

How to Talk to Your Professor

1. You can call me “Steven” or “Professor Engler,” whichever you prefer (same in emails).
2. My job includes talking to you during office hours, if you wish, individually or in small groups. Feel free to check in at any point for any course-related reason, even just to get some reassurance that you are on track.
3. Talk to me about whatever you think might be relevant to achieving your goals in this course. But please don’t ask questions already answered on the course outline (office hours/location, course policies, deadlines etc.).
4. Ask assignment-related questions early, not at the last minute.
5. Questions or comments on any topic are welcome at any time during any class. I will answer or we will discuss all relevant or especially interesting ones.
6. I do not assume that everyone in the class wants an ‘A’ (though I run the class like that, in order to consistently communicate and model course standards). I have no problem if you are aiming at a C+ or whatever, either because you are busy (with family, work, health issues etc.) or because you are prioritizing core courses in your program. Don’t be embarrassed to talk with me about working toward your goal for the course.
7. My three goals: to help you achieve *your* academic goal in this class (whatever it is); to teach you about other religions/cultures (because our world is more-and-more multi-cultural); and to help you to think critically (not just about religions).
8. I am approachable and open-minded. (I am a little judgmental about people who are irresponsible and/or disrespectful in my classes. Still working on that...) Tell me if you experience anything else; honest feedback helps me improve. I work hard to try to appreciate where my students are coming from. I honour your differences: *identities* (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, class etc.); *trajectories* (from another country to Canada, from a small town to Calgary, from early challenges to your coming success etc.); *challenges* (stress from too many responsibilities, a learning disability, a family tragedy, shyness, mental health issues etc.), etc. If you are struggling in your studies for any reason, please feel free to come talk to me.
9. Feel free to ask about exceptions to course policies (deadlines, missed tests etc.) if you feel that your situation or circumstances are unusual. My answer will generally be that I do not make exceptions, because treating one class-member differently than the others is the definition of unfairness. But sometimes equity (taking individual circumstances into account) is more fair than equality (treating everyone exactly the same).
10. You don’t have to like me personally for me to help you or answer your questions. Our relationship is professional not personal.
11. There is no need to talk to me if you don’t feel like it and everything is going well. I grade you based on your work, not on whether you have made an impression.
12. You *must* talk to me if you are seeking an academic accommodation (see course outline).
13. *My communication preferences:* office hours, meetings by appointment, or quick questions by email or right before/after class (time allowing). I am happy to chat if we run into each other on campus, as long as I am not rushing off to a class or a meeting. You can call my office phone during office hours. I do not text, or use social media for school communication, or listen to phone messages (too much junk mail). I do not read minds.