EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR PROFESSORS
OFFICE HOURS

- One way to get to know your professors better is to visit their office hours, which are specific times professors set aside for students to visit their offices or to meet over Zoom.

- Students choose to attend office hours for a variety of reasons, such as asking questions, clarifying concepts, seeking feedback, inquiring about grades, or procuring advice on a variety of academic issues.

- You can find your professors’ office hours and preferred method of meeting on their course information sheets.
Some of your professors are adjunct instructors, which means they work part-time at the college, while others are full-time faculty members who have additional responsibilities to the institution beyond teaching.

Regardless of adjunct or full-time status, all professors are appropriately qualified and credentialed to work at the college.

It is often the case that adjunct faculty work full-time jobs outside the college and can provide students with real-time, real-world knowledge because they are practicing experts in their fields.

The terms instructor and professor are often used interchangeably because both denote someone who teaches college students. The distinction between them is minor, having to do with promotions and years in rank, not qualifications to teach in their fields of study.
College students are sometimes surprised to discover that instructors enjoy getting to know students. The human dimension of college really matters, and as a student you are an important part of your instructor’s world. Most instructors are happy to work with you during their office hours, or talk a few minutes after class. They are also willing to respond to digital messages, talk on the phone, or engage in online discussion forums. These are some of the many methods of communication you and your instructors can use.
BENEFITS OF COMMUNICATING WITH INSTRUCTORS

- Communicating with instructors can help you feel more comfortable in college and more connected to the college culture.

- Communicating with instructors is also a valuable way to learn about an academic field or a career. Maybe you don’t know for sure what you want to major in or what people with a degree in your major actually do after college. Most instructors will share information and insights with you on these topics.

- You may also need a reference or a letter of recommendation for a job or internship application. Getting to know some of your instructors puts you in an ideal position to ask for a letter of recommendation or a reference later on.

- Because instructors are often well-connected within their field, they may know of a job, internship, or research opportunity that you wouldn’t otherwise know about. An instructor who knows you is a valuable part of your network. Networking is important for future job searches and other opportunities. In fact, most jobs are found through networking, not through classified ads or online job postings.
COMMUNICATION IS KEY
GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATING WITH INSTRUCTORS (PART I)

• Prepare before meeting with the instructor. To get the most out of the time you are speaking with your professor, go over your notes and write down your specific questions. You’ll feel more comfortable, and the instructor will appreciate your organization. Often times, clarification of course content, assignments, or grades only takes a few minutes. See your professor early, so you can stay on track with the course.

• Introduce yourself. Especially near the beginning of the term, don’t assume that your instructor has learned everyone’s name yet. Unless the instructor has already asked you to address him or her as “Dr. ___,” “Ms. _____,” or Mr. ______,” or something similar, it’s appropriate to say “Professor ______.”

• Respect the instructor’s time. Be sure to attend your scheduled meeting on time. Try not to cancel meetings, but if you have to, make sure you send an email well in advance.
GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATING WITH INSTRUCTORS (PART II)

• Be professional. Come to office hours with your questions ready, and don’t wear sunglasses or earphones or check your cell phone for messages. Be prepared to accept constructive criticism in a professional way.

• Use office hours. Office hours are a great way to have one on one time with your professor. When thinking about whether or not to bring something up in class, consider if your question is something the entire class would benefit from hearing. If your question or comment is pertains to only you, try to speak with your professor individually. For example, if you need to miss class for a family emergency or you want to discuss your grade, see your professor before class, after class, or during office hours. If that is not possible, send an email.

• Know your professors want you to be successful. If you are feeling hesitant about approaching your professor, remember that you are in college to learn, and you have valuable thoughts. If you are wondering about something, chances are, other classmates are wondering too, so ask questions often and early.