Ten Ways to Guarantee You'll Be the Least Popular Student in Your Online Class

Michael McDonald

km1136co@metrostate.edu

Have you taken any online classes? Most Metropolitan State University students will have the pleasure of taking at least some of their degree's coursework online. In my own experience, I have found etiquette to be a prerequisite that some students need serious remedial work in. Here are a few situations that left me questioning my classmates' grip on their virtual reality.

Each week, your class discussion ends with the exact same classmate explaining his unparalleled understanding of that week's topic thanks to his "totally intense" life experiences. His first couple of posts received a range of responses from seemingly sincere admiration to gushing jealousy. Nine weeks into the semester, his post marks the unofficial end of all further discussion as the class collectively closes their browsers.

You're responsible for assembling and submitting your group's final project. With two weeks to go, you email your group a working schedule and casually mention your hope of being finished soon. Three hours before deadline you receive an email from the last member of your group to turn in her work. Copied to your professor, she says she's been keeping it real in the face of your constant nagging.

The two other members of your team project are fighting via group email. They've each used the term “deadweight” to describe the other and one has already threatened to notify your professor he can't possibly work with someone so disrespectful. The disagreement seems to stem from whom was slower to respond to the ice breaker message you sent an hour ago.

The tropes and travails of online education can be avoided. Here are 10 ways to guarantee you'll be the least popular student in your online class.

1.) Dominate your class discussions. Make sure your online classmates know you know what you know (and that you've known it longer than them). Every weekly discussion post is a chance to show that you've got it all figured out (and they don’t).

2.) Keep it real. Online classes tend to get boring if everyone is the most polite version of themselves all the time. Let your personal politics be known. Don't shy away from disagreements or profanity. If your classmates are offended, that's their problem—you're the one who’s keeping it real.

3.) Remember to use sarcasm. In an online setting, you really need to help people understand how funny and smart you are because nobody can see you smirking or hear you snickering online. (Puns and onomatopoeia are encouraged.)

4.) ALL CAPS YOUR FEELINGS. Make sure your online classmates understand the depth of your emotions. You might think you're effectively communicating how stressed out you are about next week's project deadline and how helpful it would be if your group members finished their work faster, but you'd be amazed by the results you'd get just by capitalizing the same sentiments—how badly you REALLY, REALLY, REALLY NEED ALL FINAL DRAFTS RIGHT NOW!!!!!!!

5.) Buy class materials when you think it's necessary. Sure, the reading assignments have been coming in steadily for three weeks—but the exam isn't for two months and the paper is a group project. What are online classmates for? Let your classmates know you "totally skimmed" the reading, but you want their opinions on the big ideas. Buying textbooks is lame and expensive.

6.) Share your personal information. Help give your online classmates a clearer picture of you. Sharing your family's recent health history, griping about your commute to work, or detailing just what exactly made your lunch so horrible can give a stranger a window into your daily life and lead to better understanding the intricacies that add up to make "you" so special.

7.) Let the dummies ask the questions. Is something in your course's syllabus misspelled or unclear? Let your classmates cry for help—clarification is for the weak. If you want to seem less intelligent and independent, go right ahead, but know you're annoying everybody else who "gets it."

8.) Quit the cheerleading before you start. Encouragement is for sports and baby steps. Never say "attaboy" or "great job" to an online classmate—you didn't just hit a home run and we're not in the locker room after the game. Motivational speeches are embarrassing for everyone.

9.) Respond to emails when you feel like it. Your online classmates don't know how important you are or how stressful your life is. "Please confirm you received my email" is not a question, so don't worry about answering it. Your thoughts can be shared when you're ready to share them.

10.) Own your outdated tools. Why should you have to update your browser just because your course's D2L Brightspace discussion posts can only be fully accessed in the latest version of Firefox? Internet Explorer works best with your Hotmail account, and the University is just going to update the interface again, anyway.