

Slack directions

Spring 2021

Why Slack?

I want us to use Slack as our main method of communication in this course. The reason I like Slack is because it allows us to have more "direct" conversations and it is a bit less formal than email. I admit that I miss the in-class experience where I am used to 300-person lectures. Pre-recording lectures and delivering the course content online is not ideal. We lose a lot of the in-person discussion where the whole class is free to participate. Slack allows us to do a few things that are beneficial:

- Slack moves many of the conversations out of my inbox and into a space that we can refer back to later.
- It offers a space to answer questions once *for everyone*.
- It makes a space for students to answer other students' questions as well.

So what should you expect from me when it comes to Slack?

- I will use Slack to make important course announcements. These will appear in a separate "channel" for announcements (more on this later).
- I will use Slack to answer any questions that do not require a phone call or video chat. I will answer questions as they come in.
 - Students can and should answer student questions if they know the answer. It will help to cut down on repeated questions and allow you to get answers to questions that you did not even know you had.

Slack SHOULD NOT be used for the following:

- Since this is essentially a group chat, you should NEVER share any private information within the class Slack channels. This means you should not give out personal identification information like social security numbers or UIN numbers, etc.
- If you want to speak to me PRIVATELY, you should never use the class Slack channel to do that. I will have regular office hours where we can discuss matters privately if you so choose. You can also send me a private direct message in Slack.

Slack Etiquette

Obviously, communication on Slack should be courteous and respectful. Communicate with your fellow classmates and your professor the same way you would in person. This is a TAMU Slack channel. All University rules still apply.

Setting up Slack

Step 1: Get a Slack account with TAMU:

- If you already have a Slack account with TAMU, then you don't need to create an account. Skip ahead to Step 2.
- If you have never used Slack with TAMU, then you need to sign up here: [Slack sign up](#).
 - You can only access our Slack channel if you use your TAMU email address when you sign up and you HAVE TO BE in the TAMU workspace. So if you already have a Slack account, but you signed up using a non-TAMU email or you are not in the TAMU workspace, then you have to make a TAMU account at the URL above.

- Once you create your account, you should get a confirmation email sent to your TAMU email. If you do not get a confirmation email from Slack it might be because of one of these issues:
 - Do you have your TAMU emails forwarded to another email address? If so, you need to go to <https://gateway.tamu.edu> and change your TAMU email address to deliver to your TAMU Gmail account, rather than your non-TAMU email.
 - If that is not the issue, then check your Spam inbox. Some people have had issues when they check their email on their phone vs a computer. It seems to fix the issue if they check their email on their computer and then check the spam folder there.
 - If neither of the above fix the issue, then you should email me.

Step 2: Add Slack to your phone, tablet, and/or computer:

- You can add Slack as an app on your phone, tablet or computer. You can add it to all three if you prefer.
- Sign in to your Slack account that you created with your TAMU email.

Step 3: Join our class Slack channels: We have four Slack channels for this course:

- #pols206-sp21-officehours-lewis
 - This channel is reserved for questions/discussions about *course material*. For example, questions about particular concepts I discussed in lecture and you want more clarification. If you do not mind asking your questions in the public forum, it would be beneficial to the whole class. It is somewhat like raising your hand during a lecture to ask a question: the entire class gets the benefit of hearing the answer to the question. It also allows other students to chime in and answer questions if they know the answer. If you prefer to ask me a question privately, you can send me a private message in Slack (more on this later).
- #pols206-sp21-announcements-lewis
 - The announcements channel is reserved for course announcements. I will often send reminders about assignments that are due and will also use this channel to make announcements if any changes arise. This is also a place where I will notify the class whenever there are "IT" issues (like if a campus server goes down that will interrupt Canvas).
- #pols206-sp21-politics-lewis
 - The politics channel is reserved for questions about current political issues. If you have a question about something you read in the news or a Tweet, Facebook post, etc. you can link the info here and ask questions. I will also use this channel to post links to stories that are relevant to course material we covered recently.
 - **LET ME BE CLEAR:** I will not tolerate anyone using this channel to insult, berate, intimidate, harass, or disrespect anyone else. Furthermore, this channel is meant to inform and elaborate, it will not be used to indoctrinate or spread false stories or conspiracy theories.
- #pols206-sp21-openforum-lewis
 - The open forum channel is optional. It is dedicated to "de-stress" yourselves. Post memes, pictures of your pets, links to activities people can do remotely and safely. It is an open forum for students in the class to discuss whatever they want and it does not need to be class related at all.