

PROFESSORS & CLASSROOM DECORUM LESSON PLAN

I. Objectives

To help students understand:

- a. The difference between professors and teaching assistants
- b. Responsibilities of professors
- c. What professors value
- d. Academic freedom
- e. Communicating with professors
- f. Classroom decorum

II. Professors and Teaching Assistants

- a. What are your impressions of your professors so far?
- b. Do you understand the difference between a TA and a 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
- c. Dispel myth that students should wait x minutes for a TA to arrive to class and xx minutes for a full professor, etc.
- d. Almost always, students will bring up international teaching assistants. Address what to do if there is 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.*
 5. *Talk to dean of the college.**All ITAs go through language screening by three person panel. Panel includes undergraduate student.*

III. What Do Professors Do All Day?

- 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 typical DOE has 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.

IV. What Do Professors Value?

- 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.

V. 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/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/1940statement.htm>.)

- b. It's acceptable to respectfully express your reaction to ideas, even if you disagree with the idea.

VI. Communicating with Professors

- a. Utilize office hours. What would motivate you to visit a professor? What would stop you?
- b. Email instructors when appropriate. Do not use text messaging abbreviations or lingo in your emails. Don't be "too casual."
- c. When emailing instructors, use your uky.edu email address. Other addresses may be screened as spam, and the instructor won't receive it. If you use another email address, always include your full name so that professor knows who sent the email.
- d. Address instructors as Professor X or Dr. X unless told otherwise.

VII. Classroom Decorum

- a. If using the "Classroom Etiquette" exercise, insert it here without telling the students that it is about classroom decorum. After the exercise, discuss the following.
- b. Understand impact of your behavior. Your actions tell the professor something about you and your attitude toward the class. Your behavior also affects the quality of instruction you receive. 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.
- c. If you were a professor, what behaviors would you want students to avoid?
 1. Using cell phone to talk or text.
 2. Reading the *Kernel* in class or working crossword puzzle.
 3. Surfing Facebook on laptop.
 4. Never looking at instructor.
 5. Not taking any notes.
 6. Using negative body language: slouching in chair, head resting on desk, looking bored.
 7. Arriving to class late or leaving early.
 8. Sleeping.
 9. Talking with neighbor.
 10. Doing homework for another class.

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 volunteering to answer when professor asks 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.

d. How do these manners and behaviors 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 and effort.

e. Comments that probably won't impress instructors: (Portions excerpted from *Student Success: How to Succeed in College and Still Have Time for Your Friends* by Walter and Siebert, 1993.)

"I was absent last class. Did I miss anything important?"

"Will the exam be easy (hard)?"

"I need an 'A' in this course to _____."

"Do we need to take notes in this class?"

"Can you believe that my other grandmother just died, too?"

"Do we have to know this for the exam?"

"I was absent because I was studying for an exam in an important class."

VIII. 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 (how course will be graded, assignments, etc.).
- g. Provide feedback in performance in class (e.g., mid-term grades).

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; student texting; student on 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? (See list on page 3.)
- 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? (See list on page 4.) 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 address the main points in the professor lesson plan (i.e., what does it mean to be a doctoral/research-extensive university; what do professors value, etc.).

The following are examples questions asked by UK 101 students during a faculty panel session. You may want to include these questions in your class discussion.

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?