

## LUC WRITING CENTER – “EMAIL ETIQUETTE”

Email is the primary medium of communication between students and professors outside of the classroom. An email composed in a professional context is a unique genre of writing, and you should be aware of its conventions to avoid offending your professors. Usually you will write a professional email in times of personal crisis or academic interest, i.e. when you can't make it to class, have family or personal issues that prevent the completion of your assignment, or are setting up an appointment during office hours to see your professor.

### *How to Compose a Professional Email:*

- 1) Address your instructor at the beginning of the email using his or her professional title. If your professor has a doctorate, address him or her as “Dr. Last Name.” If you aren't sure whether your professor has a doctorate, writing “Professor Last Name” is a safe alternative. Writing “Dear” before the professor's title sounds more formal, but this isn't strictly necessary.
- 2) Include a subject line.
- 3) Use complete sentences, and make sure to check your spelling and grammar. Do not use emoticons.
- 4) Be respectful, concise, and formal.
- 5) At the bottom of the message, sign your name (i.e. Sincerely Yours, Jonah Dupree).

### *When to Use Email:*

- 1) If you have a major issue to discuss with your professor – for instance, if you disagree about your grade, don't understand their comments on an essay, etc. – try to speak with them in person. Every professor and graduate instructor is required to hold office hours, and a face-to-face conversation is often more conducive to effective communication than a sequence of emails.
- 2) If you are sending your professor a time-sensitive email (for instance, if you have a major question about an upcoming writing assignment) don't wait until the last minute to send it. If you want your professor to look over a rough draft of an essay for you, don't send the draft at 8pm the night before the paper is due.
- 3) Some professors respond to emails in the evenings and on weekends, but many do not, and you should not expect your professor to be easy to reach outside of ordinary work hours.
- 4) Before emailing a question to a professor, check the course syllabus to see if the question is answered there.

### *Examples of Good and Bad Professional Emails:*

**See below for two positive and two negative examples of professional emails.** The most important thing to remember is that while an email to a professor doesn't have to be rigidly formal, it is a professional document that should be respectful and carefully written. Failing to follow conventions sends the message that you neither respect your professor nor take the time to draft a carefully worded email. Writing a detailed, informative, and deferential email not only helps your professor solve your issue, but causes them to respect you as a capable student and good writer.

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### Example A:

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To: agrant@luc.edu

Cc:

Subject: Class Absence

Dr. Grant,

I wanted to let you know that I'm not going to make it to class on Friday. A family emergency just came up, and I'm flying home Thursday morning and won't be back until Sunday night. Will it be alright with you if I submit my essay by email that morning? Also, is there a time during your office hours on Monday when I could stop by to discuss what I missed? I see that you uploaded the PowerPoint for that day to Sakai, so I'll review it on my own.

Sincerely,

Timothy Landless

### Example B:

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To: ijones@luc.edu

Cc:

Subject: Essay Ideas

Dear Dr. Jones,

I have been trying to come up with a topic for the final paper, and was hoping to run a couple ideas by you. One paper would compare the geographic distribution of Hellenistic and Hasmonean oil lamps during the first century BCE, and the other would consider the implications of the presence of Ptolemaic currency in northern Palestine during the same period. Can I stop by your office on Thursday around 3pm to discuss these ideas in more detail?

Thanks,

Sarai Azif

### Example C:

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To: jsmith@luc.edu

Cc:

Subject: (none)

Dr. Smith, Im not going to be in class today, what are we going to do?

### Example D:

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To: wwhite@luc.edu

Cc:

Subject: grade

Why did I only got a C+ on the final test and is there a way I can get a B instead. -Jesse

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