Eating a full lunch in class (unless the class is held during lunchtime and
the professor allows everyone to eat)
15. Throwing things in class
16. Making fun of another student’s question or comments
17. Dominating the class with constant questions
18. Holding hands and fondling your boyfriend or girlfriend in class (Yes, this really happened.)
19. Making fun of the professor
20. Being hung over or impaired

Q#2: What behaviors would you want to see from students?
1. Sitting up front (if possible)
2. Making eye contact with professor
3. Taking notes
4. Using positive body language: Nodding head to show understanding
5. Participating in class by asking questions (when appropriate) or answering professor’s questions
6. Being on time for class; if student knows in advance that he/she will be late or absent, notify professor beforehand via email.
7. Visiting professor during office hours
8. Talking to professor before or after class; be sure to ask if the professor has a minute to talk after class, because he/she might need to get to another class or appointment.
9. Thanking the professor: “I really enjoyed this class.”
10. Dressing appropriately
11. Remembering that professors are people too; they have good days and bad days, but overall, they care about students and want them to learn.

Q#3: How do the positive behaviors of other students benefit you as a student?
1. You are more likely to stay alert and learn more.
2. The professor is more likely to get to know you. In the future, you may need to request a letter of recommendation from a professor or ask him/her to serve as a reference.
3. If your grade is borderline, perhaps the professor will give you the higher grade because of your participation. This depends on the class and the instructor.

Q#4: How do negative student behaviors hurt you, even if you aren’t the one displaying the behaviors?
1. Very distracting! You can’t focus on professor or what’s being taught.
2. Miss out on what the disruptive student could contribute to class if he/she chose to participate.

IV. Communicating with Professors
A. Utilize office hours to communicate with your instructors. How many of you have already visited one of your professors during office hours? Tell us why you went. For those who haven’t, what would motivate you to visit a professor?
In high school, students who asked questions were considered "brownnosers." This is not the case in college. However, don't dominate a class by asking too many questions. If you have numerous questions, visit the instructor during office hours. Most faculty welcome comments/questions; feedback helps them be better instructors.

B. How should you address professors? Address instructors (both male and female) as Professor XXX or Dr. XXX unless told otherwise.

C. What do you think are some things you should never say to professors?
The following are some **REAL negative examples** that have occurred.

- "I was absent last class. Did I miss anything important?"
- "I was absent because I was studying for an exam in an important class."
- "Is there extra credit in this class?"
- Saying things to female instructors that could be interpreted as sexist or worse: for example, saying to a professor, “I missed you.” Also, do not touch or try to hug a professor.
- Openly questioning whether the instructor knows the material. (If this is a concern, then talk to the department chair.)
- Saying something disrespectful under your breath such as, “You are stupid.”

D. **Email**

1. Use uky.edu email address. Other addresses might be screened as spam. Official communication from college, Dean of Students, academic advisor, etc., sent to uky.edu email address.

2. Do not use text messaging abbreviations or lingo in your emails.

3. Don’t be “too casual.” Begin email with a salutation such as Hello, Dr. XXX. Then include a sentence with your name and course.

4. End the email message with your first and last name.

5. When you email, indicate what your concern or question is. If the email is over 12 lines, rethink your message. Or perhaps you need to visit your professor. What are some examples of why you would email your instructor?

6. What are example issues that would be better addressed in person during office hours? (A question over a grade. Go to office hours or email the instructor and request an appointment. Indicate in the email that you have a question about the grade.)

7. Be respectful. An email rant isn’t helpful to you or the professor.

8. Expect a time lag! Don’t expect an immediate reply or reply over weekend.
Email Exercise
Write an example “bad” email on the board. Group students into pairs, and ask them to rewrite and improve the email using the guidelines given in class. Then ask for volunteers to share what they wrote.

1st Email Example
From: saraloves007@hotmail.com
Subject: Question
hi i missed ur class can u send me the notes plz

1st Example Rewritten
From: ajnigo0@uky.edu
Subject: SOC 101-004 Absence

Professor Oliver,

I missed class on Monday and will bring my doctor’s excuse to class on Wednesday. I will contact another student in class regarding notes, but I wanted to send you an email to touch base.

Thank you,

Student’s first and last name

2nd Email Example (This is a real student email that was sent to an instructor.)

Student email response to professor
i thought everything was in order…i know as a fact that i didnt have 5 missing assignments—actually, i thought i had turned in everything that needed to be - havent checked my email in awhile…get back at me whenever you can

Followed up by second email to professor
what was the advisor thing--i dont kno where my syllabus is...

2nd Example Rewritten
Professor X,

I’d like to schedule an appointment with you to discuss my missing assignments. I thought I submitted them, and I’m concerned about the discrepancy. Are you available at 2 p.m. tomorrow during your office hours?

Thank you.

Student’s name
Course and section
V. **What Do Professors Do All Day?** (Ask students what they think professors do.)
   A. Professors are deeply committed to being academic scholars, which is a profession that includes activities related to 1) teaching 2) research and creativity 3) service to the University 4) their professional discipline 5) and the broader community. Professors have invested considerable time and energy earning their terminal degrees, usually a Ph.D., and they continue to invest time and energy in order to be successful scholars.

   B. You can't judge a professor's workload by the number of hours he/she spends in the classroom. Judging a professor's workload by the number of hours he/she teaches is like judging a minister's workload by the number of hours he/she spends preaching from the pulpit. A lot of work occurs behind the scenes!

   C. Besides teaching, professors spend time researching and preparing lecture notes; reading, writing, and editing journals; serving on University committees; conducting research; advising students; meeting with students during office hours, etc.

   D. Faculty responsibilities are outlined in a DOE or Distribution of Effort. The 3 components of a DOE are: research, teaching, and service. A DOE may have the following %: Research 45%; Teaching 45%; Service 10%. It's important to understand that research is a big part of what most UK professors do.

VI. **What Do Professors Value?** (Ask students.)
   A. To understand professors is to understand how much they value curiosity, learning, knowledge, academic honesty, problem solving, the sharing of ideas, and critical thinking (all a part of “academic work”).

   B. All of these values are components of what is referred to as the “life of the mind.” It is important for students to appreciate that professors continue to read, learn, and think because these activities are inherently satisfying. Consequently, when professors teach, they assume that students will share these values and adopt a life of the mind framework.

   C. For students to miss class without a good reason, not to read an assignment, or not to complete homework is in direct conflict with what professors value. To be successful, students must appreciate the value system of their professors and be willing to adopt these same values.

VII. **Academic Freedom** (Ask students if they can define academic freedom.)
   A. Academic freedom gives college instructors more latitude in the classroom than high school teachers have. “Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.” (From [http://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure](http://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure))
B. It's acceptable to respectfully express your reaction to ideas, even if you disagree with an idea.

VIII. Professors and Teaching Assistants
A. Ask students if they understand the difference between TA and professor.
   Teaching Assistant (TA): A graduate student who is working on an advanced degree. Usually facilitate a discussion section; grade most of the homework; under the supervision of a faculty member; may teach some classes other than discussion groups.

   Assistant Professor: Faculty members who have a terminal degree (highest degree in a field of study) and have been hired by the University for a specified period of time. Typically, do not have tenure.

   Associate Professor: Next level of rank for professors; typically receive tenure when promoted to associate professor

   Full Professor: Highest level for a professor; has tenure; not all professors receive this rank

B. Dispel myth that students should wait x minutes for a TA to arrive to class and xx minutes for a full professor, etc.

C. Students may bring up international teaching assistants. Address what to do if students complain of a language barrier or some other problem:
   1. Talk to the TA and give the class some time.
   2. If there is an “instructor of record,” talk with him or her.
   3. Get advice from your academic advisor
   4. If no improvement, talk to department chair.

IX. What Do You Expect of Professors?
A. Come to class prepared.
B. Arrive on time.
C. Know their subject.
D. End class on time.
E. Hold office hours.
F. Include required information in syllabus
G. Provide feedback on student performance in class (e.g., mid-term grades; timely return of papers, etc.).

Even if a professor doesn’t live up to your expectations, remember that ultimately you are responsible for your learning.
CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE AND BEHAVIOR EXERCISE
(Need approximately 15 minutes.)

**Goal:** Heighten student awareness that disruptive behavior is noticed by most instructors
and that this behavior can distract instructor and other students in class.

**Divide class into 5 groups:** Tell five groups that they are each going to be assigned a
textbook chapter to quickly review with the class. Peer instructor takes one group outside
classroom and closes door.

**Directions for group meeting outside classroom:** Ask students to highlight points in
one of the textbook chapters on student success or study skills (or any chapter with
relevant information that is easily divided). Each student in the group must present a
portion of the material. Give group about 4 minutes to prepare for presentation.

**Directions for remaining groups inside classroom:** Instructor tells the students what
is really happening with this exercise. The outside group doesn’t know that they are going
to be presenting to a group of disruptive students. Each group inside the class is assigned
a disruptive behavior that they will begin to exhibit when the inside group returns.
Behaviors can include: reading the *Kernel*, working the crossword puzzle; looking bored/no
eye contact with presenters; sleeping/yawning/ head on desk; whispering with
neighbors/passing notes; cell phone ringing and student proceeding to talk on cell phone;
texting; surfing Facebook, etc.

**Bring the outside group back inside the classroom and ask them to present first.**
Only the instructor and the peer instructor should be attentive to the presenters.

- Usually after a couple of the student presenters finish their portion, they realize
  “something is going on.”
- Stop the presentation and ask presenters how they felt about it.
- Did they notice anything about the class? (Typically, student presenters can cite
  exactly what disruptive behaviors they saw. Students reading the *Kernel*,
  whispering, texting, and looking bored causes the student presenters to lose their
  confidence and also to lose their concentration.)
- Did the behavior of the class bother them?
- Do they think that negative behavior by students affects an instructor’s teaching?
  YES!
- Do the students think that professors notice that kind of behavior? What behaviors
do students think should be avoided in class?
- Do they think that other students in the class notice that kind of behavior? Does it
  hurt them? Discuss reasons why.
- What behaviors would help a professor notice that students are serious about the
  class and that they want to learn? How does it benefit students to exhibit these
  positive behaviors?
FACULTY PANEL EXERCISE

Goal: Help students better understand the role of faculty and how to build relationships with them.

Invite two or three faculty members to a class session. Before this class, ask your students to brainstorm questions that they would like to ask the professors. Ask students to write questions on 3x5 cards; collect cards; use them the day of the faculty panel. Before the panel begins, ask the faculty to reinforce the main points in the professor lesson plan that address classroom decorum and communicating with professors.

The following are example questions asked by former UK 101 students during a faculty panel session.

1. Do you really want students to visit you during your office hours?
2. What do you discuss with students during office hours?
3. Do you think students are trying to “brown nose” you if they visit you or talk to you after class?
4. What do professors do besides teaching class?
5. Do professors enjoy flunking students?
6. Why are you a professor?
7. What student behaviors in class bother you?
8. What student behaviors do you appreciate?
9. Are you more lenient with borderline grades when the students have been active in class?
10. Do you really care if students come to your class or not, and if so, what do you do to people who never (or rarely) come?
11. Do you acknowledge when students are having a hard time in class? For example, if students think you are talking too quickly, do you slow down?