Guidelines for Online Etiquette

Adapted from University of Maryland University College Guidelines
http://polaris.umuc.edu/de/faculty/rmf/#netiquette

Personal Courtesy

1. Begin each posting with a greeting stating the person's name (Hello Kerry, or Hello Dr. Reed), and closing with your name on its own line. This raises the tone of the correspondence so that there is a level of respect no matter the content. It also clearly delineates the beginning and end of messages in a thread containing many.

2. For e-mail, identify yourself and the subject of your e-mail message. Be sure to include the course number and section, the assignment, and your name in the heading.

> Example: ENGL 245- OL Jane Smith Question about Week 2
> Example: ENGL 245- OL Jane Smith Paper 2 attached

3. Write to the whole group through the discussion forum. Use e-mail to send a private message.

4. Use paragraph breaks in your discussion postings and follow guidelines for how much to write. Your classmates will greatly appreciate your respect for their time.

5. Make sure your postings are clear and logical. It is possible to write a paragraph that contains no errors in grammar or spelling, but still makes no sense at all. Doing so in the classroom wastes times and reflects badly on you.

6. Be aware of the effect that your choice of words and typestyle may have. Using bold type or all capitals, will people think you are shouting at them or simply emphasizing a point? Be careful with words or phrases that can stereotype people, and remain professional when responding to ideas with which you feel strongly. Use emoticons and abbreviations sparingly: They are often misunderstood and relay vague ideas. It is better to find clear words for your thoughts.

7. Avoid satire or sarcasm. Few people can successfully write humor and satire. A probable and perhaps lasting misunderstanding is not worth an unlikely and passing chuckle.

8. If your message is designed to vent strong feelings, write it, but do not send it until you have slept on it overnight. It is interesting how different your words look in the light of day!

9. As the reader, give the author the benefit of the doubt. If something seems hostile or offensive, before you leap to that conclusion, ask for clarification. Practice patience and courtesy.

10. Apologize. When a misunderstanding occurs, acknowledge when you have been unclear, apologize, say what you meant more clearly, and put it behind you.

11. Use "please" and "thank you". The power of these simple signs of respect and caring cannot be overstated.

12. Practice random acts of kindness. Think of what you can say (without being obsequious), that would brighten the recipient's day. It simply makes for a better experience for everyone, and as a bonus you may find that people pay better attention to what you have to say.

13. Above all, remain polite and professional at all times. Don't use offensive language, and don't be confrontational for the sake of confrontation. Treat all class members with respect and courtesy, and ask yourself, "Would I say this if we were sitting in a face-to-face classroom?" If the answer is no, rewrite and reread.

Academic Integrity

14. Provide citations for quoted materials or others' ideas, just as would be done in hard copy.

15. Do not forward personal notes or messages to others unless you are certain the content is appropriate and you have obtained permission from the author.

Electronic Use of Information

16. Never write anything you wouldn't want to see publicly printed; computer messages cannot be assumed to be private.

17. Since anything you write online can be (and may be) forwarded to others, do not disclose trade secrets or company-confidential information as part of a course.

18. Delete old e-mail messages; they take up valuable storage space.