The University of Texas at El Paso is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students. There are certain expectations of students’ behavior and communication in a class, whether it is online or in a classroom. UTEP classes should provide a safe environment where students are free to express their views, explore new concepts, and respectfully share knowledge with classmates and faculty. The following are general guidelines that should be followed in online communication:

**SECURITY**

Blackboard is the online classroom, and UTEP login credentials and password are the keys to enter the classroom. You should not share credentials and passwords and should change passwords if they have been compromised. You should always log out of Blackboard at the end of a session.

**GENERAL GUIDELINES**

You should:

- Treat the instructor with respect, whether communicating via email or any other online communications.
- Address professors using the proper title such as Dr. or Professor. If in doubt, ask or use Mr. or Ms.
- Use correct spelling and grammar.
- Avoid use of slang terms. There is a difference in how people communicate in an educational setting and how they communicate in a social network.
- Avoid use of the cap lock feature. IT CAN BE INTERPRETED AS YELLING.
- Avoid emotional responses in posts and responses.
- Be cautious when using humour. What may be a joke to one person may be offensive to others.
- Safeguard personal information.
- Avoid using confidential information from the class.
EMAIL

You should:

• Use the University email and not share personal email addresses.
• Include the course name and number when communicating with the instructor, teaching assistant, or classmates. Keep in mind that instructors, assistant instructors, and students are in several courses in the same semester.
• Include a subject line that tells the recipient what the email is about.
• Ensure your recipients can open attachments.
• Avoid HTML and use plain text.
• Think before sending the email to several people: is this a private message or does everyone need to know?
• Notify the sender and not forward the email to someone else if it has been received by mistake.

COMMUNICATIONS ON BLACKBOARD

• Read the assignment instructions and review the grading rubric to ensure the post is on topic and within the scope of course material.
• Double-check that the posts are in the correct area. Also, check if the instructions are to start a new discussion thread or respond to a thread that is already active.
• Be sure that postings are in your voice.
• Review the post before submitting it to the discussion to ensure it is clear and meets academic writing requirements.
• Be brief but provide substantive postings.
• Always give proper credit to sources. Use proper in-text citation and list references. If the instructions are not clear about how to do this, ask the professor.
• Read all messages in a thread before replying.
• Avoid repeating what someone else wrote. Discussions meant are to exchange ideas and concepts.
• Avoid answers such as “I agree” or “I disagree” without explaining why.
• Respect other people’s opinions. In an academic discussion, the objective is not to win an argument but rather to exchange knowledge.
• Express your views while respecting the views of those who disagree.
• Avoid making personal insults. Avoid responding emotionally to a posting.
• Be open-minded. Do some research and provide evidence of views when disagreeing with others.
• Always validate postings with research. Unless told otherwise, academic discussions are not social events but an exchange of ideas based on assigned reading and research.
• Always follow the professor’s instructions.
• Review discussion postings regularly and respond to questions from the professor and classmates.
• If posting a video in the discussion, make sure the video has captions to promote inclusion of students with disabilities.
• Avoid highlighting parts of the discussion since some students may not be able to distinguish highlighted text.