Great Net-spectations: Guidelines for Commu-net-cating Online

1) Be Committed
   • *Post messages with substance and which add to the discussion.* (Posting just “I agree” or “I disagree” without stating why does not add substance.) Engage the topic; respond to others; help us all learn!
   • *Write only after you have thought about what to write.* You may want to compose your post(s) in another document so you can edit them and then paste them into the discussion.
   • *Check in frequently.* Read posts several times a week, comment on new threads. Our classroom is online and you need to learn from each other. Commit yourself to teach and to learn throughout the course.

2) Be Courteous
   • *Respect others at all times,* even if you disagree or don’t understand.
   • *Don’t post in anger.* Avoid ALL CAPS BECAUSE IT LOOKS LIKE YOU’RE YELLING (it’s impolite to yell). It’s ok to occasionally put ONE word in caps for emphasis (just don’t yell).
   • *Word your post with the same kindness you would speak face to face.* You are communicating with a human being, not a computer.

3) Be Clear
   • *Write so others can understand you.* Problems with spelling, grammar and punctuation can make that hard to do. Informal writing is fine, but remember: UR not texting!
   • *Write at least as well as you speak.* It’s ok to write in your own voice, but it may help to read your post out loud before you send it to be sure it makes sense.
   • *Write specifically.* If referencing a previous post, cite the person and cite the part of the post which you are addressing.

4) Be Concise
   • *Say enough to articulate what you mean, and no more.* Readers often skip anything longer than three paragraphs (less than 250 words).
   • *Look for ways to reduce the number of words in your post.* Eliminate anything redundant or repetitive, or anything which muddies the waters of thought or simply makes things less clear.
   • *Don’t overload your post.* If your post is getting long, perhaps you are trying to cover too much. Divide it into more than one post.

5) Be Courageous
   • *Please disagree, thank you.* A respectful disagreement can advance our learning and deepen our understanding of one another.
   • *Don’t disagree without adding something to the discussion.* Ask a question, raise a concern, or present an opposing position, respectfully.
   • *Criticize ideas, but never people.* Discuss what was written, not the person who wrote it or even how it was written, unless to help clarify the idea(s).

6) Be Cautious
   • *Err on the side of courtesy when tempted to use humor or sarcasm.* Tone of voice does not exist for online posts, so attempts at humor often evoke unintended emotions. Emoticons can help, but limit their use: :) happy; :,( sad; :) wink; :o surprise; :/ perplexed or confused
   • *Avoid language that could be construed as insensitive or inflammatory.* Be sensitive to the age, race, gender, culture, background, and personal history of your readers.
   • *If in doubt, leave it out.* Sometimes the best thing to say is nothing.

7) Be Careful
   • *Proofread all posts before you send them.* Often a moment of care can prevent a year of ruffled feelings.
   • *Double check your intended meaning with the words you have written.* Make sure you really are saying what it is that you think you’re saying.
   • *Be sure you are addressing the issues that pertain to the posted discussion.* Avoid chasing tangents or pushing personal agendas.