Miss Manners Do and Don't List

This is the (previously) unwritten code of manners I consider necessary for appropriate university interaction. Hopefully, most of these are obvious to you.

DON't List

1. Don't get up and walk out during class. This disturbs the instructor and other students. If there is an unavoidable circumstance that makes it necessary for you to leave class early, sit near an exit. It is also considerate to inform the instructor at the beginning of class that you will be leaving early. No reasons needed.

   (The "it's not over until it's over" rule also holds for church, Jazz games, and good night kisses.)

2. Do NOT come to class late. You disrupt others. If your previous class is way across campus, speak to me about the situation.

3. Miss class only when absolutely necessary - and then only very rarely. When you do miss class, it is your responsibility to learn the material on your own. Your instructor cannot be expected to give a private lecture to anyone who missed class.

4. If this class is not full; there will be a number of empty seats. Do NOT take seats in the back of the room; it makes it very difficult to teach. Fill in seats from the front of the room instead of immediately taking seats in the back of the class. It makes discussion easier... and helps save the instructor's vocal chords! And studies have shown that those who sit near the front generally get better grades!

5. Sleeping or reading the newspaper in class is inappropriate. Your instructor may not notice if you are absent, but it is very likely that he/she knows everyone who sleeps or reads the newspaper in class even once. In Survival (a program to help freshman get acclimated to university life), these two things come up every year as being pet peeves of instructors university wide.

   Sleeping in class irritates your instructor. Reading the newspaper in class irritates your instructor. Checking your cell phone, taking calls, or even reading text messages is inappropriate unless the message is of extreme importance. If you don't want to be in class, physically and cognitively, then do us both a favor and stay home.

   If you have an unusual situation (such as you work nights) which makes falling asleep in class more likely, you should inform your instructor that you aren't falling asleep to show your disinterest in the class, but you just can't help it. (The ban on dozing off and reading newspapers also holds for conversations with your mother-in-law and dinner appointments.)

   Working on assignments for other classes is also discouraged, but the instructor will give you the benefit of the doubt - maybe you left your assignment home and have no way to get it, maybe you just had a wonderful idea that you will forget if you don't write it down. But, your instructor will never cut you any slack at all if you are reading the newspaper. There is
no compelling reason why you must read the newspaper in class. It is just rude. It says, "You are so boring and your class is so pathetic, my time is better spent reading the newspaper."

6. If you take a computer to class, do not use it to play games, surf the web, or read your email during class. If class is moving too slowly for you, use the time to think deeply about related issues. Using a computer in class is a lot like reading the newspaper. Your instructor usually knows you are not paying attention.

7. Don't talk to your neighbors when material is being presented or questions are being asked, whether it is a video or someone addressing the class, student or instructor. It's not only rude, but it's distracting to the speaker, as well as to others who want to listen. If you have a question or need a repetition or clarification, ask the instructor.

8. Never walk through a closed office door without knocking. If you are not invited in after you knock once, leave a message with the secretary. DO NOT KEEP KNOCKING. (The "never walk through a closed door" rule is relaxed for elevator doors, restroom doors, and classroom doors.)

9. A professor is busy and must have hours without interruptions. Don’t knock on your professor's door unless it is during office hours or you have a good reason to interrupt.

10. Never interrupt conversations. If you must break in, wait to see if you are recognized OR say something like, "Please excuse me, but did you realize there are doughnuts in the lounge." You should never assume your time is more important than everyone else's. Though it may be appropriate for a faculty member of interrupt another conversation, it is almost never appropriate for a student to do so. It is a question of respect.

11. If an instructor interrupts a conversation he/she is having with someone else to ask you if you have a quick question, this means a 5 second question. Otherwise, just say you will wait.

12. Pacing in front of the office door or hanging in the doorway (when you haven't been invited in) while your instructor helps someone else is inappropriate. It is okay to stand so the instructor can see you. That is a gentle reminder that someone is waiting. Anything more aggressive is not appropriate.

13. Listening to another's phone conversation is generally inappropriate. Stay outside the office until the phone call is completed (unless directed otherwise).

14. Do not interrupt faculty members (who aren't your instructor) in their offices and ask for help. Your instructor or paid consultants are the only ones you should expect help from.

15. Don’t ask to be an exception to the rules. That isn’t fair to others.

16. Sometimes students drop by the office to ask a question they really want to ask another faculty member, but "don't want to bother him". They are really saying, "His time is too important for this interruption, but yours isn't."

In our society, we treat people differently depending on how we view their status. I don't know if this is right or wrong, but it is the case. We treat a physician (of either gender) with more respect than we do the nurse (of either gender) or janitor. The respect takes many forms: not interrupting, valuing their opinion, controlling our temper, waiting for them, accommodating their schedule, wanting to please, etc. Because women are often associated with service positions like waitress, secretary, or stewardess, they are sometimes treated as "infinitely interruptable" even though their status would not place them in that class. It is a
mixed message of "I'd rather talk to you" which is flattering with "I would rather interrupt you than someone more important" which is not flattering.

17. In professional football, there is a replay rule. If you think a referee has made an incorrect call, you can ask that the tape be replayed. If you are right, there is no penalty. If you are wrong, however, you pay by losing a timeout. This helps move the game along as well as remove the temptation to badger the refs for reconsideration.

I wish we could impose the replay rule. As an instructor, I just don't have the time to regrade everything. It is just too time consuming, but more importantly it isn't fair. Let me explain. Some students will pester the instructor for absolutely every point that was lost, regardless of the justification. Students that do that routinely often get undeserved points just because the instructor is tired of arguing about points. This is unfair to the students who don't make a nuisance of themselves. When I am grading and I see a mistake, I must assign a point value to the mistake. It is personal decision how I count it. Mistakes aren't linear in nature. You just have to assign a point value to them. It could be that one of several decisions would be perfectly reasonable, BUT after you do make a decision and grade all the class tests based on that criterion, you can't change one persons score just because they think a different point distribution would have been more appropriate. It isn't fair to the rest of the class.

If there has been a mistake, I want you to point it out to me. But asking that every single question you missed be re-graded, wastes both your time and mine and will not result in increased points. In addition, it disadvantages you in the future when you come to me with a genuine concern. I become so used to discounting your pleas, that a real concern might be discounted as well.

In addition, I do not have time to go through your entire test explaining what the answer should have been. Read the textbook. Read the posted solution. If you still can't understand what the answer should have been, then see me.

Some semesters have been particularly bad for students hounding the graders for more points. One grader said, "I don't know why anyone would want this job. It is so stressful. I spend hours grading and then students argue every point. They say, 'Three points is so many. Why did you take off so many?' Or they say, 'You took off for quality. How could mine have been better?' I have graded the whole class. I am grading them with respect to all the others. I don't have time to show them ten other outputs for them to realize how they could have been better."

18. Refer to a professor using Dr. (if appropriate) or Ms./Mr. Do not use a first name unless invited to do so. It is offensive to assume that all women are Ms and all men are Dr. Find out and use the correct title.
DO LIST

1. Attempt to see your instructor during office hours. If you feel you need to see your instructor outside of office hours, send Email to set up an appointment. If that is not possible, at least preface your interruption with, "Do you have time to talk to me now?"

   Limit the number of times you see your instructor in a single day, especially if it is not during his/her office hours. It is hard for your instructor to accomplish anything if he/she receives dozens of interruptions all day long. That is the reason for office hours. If you ask frequent questions when it is not office hours, your instructor may be forced to go into seclusion, refusing to answer the phone, door, or Email. This hurts everyone.

2. Come for help prepared: current listing, copy of output, error messages written down, informative debug printed, having tried several alternatives. Your instructor may NOT want to run your code as it is slower than just reading it.

3. Ask the consultants before coming to your instructor for help.

4. It is easy to focus on the negative, but if you offer sincere praise now and again, your complaints will be taken much more seriously.

5. Take time to be polite to secretaries, technicians, and consultants. It makes their job much easier. When they are happier, everyone benefits.

6. Participate. Participation is necessary for learning. Participation includes attending class regularly (90% of the time), coming on time, remaining focused until class is dismissed, taking notes (This is helpful even if you never read them. Listening to get the main point is good discipline.), trying problems at your seats when directed to do so, answering questions when called upon, asking timely questions, being prepared for class, paying attention during lecture, and having an attitude of learning.

7. If you are having a rough time, seek individual help from your instructor. You will learn much more from the one to one interaction and it serves as a reality check for your instructor so he/she understands why students are having trouble.

8. Do set yourself up to receive the benefit of the doubt. Be a model student, then when you space out the final, bomb an assignment, or lose the only copy of your program, you have some chance of being listened to and accommodated. If you have been a creep, you will probably be treated that way.

9. If you question, disagree with or are unhappy about something related to the class, by all means, come see me so we can discuss it... but not battle over it! We're collaborators in the learning process, not adversaries; you don't have to "confront" me or anyone else associated with the class. The Responsibilities of Students (Article II, Section1 of the Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University), states that "All interactions with faculty members, staff members, and other students should be conducted with courtesy, civility, decency and a concern for personal dignity." I have the same responsibility with respect to my interactions with you and will never intentionally embarrass or demean you.

10. Create a positive impression. Most of the time companies never call for a recommendation, but students should still ask themselves, "What would my professors say of me if asked for a letter of recommendation, security clearance, or graduate school admittance?" I try to be as positive as possible in letters of recommendation, but sometimes I have to simply say, "This person was not impressive." "He works far below his abilities." "She is really negative and..."
has a hard time working in groups." Even if I have had no bad experiences with a person, it is doubtful I can give a glowing recommendation of a student who always came to class late or slept half the time. Sometimes I can honestly say, "His grades aren't the greatest, but he is just wonderful to work with. I'm sure you will be very pleased with him." "Her grades don't reflect what she can do. She is much better than her GPA indicates." "I have been so impressed with his questions in class. He thinks deeply and is motivated to find the answers on his own." I do try to point out just the positive as I realize no one will hire you if I write, "Loser", but I can't write wonderful things that just didn't happen.

In most cases, the respect you show others is returned to you. It is good practice for the work place. You treat your boss with more respect than you may treat a peer. You try to please him/her so he/she will think well of you. Then when you need a special consideration or benefit of the doubt, it will normally be extended to you.