Netiquette for Asynchronous and Synchronous Class Discussions

In order to ensure productive online discussions, we should set some ground rules for our students. This handout will give you a list of tips for asynchronous and synchronous discussion guidelines for your students.

For Asynchronous Discussion Forums/Boards:

- Even in an online environment, your writing should represent you as a professional, educated person.
    - Use proper grammar, spelling, syntax and word choice in your posts.
    - Be precise. Using specific word choice will make your ideas clear to your readers. Read your posts aloud before posting them, to ensure that you are writing clearly.
    - Avoid emoticons and "texting" abbreviations. These products of casual, online conversations are not professional and can distract from the message you are sending in your post.
- Be thorough and carefully proofread your work
    - Use examples and explanations to justify your opinion. Make an assertion, and then support it with evidence.
    - Avoid simply saying "I agree with you" in a reply to a classmate's post. You can tell them you agree, but then tell them *why.*
    - Some online forums build in edit time after you hit submit. Others do not. So, make sure you read through your post, count to 10, and read it again before submitting.
- Be respectful -- "remember the human."
    - It is fine to have strong opinions, as long as you present them rationally and use evidence/reason to support them. But make sure you are doing just that.
    - Respect diversity of cultural background, ethnicity, religion, race, and gender.
    - Profanity and sexist/ageist/racist comments are unacceptable, so make sure not to use them -- and if you are the recipient of a comment like that, remain calm and report the issue to your instructor.
    - Control your temper. Be respectful, even if others are not.
- Take your posts seriously. They are not only part of your grade, but they are also part of your learning process. Make sure you are giving yourself the right learning environment, and that you are also supporting your colleagues' learning with well-reasoned, informed, and respectful posts.

For Synchronous Video Conference Discussions

Respectful behavior and clear, concise discussions are still a part of video conference discussions, therefore many of the guidelines above apply. But, video conferencing requires another level of intentionality, so that other attendees can see and hear you. For anyone on the conference, instructor and student alike:

- Wear headphones or earbuds, and/or mute your audio when you are not speaking, to avoid feedback or ambient noise.
- Attend your meetings in as quiet a space as possible, to avoid distractions
- For your video, make sure you have lighting in front of you, and avoid bright light behind you.
- Remove any clutter behind you, so that your colleagues are not distracted.

For the instructor:

- Think about dialogue. Not being in the same room can pose a challenge -- how do you determine order and how to handle dialogue? Some suggestions:
    - Ask students to use the "hand-raise" function on Zoom. You will be notified when someone raises their hand.
    - After you ask a question, pause longer than you would in an in-person classroom. It takes a while for your voice to travel for your students, and it takes extra time for students to ponder their answers.
    - Warn students ahead of time that this environment means that there will be longer pauses between a question and an answer. Remind students that silence is action, and that it is also a learning tool!
    - There will be times when more than one person will speak at a time. That's ok. As the instructor, take control of the traffic, and call on one of the students first. Then ask the other student to weigh in.
- The Chat Room. Now this is a personal preference. Decide whether you want students to use the chat room, and whether you want students to be able to use the private chat function. Set standards as you see fit. Here are a few pro's and con's:
    - Chat functions can be beneficial when students have questions that other students may be able to answer
    - Chat functions can allow students to offer encouragement to one another during/after presentations, or during or after a particularly effective or difficult dialogue/discussion.
    - Chat conversations can also serve as a distraction, even when they contain a normal conversation.
    - Chat conversations can also be abused.

Adapted from eLearning Industry
https://elearningindustry.com/10-netiquette-tips-online-discussions and Zoom Video Meeting
Etiquette: 7 Tips to Ensure a Great Attendee Experience
https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2019/11/27/video-meeting-etiquette-tips/
"Proper 'Netiquette' for Video Conferencing, Azusa Pacific University
https://support.apu.edu/hc/en-us/articles/360045057214-Proper-Netiquette-for-Video-Conferencing