

## Communicating with your Professor or Teaching Assistant

**Meet your professors during their office hours. Professors want you to do well, enjoy the course and to develop an interest in their research field. Connecting with even one supportive professor will greatly enrich your university experience.**

Profs can:

- \* Clarify difficult content, but will be more receptive to helping you individually after you have read the notes or text, attended the lecture, tried the homework
- \* Encourage you when you may feeling overwhelmed by the course
- \* Explain assignments, after you've tried to understand the purpose, format or expectations
- \* Stimulate your interest in an area. Your prof. has a research area they are often deeply committed to - ask them about it and see if you share their passion
- \* Be a reference for a job, your grad. school application or proposal... especially if they know you first.
- \* Hire you in their lab, which builds your practical experience

**Set a goal of speaking outside class with each professor, at least once each term.**

### Contacting your Prof.

- ✓ Check your course outline for information on office hours, e-mail or phone preferences
- ✓ If possible, inform them in advance about the purpose of your contact
- ✓ Identify yourself by name, course and section
- ✓ Before requesting an extension on an assignment, check the syllabus for answers to all logistical questions. E.g. are marks deducted? When? How many? Exceptions?
- ✓ Be clear and focused in your communication – like you, they are busy
- ✓ Be polite and formal in your interactions, unless invited to be more casual.
- ✓ Do not expect an immediate response to your request- - e.g. midnight the night before an exam
- ✓ Respond quickly to their messages

### E-mail Etiquette

#### 1..Start an e-mail to an instructor with:

- x Hey!
- x Hi Kim-
- ✓ Hello Prof./ Mr./Ms Young (*Tip: use the name of the recipient*)

#### 2. Identify yourself saying:

- x “nothing” -they can read the e-mail address
- x I'm a student
- ✓ I'm in your Math121 section B course (*Tip: help your prof. make sense of your request*)

### 3. State your request:

- x plse send hmwrk sol'n. (*Tip: use a business font like arial, not smaller than 11, and no abbreviations*)
- x I was sick and missed class. Any solutions handed out?
- ✓ I was sick and missed class. I got notes from a friend, but I have a few questions. Can we please meet during Tuesday's office hours? (*Tip: be informative, and specific to reduce multiple e-mails*)

### 4. Sign off with:

- x Greg
- x Greg Jones
- ✓ thanks for your time, Greg Jones (# 05869923) (*Tip: be polite and clear*)

## Working with TAs

Teaching or Lab Assistants are usually graduate students who assist the professor with specific tasks. In large classes, they are a connection between undergrads and professors.

- \* Ask them how they want to be addressed. Even though they may be close in age, they may prefer some distance from you
- \* Be polite when contacting TAs by email
- \* Understand their role: TAs may lead tutorials, mark papers or exams, or hold office hours to answer questions
- \* TAs are often a great resource for teaching from the "student perspective". But can they really remark that paper, or do you need to ask the professor?
- \* Ask for feedback on tests or assignments. Approach TAs wanting to know how to improve (vs. criticizing their grading)
- \* Respect their wishes about how and when you may contact them

## Building Positive Relationships with Faculty

*Relationships are built through contact + content*

- \* Engage in the course: Read your course syllabus for information on course objectives, topics, and key dates
- \* Speak in class, so the professor knows who you are
- \* Look for opportunities to talk with your professors outside of class, especially if you don't speak in class
- \* Request feedback on how you are doing, and how to deepen your understanding or improve grades
- \* Express views that may differ from your professor of TA
- \* Try to learn more about your professors: their research interests, other courses they teach, or community involvement
- \* Attend talks or academic events at which your profs. will be present. Offer professors or TAs positive and constructive feedback on the courses you are taking