

Examples of Troublesome Behavior in the Classroom

Troublesome behavior in your classroom may be classified as anything that disturbs you or your students during the class period. Here are a few examples of troublesome behavior you may have experienced in your classroom:

- ◆ cellular phones, beepers
- ◆ challenges to your authority, demanding special treatment (“I paid for this...” mentality)
- ◆ eating or drinking in the classroom
- ◆ excessive tardiness/leaving the lecture early
- ◆ making offensive remarks
- ◆ adverse reaction to missing deadlines
- ◆ prolonged chattering
- ◆ sleeping
- ◆ talking out of turn
- ◆ dominating discussions
- ◆ shuffling backpacks and notebooks
- ◆ use of electronics for entertainment during class

Information for Online Classes

For specific information regarding etiquette in an online classroom, please visit the following website for more information, <http://www.ctdlc.org/Faculty/TeachingTips/index.html>

Memo to Faculty

Demonstrating civility and respect for fellow members of the UTSA community and beyond is one of our university's core values. Faculty are expected to assist in maintaining an environment that is conducive to learning. We encourage faculty to include a statement in their course syllabi related to classroom behavioral expectations such as:

As members of the University community, students share in the obligation to maintain a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Accordingly, students are prohibited from engaging in any behavior that obstructs, disrupts, or interferes with any class. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom may result, at a minimum, in a request to leave class. Such behavior also violates the Student Code of Conduct and may result in disciplinary action. The Code may be accessed at:

<http://www.utsa.edu/infoguide/appendices/b.html>

Departments should establish guidelines for dealing with troublesome/disruptive behavior.

Recommended procedures are:

1st incident – Instructor addresses the behavior immediately and follows up after class or with a scheduled meeting as soon as possible. Document this interaction. If the faculty member believes the incident to be sufficiently serious, he or she should contact the Director of Student Judicial Affairs, as soon as possible, for consultation.

2nd incident – Instructor should refer the student immediately to the chair/dean. The chair/dean may inform the student that repeated deviations from expected classroom behavior shall result in an immediate referral to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may be pursued in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct* located in the *UTSA Information Bulletin*.

*Dr. John Frederick, Provost and
Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Dr. Gage Paine, Vice President for Student Affairs

UTSA

Faculty Guide

Civility in the Classroom

Tips for Dealing with Troublesome Behavior And Addressing Issues Before They Escalate

Learning Communities today are increasingly diverse and global. It is wise to establish criteria that encourages openness to wide ranging viewpoints.

- ◆ All should respond to contrasting viewpoints in a respectful manner.
- ◆ Guide classroom dialogue so that all opinions are valued and no viewpoint dominates.



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Student Judicial Affairs: 210-458-4720
Office of the Provost: 210-458-4110
Office of Student Affairs: 210-458-4136

Website: www.utsa.edu/osja

Start with an Effective Syllabus

Begin the first day of the semester with an effective syllabus that lets the student know you are serious about university policies. A syllabus serves as a contract between you and your students. Your policies should be clearly defined in your syllabus in order to decrease confusion.

Syllabi Tips:

- ◆ List your name, title, office hours, primary and/or secondary methods of contact.
- ◆ List prerequisites required for class.
- ◆ Define excused and unexcused absences.
- ◆ Clearly outline the consequences regarding attendance, tardiness, and missed deadlines.
- ◆ Give a detailed and clear course outline with deadlines and exam dates.
- ◆ Inform students of the need for blue books or parscore/scantrons for projects and exams.
- ◆ Let students know about the writing style (APA, MLA, Scientific, or other) required for papers.
- ◆ List possible extra credit opportunities or whether you will consider extra credit throughout the semester.
- ◆ Outline specific procedures for making up exams.
- ◆ Determine a reasonable period of time students should wait in the event you are late to class.

Class Attendance

Be a role model for your class by establishing policies and expectations in the beginning.

Attendance Tips:

- ◆ If you're going to be absent, inform your students ahead of time.
- ◆ Have a ritual at the beginning of class that students would hate to miss.
- ◆ Speak privately to chronically late students.
- ◆ Make your class lecture content and learning activities crucial information that students find useful for exams and professional life.

Have logical consequences for missing class and being late. You do not own the problem or need to re-teach the class. Do not rescue students; let them be responsible for retrieving information they have missed.

Challenges to Authority

At times students are vocal about their challenges to authority. Suggested responses to challenges:

- ◆ Don't become defensive; explain instructional objectives and how your assignments pertain.
- ◆ If students press you in class, ask to discuss the matter after class.
- ◆ Be honest if something is really not working.
- ◆ Say "no" assertively, not aggressively or submissively.

Minor Incidents

Consider a general warning to the class for a minor incident, rather than focusing attention on one student. Other tips include making direct eye contact, stopping the lecture and asking the person to stop talking, physically moving to the problem area, varying presentation or lecture style, and speaking to the student privately after class.

Major Disturbances

Remain calm, restore classroom order, and re-view your behavioral expectations again. If necessary, dismiss your class for safety reasons. Request a meeting with the student (after class) to discuss how disruptive behavior impacts the class. Clearly articulate that the behavior will not be tolerated.

Explain that further disruptions could result in a referral to Student Judicial Affairs where disciplinary sanctions may result. In addition, consider documenting the incident and keeping it with your student records. Inform your department chair of disruptive activity and student concerns.

The UTSA Police Department is available to assist with threats of violence, physical or verbal abuse, and uncooperative students (refusing to leave class). Err on the side of caution when considering police involvement for all safety related issues. Contact the UTSA Police Department at 210-458-4242 for all non-emergency situations.

(Civility in the Classroom is taken in part from "Strategies for Dealing with Troublesome Behavior in the Classroom" by Dr. Rosalind Reed and has been adapted with the permission of Dr. Michael D. Shonrock, Vice President of Student Affairs, Texas Tech University.)

Information is subject to change without notice. Please consult the Student Code of Conduct at www.utsa.edu/osja or Student Judicial Affairs at 210-458-4720 for more information. (Updated 04/08)