Things That Annoy Your Instructors
Taken from Appendix B in *Writing for Sociology* (2nd Edition)

Almost all of your professors, Graduate Student Instructors, and Readers will be annoyed by sloppy papers, careless mistakes, and petty inconsiderate acts. Before you turn in a paper with any of the problems listed below, consider this: Do you really want to irritate the person who is about to give you a grade?

Sloppy Papers

None of these are capital offenses, but they don't signal to your grader that you've paid close attention to detail either!

- A paper that is not proofread, and so is filled with trivial spelling or grammatical errors.
- Basic identifying information, like the student's name or date, is missing.
- Pages are not stapled together, so that your instructor either has to do it for you or take extra care not to lose stray, unattached pages.
- Pages are printed on scrap paper.
- The instructor's name is misspelled. Another version of this is when the name of an author from the readings is misspelled. Check the syllabus to make sure that you have spelled all names correctly.

Cut corners and flimsy arguments

These are more serious offenses, and you risk losing credit in addition to annoying your instructor.

- A paper mostly filled with quotations or summaries of the points from lecture, so that the author appears to be simply regurgitating the material from class.
- Quotations unaccompanied by footnotes or references.
- Wikipedia-based research. Some instructors love Wikipedia, but those who don't like it really don't like it. You should always check with a professor before you cite it.
- Obvious mis-attributions and inaccurate statements about an assigned text, which suggests that the author has either not cracked the books at all, or has skimmed them so quickly as to miss main points and central examples.
- Big Sweeping Statements about the state of the world which are either banal or at-out wrong ("Since the beginning of time man has longed for answers to the world's mysteries" or "The civil rights movement vanquished racism in America").
- Feelings where analyses should be. Use your emotions to inform your arguments, not in place of them.
- Crazy Formats in Short or Long Papers only serve to announce that you have chosen to disregard the requested page length of the assignment. Messing around with margins and fonts does not fool anyone. Instead of messing with the formatting, spend time paring down your work.

E-mail Etiquette

- Just because you sent your paper on email 15 minutes after it was due doesn't mean it is not late.
- Emailed documents should have your last name and the date in the title (for example: JaneDoe_13AUG2007.doc). Also include the name of the course in the subject line of your email. Professors get a great many papers emailed to them. These steps will make their lives easier.

Lazy Questions

There are no stupid questions, but there certainly are lazy ones. It annoys instructors when students ask a question about something that they carefully spelled out for you already. If you have a question about the course or assignment, check the syllabus or prompt before asking for help.