Modeling and Simulation: Etiquette and Policies

The University of Texas at El Paso – Fall 2014

_Treat this class is like a job._ Your primary responsibilities are to show up, to be professional, and to make consistent progress on the task at hand. Our primary responsibility is to create an effective educational environment and provide support that makes it possible for you to make progress.

Throughout this course, you will be expected to behave in a professional manner. This course is unique in its design; therefore, please understand that the following guidelines and expectations are designed to help us use our time in class effectively.

Once we get started on the two major projects, much of the time in class will be reserved for you to work on your work. You will have to make decisions on how to use this time wisely! So...

- Please turn off your cell phone when you enter the classroom. Once you are in class, your focus and attention should stay in class and on your work. (We understand that there may be emergencies where you need to keep your phone on. Please just let us know!)
- Bear in mind that a lot of your work this semester will be done in groups; be responsible to and respectful of your partner(s). Your approach to in class work affects both your learning _and_ your classmates’ experiences. This includes keeping non-coursework related conversations to a minimum and keeping the noise to a reasonable level.
- When there is a class wide discussion, please make sure that you are seated in a place where you can see the speaker and that your attention is focused on him/her.
- This is a very collaborative course. If you have something that you are proficient at, but see a classmate struggling, offer your assistance! And the reverse is true. If you need help, ask your classmates!
- Because of the nature of this course, we (your professors) need to be able to interrupt you. If one of us comes to your workspace and you need a few seconds to get to a good stopping point, that’s fine. If you want us to come back later, just ask. We will try, but it may not be possible to accommodate you and still meet with all groups.
- We will try to meet with every group once during each class session.
• Most projects ask you to produce intermediate deliverables that are intended to facilitate your discussions with us. In order to use our time well, it will be important for you to prepare these deliverables on time. If you miss 1--2 deadlines over the course of the semester, that is understandable; missing more than that is evidence of a problem we should address.

• This class requires you to write computer programs that simulate models of physical systems. One of the goals of this class is to develop your ability to write programs, and debugging is an integral part of that process. Therefore we will almost never debug your programs for you. At most, we might suggest techniques that will help you find errors.

• Come to class on time. We make important announcements at the beginning of class. If you are late, you will not know what is going on.

• Come to class in a condition conducive to effective work, which means that you should have adequate food and rest. The most important things you can do to be successful in college are to eat well, sleep well, and get some exercise. Sometimes, this is more important than completing your work.

• Use your workspace. Make sure you have enough clear table space to lay out your materials. Assemble the tools you will need - including paper, pens and pencils, tape and push pins - at the beginning of each session.

• Use paper. Laptops are good for individual work and generally bad for collaborative work.

• Use your timeline to create a persistent record of your activities. This record is helpful to you as a visual reminder; it also facilitates cross-fertilization between teams. If you are not posting material, you are not contributing to this public exchange.

Laptop Policies

• Bring your laptop to every class meeting. If you are working with your team outside of class, you should probably bring it then as well!

• When we are meeting, we expect to have the full attention of all members of your team. Closing your laptop is one way to signal that we have your attention.

• If you're using your laptop to take notes, that's great. If you're using it to do other stuff, leave it closed -- playing Halo or updating your Facebook is distracting to other students and to us.

Working on a Team

• You are expected to communicate and interact with your teammate(s). That doesn't mean that you have to work together all the time; you should be working independently at least some of the time. But if you are working entirely alone, you are failing to achieve one of the goals of this class, and you are unlikely to be successful.

• Every member of your team is responsible for the learning of every member of the team. In a production environment, it can be effective to specialize, allowing
team members to focus on what they do best without understanding the details of what the others are doing. But division of labor is sometimes contrary to the goals of an educational environment. It is more important to strengthen your areas of relative weakness than to practice familiar skills.

- You are welcome and encouraged to discuss projects and exercises with other groups as long as these interactions are consistent with your educational goals. For example, if you read someone else's program in order to learn a new technique and apply it to your own implementation, that is a good way to learn. But if you copy a program you don’t understand instead of learning to develop your own, you are undermining your own education.

- You should maintain the autonomy of your team, which means that your should be making your own choices and not following another team or doing what you think you are supposed to be doing.