Cultural Differences in the Classroom

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Overview

- US classroom environment
- Different class formats
- Preparing for class
- Office hours
- Useful technology
- Classroom expectations
- Academic and professional integrity
- Resources
US Classroom Environment

- Relaxed atmosphere
- Technology friendly
- Student centered
- Critical thinking
- Students freely express opinions
- Active learning
  - In class discussion/debate
  - Presentation
  - Role-playing
  - Team-work
  - Papers
  - Case study
Class Formats

Lecture
• Instructor is principally responsible for the preparation of the subject matter and the conduct of the class

Success Tips
• Preview (+ review)
• Take notes
• Ask questions

Seminar
• Format can vary
• Guest lecture
• Student led class discussions

Success Tips
• Be prepared
• Participate
• Be open-minded
Class Formats

Laboratory
• Supplement to a lecture
• Smaller class size
• Flexible section choices
• Supervised by instructor/GSI

Success Tips
• Ask why - understand the science behind the experiments
• Be a good team player

Independent Study
• Flexible course credit that varies among different programs
• Students receive individual consultation and guidance from the instructor

Success Tips
• Ask your program coordinator
Preparing for Class

Read the syllabus carefully for each class
- Important days (assignment due days, exam days, no-class days...)
- Requirements of homework submission (paper version, canvas...)
- Grading scale
- Deadline extension / makeup exams policy

Find your own way of taking notes
- Cornell note taking template
- Notebook / laptop / ipad / taking picture of the notes
- Software to organize annotation/citation/bibliography: endNote, Zotero, Mendeley
Preparing for Class

Read papers efficiently and strategically remembering
• Keywords in the title
• Primary authors’ last names
• Journal name (publication year)

Example: A and B developed C method, which is published on D Journal in 2016

• Start with abstract, move forward to method and conclusion section for detail
• Highlight/add comment while reading
• Summarize the main points in your own words
Join the Class Discussion

What prevents us from freely joining the class discussion?

- Not used to the feel-free-to-ask-question environment
- Can’t think fast enough in class
- Lack of confidence
  - Afraid to disagree with others
  - Language concerns
  - Questions too simple to ask

Solutions

- Be familiar with the topic before going to the class
- It’s OK to question/disagree with your classmates/professors/reading
Go To Office Hours

- Highly recommend!!!
- Check the time and location before you go
- Have questions prepared or just show up and listen to others’ questions
- Build personal relationship with your professor
Useful Technology

Canvas
Useful Technology

Generally available software: http://its.umich.edu/computing/computers-software
CAEN environment: https://caen.engin.umich.edu/software/
Useful Technology

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CAEN

- CAEN Lab Software Environment (CLSE)
- High performance computing for research
- Instructional technology
- Web services
- Administrative and departmental support
Useful Technology

- Library catalog, Online Journals, ILL
- Study Rooms
- Ask A Librarian
- Groundworks, Data Visualization
- Workshops

For more information, attend the Library Basics workshop:
  - Friday 8/16 1pm-3pm
  - Friday 8/23 1pm-3pm
  - Friday 8/30 1pm-3pm

Registration and locations at internationalcenter.umich.edu/events/orientation
Classroom Expectations

Group Activity

- Turn to your neighbors
- Discuss the question on each slide ~ 30 seconds
- Practice your classroom participation: Speak out, and you will get a prize!
Is it OK to....

Greet my professors/GSIs with their first name?

✔ Start with Dr. ___ or Prof. ___ or Mr./Ms. ___, be open to first names when preferred.
Is it OK to....

Eat during class?

✔ Yes
✔ Food should not have strong smell
✔ Please eat quietly
Is it OK to.....

Avoid asking and answering questions in class because of language challenges?

✔ No
✔ Improve your English skills by practicing and taking risks
Resources

• Take courses at English Language Institute (ELI)
• Join Sweetland Writing Center
• Revise paper at writing lab in your department
• Attend social events (college, department, International Center, etc.)
• Attend events to improve presentation skills, like “Sandwiches and Science” organized by some engineering departments
• Learn from peers in labs to improve writing for publications
Writing Effective Emails
• Friday 8/30 10am – 11:30am in B0560

Communicating with Your Academic and Research Advisors (for graduate students only)
• Wednesday 8/14 9am – 10:30am in B1560
• Friday 8/23 9am – 10:30am in B1560
• Monday 8/26 2:30am – 4:00pm in B1570
Is it OK to…. 

Ignore my University of Michigan email account?

✔ No
✔ U-M email is your professional communication tool
✔ Download the Gmail app
Is it OK to…..

Leave the classroom before the class is over?

✔ No, unless you have a legitimate reason and are given permission in advanced

AND

✔ Yes, you are in charge of your own learning
Is it OK to….

Ask your partners to contribute more time and effort to the group project?

✔ Yes
✔ It is their responsibility to participate and you should not be the only one working on a group project
Resources

- Communicate and plan as a team
- Agree on a plan of action
- Compromise will be required
- Set and follow deadlines
- More communication
  - Group messaging
  - Group meeting locations
Is it OK to….

Paraphrase someone else’s writing in your own papers?

✔ Yes
✔ However, if the words and/or ideas you express originated elsewhere, proper citation is required
✔ Cheating is often accidental
Academic & Professional Integrity

Academic Misconduct
- Cheating/obtaining improper advantage
- Plagiarism
- Research misconduct
- Dishonesty in publication
- Abuse of confidentiality
- Misuse of computer facilities

Professional Misconduct
- Misrepresentation of one’s credentials or status, including professional experience and positions held
- Unethical consulting activity
- Conflicts of interests
- Dating relationships between teachers and students is prohibited

Often unintentional - be aware of the policies!
Academic Integrity & Misconduct

- Potential consequences of academic misconduct include loss of legal immigration status

- Ignorance of academic integrity policies is *NOT* an acceptable explanation for academic misconduct

- Honor Codes and Academic Integrity policies are published by each School and College
Resources

- LSA academic integrity guidelines
- Rackham academic and processional integrity policy
- Office of Student Conflict Resolution
- The Office of the Ombuds (resources for problems or concerns- totally confidentiality)
- PEERS training thorough MyLINC
Is it OK to…..

Work on your homework assignment together with your classmates?

✔ Maybe
✔ You are often encouraged to discuss homework with your classmates, but you are required to hand in your own work
Is it OK to…. 

Go to class when you are sick?

✔ No!
✔ You will only get others sick and make yourself worse.
✔ Instructors will likely encourage you to stay home when you’re sick and accommodate you catching up with missed work
Is it OK to....

Bring notes to your exams?

✔ Maybe
✔ Some instructors allow ‘cheat sheets’
Campus Resources

Academic Resources
- Rackham Graduate School
- Your college’s website
- Libraries (International Center Orientation Workshop: Library Basics)
- Academic Advisors
- Math lab
- Science Learning Center

Personal Development
- Student organizations (1,550 on campus)
- Festifall is Friday, September 6, 2019 from 2:00pm-6:00pm on the Central Campus Diag
- Northfest is Monday, September 2, 2019 from 11:00am-2:00pm at Pierpont Commons

Career Development
- Career Center
- Career Fairs
Common Campus Terms

http://parents.umich.edu/page/u-m-lingo

• Wolverine Access
• Uniqname / UMID
• SAB: Student Activities Building
• LSA: College of Literature, Science, and the Arts
• UGLi (Shapiro) / Hatcher / Taubman / Duderstadt Libraries
• CCTC: Central Campus Transit Center
• CCRB/NCRB/IMSB: Recreation Buildings
Remember to Go Blue!

G: Go to class prepared
O: Organize your time wisely
B: Be ready to participate in class
L: Learn by observing, thinking, doing, and asking
U: Utilize campus resources
E: Enjoy yourself while adapting to your academic environment.
Thank You!

Please complete the Workshop Evaluation. You will receive details in your umich email soon.

Your feedback is valuable to us and will help us to improve the experience for future participants.