HIDDEN RULES FOR OFFICE HOURS

WILLIAM & MARY NEURODIVERSITY INITIATIVE
WHAT ARE OFFICE HOURS?

• An opportunity to discuss with your instructor any special needs or challenges you face. If possible, talk to your instructor before the semester starts or at the beginning of the semester.

• They are for clarifying information and answering questions from class.

• An opportunity to discuss or get feedback about assignments and tests.

• A way to get to know your professor.
WHAT ARE OFFICE HOURS?

• To share any information about extenuating personal circumstances that may be effecting your learning and class performance.

• They are an opportunity to discuss academic and/or career goals.

• They are a time to discuss potential research or internship opportunities.

• Faculty WANT you to use office hours for these purposes!
THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF OFFICE HOURS

- Each instructor’s office hours are listed on his or her syllabus and also may be listed on the departmental website.

- Some instructor’s office hours are by appointment only.

- Office hours are usually only a few hours a week so plan accordingly.

- If you arrive for office hours without an appointment, anticipate that you may have to wait or come back another day.
EMAIL ETIQUETTE

• If a professor requires an appointment, arrange the day and time through email.

• Instructor email addresses are on the department website or the syllabus.

• Address the email to Professor X or Dr. X.

• Remember that this is a professional communication, so do not address your female professors by Mrs. X or your male professors by Mr. X.
EMAIL ETIQUETTE

• In the first sentence, identify yourself with your name and the class that you are enrolled in.

• Write your request in full sentences with correct grammar and spelling.

• Respond promptly (within one day) to any emails from your instructor.

• Keep your emails to the point – perhaps 3-4 sentences.
PREPARATION FOR OFFICE HOURS

• Prepare yourself by going over the issues you wish to discuss in your mind.

• If necessary or helpful, make notes and gather supporting materials (e.g., articles, previous test).

• Look up the office location and familiarize yourself with how to get there.

• Allow enough time to get to the office, if you have made a specific appointment.
THE MEETING

• Knock on the door before entering unless the office is behind a receptionist. If this is the case, announce yourself to that person.
• Once in the office, introduce yourself with your name and the class you are taking from that instructor
• If your instructor stands up or is standing, step forward and offer to shake hands.
• Ask where you should sit.
• The instructor will typically leave the door open. Usually this will not interfere with confidentiality.
The meeting continued

- Your instructor will ask about the purpose of the meeting.
- This is the time for you to present the issues that you came to discuss in a clear, concise manner.

- Listen to your instructor’s response and take notes if appropriate.

- Ask questions for clarification.

- Remember that your instructor’s intention is to help you improve your work.
RECEIVING FEEDBACK

• If you meet with your instructor to get feedback about a grade, try to remain non-defensive and respectful.

• If you are contesting a grade, understand that you and your instructor may not come to an agreement to your satisfaction.

• Rather than argue, explore how you might improve results for the next paper or test.

• Try to walk away with something concrete to use for the next assignment or test.
CONCLUDING THE MEETING

• Remember to thank your instructor for his or her time.

• Later, reflect on the meeting and ask yourself if you’ve gotten the information and/or feedback that you needed.

• Remember that office hours are an important resource!