

Creating Classroom Norms

“Research shows that students are more civil when given the opportunity to develop their own rules and sanctions” (Davis, 2009, p. 48).

According to Nilson (2010), “Some instructors have reduced incivilities by having their students collectively draw up a classroom-conduct contract, or set of rules for behavior to which they will agree” (p. 75). To create norms for your class, follow this process:

- On the first day of class, facilitate a discussion designed to develop classroom norms by asking students to share behaviors that genuinely bother the members of the class. While you should encourage students to create the list, you may also contribute one or two behaviors to it (Nilson, 2010, p. 75).
- Take notes during the discussion and use them to create a set of classroom norms to share with your students during the next class session. Ask students if they want to make any final modifications or if the list is complete with all norms they think should be followed in the class. If you make any tweaks, share the final list with students during the next class period.
- Once the list is considered to be final, post it to your course site. If any issues arise during the semester, use the norms list to remind students of the rules for behavior they agreed to at the start of the semester.

Evaluative vs. Descriptive Language

Knowing the difference between evaluative and descriptive language can help you best approach discussions with students about uncivil classroom behavior. Evaluative, or judgmental, language causes defensiveness by passing judgment on the person and making the person the focus of the problem. In contrast, descriptive language focuses on the problem as separate from the person. Descriptive language focuses on the speaker's perceptions and is often called the "I" language.

According to Cangelosi (2013), "Research studies indicate that students feel less threatened, less defensive, and more willing to engage in learning activities when working with teachers who consistently use descriptive language than they feel when working with teachers who use a judgmental language style (Van Horn, 1982). *Descriptive language* verbally portrays a situation, a behavior, an achievement, or a feeling. *Judgmental language* verbally summarizes an evaluation of a behavior, achievement, or person with a characterization or label. Judgmental language that focuses on personalities is particularly detrimental to a climate of cooperation (Ginott, 1972)" (p. 95).

FICA Conference Planning

An effective way to hold a conference is through the use of a behavior impact feedback tool, like FICA. This tool uses the facts, impact, context, and action acronym to organize your conversation with the student. Complete the following chart before your meeting and use it to guide your discussion during the meeting.

<p>Facts: What behavior did you witness the student exhibiting?</p>	
<p>Impact: As a result of this behavior, what happened?</p>	
<p>Context: How often has this or a similar incident happened in the past?</p>	
<p>Actions: What actions are you going to take to resolve the issue? What actions do you expect the student to take?</p>	

Addressing High-Level Interruptions

It is important to deal with incivilities promptly and consistently. If the problem is ongoing or particularly egregious, or if you are concerned about the student's response, schedule a follow-up conference with the student during office hours to address the behavior. Using the following structure for a conference can help make it more effective.

1. Provide time for the student to share his point of view on his behavior. It could be that your interpretation of his behavior may be very different from his intentions.
 - "I would like to hear your point of view on the incident that happened in class recently. Can you tell me more about it?"
2. Acknowledge any negative emotions that the student may have and show the student you have empathy for his situation.
 - "It seems to me that you are frustrated with the weekly writing assignment on the readings."
 - "I'm sure it must be difficult to cover content you feel you are not very familiar with."
3. Provide clear instructions or options about what the student should do to avoid this type of behavior in the future.
 - "If you are unfamiliar with the content, try to stay focused and actively take notes. Please remember you can ask me questions during class, during my office hours, or by sending me an email. I want to be helpful to you."
4. Throughout the conference, keep the focus on the behavior, the impact of the behavior, and the behavior change you are expecting to see. An effective way to do this is through the use of a behavior impact feedback tool, like FICA. This tool uses the facts, impact, context, and action acronym to organize your conversation with the student.
 - **Facts:** Exactly what behavior did you witness the student exhibiting? Be nonjudgmental in your choice of language by simply describing the most recent incident.
 - "During the group work portion of yesterday's class, you stayed in the back of the room and did not participate with the group you were assigned to."
 - **Impact:** Explain the impact of the behavior.
 - "As a result, the other members in your group had to do extra work. Also, you did not have the opportunity to apply the concepts from the last lecture."
 - **Context:** How often has this or a similar incident happened in the past?
 - "This is the first time something like this has happened, and I'm wondering if there was something about the task that you were not comfortable with."
 - "This is the third time over the last five classes that you have chosen not to participate in group work. How can I help you to participate?"

- **Action:** Explain the actions you are going to take and the actions you expect the student to take to resolve the issue. Refer to the expectations in your syllabus and the classroom code of conduct, or classroom norms, to which students agreed at the start of the semester.
 - “As it states in the syllabus, 20% of your grade is based on group work, so I am going to have to deduct points from your participation grade. How can I help you to avoid this in the future?”
 - “We will continue with group work for the remainder of the semester, and I would like you to do one of two things. Either participate in the remaining group activities or help me to understand, by putting it in writing, how you plan to address the group work requirement for our class.”

Planning for Low-Level Interruptions

Low-level interruptions include issues such as talking during lectures, chewing gum, eating or drinking noisily, and being late. Instructors often have different levels of “acceptance” when it comes to these types of misbehaviors, so it is important to think through the expectations you want to have in your classroom to limit these interruptions. Because this level of interruption is best handled by clear expectations, routines, and procedures, use the space below to think through the different types of interruption, their importance to you, and possible expectations or procedures you can implement to reduce their impact on your instruction.

Low-level interruption	How bothersome is this action to me?	Suggested expectations or procedures	Actions I plan to take
Arriving late	Not at all A little bothersome Very frustrating	Have a few designated seats close to the door for late students so they do not disrupt the class.	
Leaving early	Not at all A little bothersome Very frustrating	Request that students sit close to the exit so they can leave without disrupting others.	
Using technology for a nonacademic purpose	Not at all A little bothersome Very frustrating	Restrict the use of technology to class-related tasks.	
Eating food during class	Not at all A little bothersome Very frustrating	Restrict food and drink consumption in the classroom.	
Talking during lectures	Not at all A little bothersome Very frustrating	Establish common expectations for behavior during lecture. Integrate short lecture breaks throughout to allow for small-group discussions about the topic.	

Addressing Midlevel Interruptions

Midlevel interruptions include behaviors such as sleeping during class, excessive absences, being unprepared, packing up books and materials before class is over, and holding side conversations with other students.

You can limit these behaviors by taking proactive approaches:

- Anticipate that problems such as these often happen in the back of the room. Combat this tendency by asking students to sit in the front of the room and leave any empty desks in the back. Davis (2009) recommends that instructors “mention that research shows that students who sit in the front of the classroom earn higher grades” and ask students to change their seats every so often (p. 49).
- Consider moving yourself to the back row periodically and lecturing from there (S. D. Brookfield, personal interview, 2015).

When midlevel interruptions do take place, appropriately address them before they build to major disruptions. A useful technique that can be used is “Distract the Distractor.” Act as if the student is engaged in the lesson by asking her a direct question that you are quite confident she can answer. Because your goal is not to embarrass the student, if you are not sure she will be able to answer a question, simply ask the student to read the next question or a passage from the reading. This will draw the student into the instruction and reduce attention on the negative behaviors. Always avoid using sarcasm when addressing misbehaviors.

Responding to Varied Levels of Disruptive or Challenging Behaviors in an Online Environment

Incivility can take various forms in an online course environment, ranging from challenging to disturbing (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016). While preemptive measures, such as creating community norms and including activities that build community will likely reduce incivility, instructors still need to be prepared to handle disruptive and/or challenging behaviors such as:

- sarcastic posts,
- posting off-topic comments,
- complaining about the course or assignment on discussion forums,
- aggressive emails to the instructor,
- ranting about a topic,
- offensive or belittling remarks towards another student,
- attacking another student's post,
- offensive language or terminology in posts,
- failing to participate in discussions and/or
- missing deadlines (Galbraith & Jones, 2010).

If left unaddressed, these behaviors can detract from a positive and productive learning environment. At the same time, instructor responses are most effective when they are well aligned and proportionate to the problematic behavior. It is also important to try to keep the offending student(s) engaged in the learning process. Because most of these behaviors occur in discussion forums, your response often needs to address the full group and may or may not require a separate communication to the individual.

Below are some basic guidelines for addressing varied situations.

Low-level disruptions

Low-level disruptions include behaviors such as posting off-topic comments, writing in all caps, using sarcasm, etc. Usually this behavior is unintentional, but you should reassure students that you are paying attention and are committed to ensuring a productive learning environment. You also want to ensure the offending student remains engaged.

- **Response to student:** Follow up with a private email to the offending student to make sure that they got the message, but also to try to keep them from checking out. Consider the following strategies:
 - Reframe the negative behavior by thanking them for the opportunity to remind the other students of the importance of the guidelines.
 - Encourage them to remain engaged in the discussion by highlighting the things they are doing well in the course.

- Ask if they would like to schedule an online or phone meeting to discuss further.
- **Response to full group:** Remind the entire group of the netiquette guidelines and/or group norms discussed at the beginning of the course. Be sure to refer to the specific norm(s) that applies to the situation.

For example, in a response to a sarcastic post, you might write:

Response to full group: *Hi all, I just wanted to remind everyone about our community norms and guidelines. In order to make sure our ideas are received and considered in the way we intend, it's important that we remember our community norm to avoid sarcasm in online discussions. Even if the intention may be humorous, text-based communication leaves too much room for misinterpretation. That's all from me for now. This is a great conversation so far; I look forward to reading the rest of your posts!*

Response to student: *Hi Aden, I just wanted to reach out to you about my comments to your post on the discussion board. While you likely meant no harm, as we discussed when we developed our community norms, we all have to take extra care to create a productive learning environment if we want to be successful in this course. You have contributed some fantastic ideas to our discussions, and I don't want to see that diminish. I just ask that you be a little more mindful about our communication guidelines. Please let me know if you'd like to talk about this a bit more. I'm happy to schedule a phone call or Skype meeting with you. Thanks again for your contributions to our learning community!*

Midlevel disruptions

Midlevel disruptions include behaviors such as using out-of-date terminology that is offensive to an identity group or complaining and venting about an assignment.

Response to student: You should first reach out to the offending student to:

- Acknowledge their intention or explain that although they might not mean any offense, their comments could have had a negative impact.
- Remind them of their commitment to the community norms and guidelines. Be sure to refer to the specific community norm or guideline that was violated.
- Offer ideas for improvement.
- Let them know that you are going to post a response to the full group on the discussion board to ensure that the other students do not assume that the behavior is appropriate.

Response to full group:

- When possible, describe the inappropriate behavior without mentioning the students' name.
- If applicable, provide additional information that may clarify any misconceptions about what the student wrote
- Refer to the specific community norm or guideline.

Examples:

Incident: A student posts a one-sentence reply to discussion questions about an article complaining that they did not understand it.

Response to student: *Hi Ethan. It sounds like the article was challenging for you...and that's a good thing because being challenged is how you learn! However, what stops you from learning is getting frustrated and giving up. You are a valuable member of this learning community, and as such it is important that you remember the commitments you made at the beginning of class, including to reach out and ask for help from me or your peers. This is so important because if you struggled with the reading, chances are other students did as well. If you let me know that you are having trouble, I can provide additional support to you and your peers before the assignment is due. Thank you for the opportunity to remind everyone about this important agreement. To help you better understand the article, I suggest that you thoroughly read your peers' responses. If you still have questions, please come to my virtual office hours this week. You can reformulate your reply to answer the discussion prompts and earn the points for this discussion forum.*

Response to full group: *Hi Class! I know that this is a challenging article, but it's an important one for helping us to understand the underlying mechanisms of chronic fatigue syndrome. If you find that you are unable to fully understand the article in order to respond to the discussion prompts, please remember our group agreement to reach out for assistance either from me or your peers. We are all here to support each other's learning. I have virtual office hours each week for exactly this purpose. I look forward to our continued discussion on the article. Be assured that I will clarify and correct any incorrect or inaccurate replies as necessary.*

Incident: A student posts a comment about “the Indians” who were protesting the Dakota Access pipeline.

Response to student: *Hi Sally! Thank you for your discussion post about the protests over the Dakota Access pipeline. In addition to raising an important topic, you have unintentionally provided an additional learning opportunity for the class by using the word “Indian.” Although this label is still used in many places, the*

more widely preferred term is “Native American.” This raises an important topic about preferred labels and changing terminology that is important for everyone to consider, so I am going to address it on our discussion board. I think everyone will benefit from this discussion, so thank you again. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Response to full group: *Hi all! I wanted to take this opportunity to discuss an important issue under the broad topic of “inclusive language.” At the heart of it, inclusive language is about using terminology (or labels) that are preferred by the people about whom you are talking. This is one way to show respect for people who are different from you in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, etc. But this isn’t always easy because preferred terminology often evolves and changes. For example, while the term “Indian” was widely used for centuries, today it is more appropriate to use the term “Native American.” That said, not every person of Native American descent is going to prefer that term either, so there is no hard and fast rule. I’ve attached a few resources in our additional resources section for those who want to explore more. And I’ll continue to post information as opportunities arise!*

High-level disruptions.

High-level disruptions include direct attacks on what another student wrote, insults or offensive remarks towards another student in the class, a person outside the course, or a group of people, and offensive or politically provocative language. Instructors should immediately reach out to the offending student and give them the opportunity to discuss your concerns. It may be that the student is passionate about the issue, but does not have the skills for effectively communicating their ideas. It is also important to remember how little we may know about some students, their troubles, or in some cases their mental health. The best case scenario is that a student might just need some additional support. The worst case scenario is they could be a danger to themselves or others.

These behaviors also require a response to the full group and, if the disruption involved an insult or attack on another student, the instructor should follow up with that student as well.

Response to full group:

- Depending on the degree of severity, you may want to remove the post immediately. In these cases, you should ensure that students who may have seen the offending post know that you are handling the situation. You may send an email or post a comment referring to the course guidelines and any other campus policies that might apply.
- When possible, use the disruption as a teachable moment for the entire class by acknowledging the issue out in the open.

- Name the specific problematic behavior and refer to the relevant community norms and their importance for the learning process.
- Guide the discussion back to the course content and discussion prompts.

Response to student:

- Use the FICA (Facts, Impact, Context, Actions) feedback tool to prepare for a conversation or write an email.
- Express your concern for the student as well as for the impact of their behavior on the class.
- Ask a question to open the conversation, such as “What is your understanding of the problem I’ve asked you here to discuss?”
- Ask how the student would like to resolve the issue.
- Request a phone or video meeting to discuss next steps.
- Share the information with the student’s advisor, as well as your Dean or Department Chair. It may be that the student is having similar issues in other courses, which can be a sign of a bigger problem.

Response to full group:

Dear Class,

I want to be clear why I removed Robert’s post. The issue was not that he disagreed with the policy of creating “Sanctuary Cities” to stem the mass deportation of undocumented immigrants. In fact, it is really important that we examine the issue from all sides so that when we develop policy recommendations, our ideas address the complexity of the issue. My concern with Robert’s post was that it used a term that is dehumanizing and hurtful in reference to a specific group of people.

So, I thought this would be a good time to remind everyone to abide by the community norms we all created, and agreed to, at the beginning of the course, including our agreement to avoid language that belittles, demeans, or disrespects any person or groups of people. We all agreed that respectful language was essential for having productive discussions about contentious issues.

I would like for us to continue this important discussion and dig deeper into the readings as we grapple with different social, economic, and political aspects of this issue.

Thank you!

Example of an email and/or script for a phone call:

Hi Robert,

We need to talk about what happened this week on the course discussion board. As you know, the use of racial slurs is completely prohibited in our learning community. This language is hurtful to your peers and destructive to our learning process. Just like you, everyone has the right to a respectful learning environment.

Although you have made some important contributions to our discussions, I've also spoken to you a few times about how your tone and use of sarcasm can sometimes be off-putting. Your use of racial slurs is an escalation of inappropriate behavior and crosses a line.

That said, I would like to work with you to remain in the course, which would include some work to repair the impact of your behavior on our learning community, such as an apology to the group and rewriting your post in a respectful and thoughtful way. Please let me know if you are willing to discuss this further.

In either case, I will be notifying your academic advisor so she can follow up with you and see if there are other support resources that might be helpful to you.

Reflect on Instructor Behaviors That Impact Online Civility

Just like in a classroom setting, instructor behaviors can have a big impact on the online course environment (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016; Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Palloff & Pratt, 2007; Stavredes, 2011). The online environment leaves a lot of room for miscommunication and unintended communication (e.g. you don't reply to an email because you are busy, the student interprets the lack of response as not interested or caring). Therefore, it is important to be conscientious about the various ways you communicate and model civility.

Questions for self-reflection:

- How do you encourage students to reach out to you with questions or concerns?
- How do you communicate and what tone do you use to ensure students know you are interested in their learning and in the course topics?
- How do you ensure students don't misinterpret the timing of your responses?
- How and how often do you reply to questions posted in online discussion forums?
- How do you respond to negative and/or disruptive behaviors?

Here are some tips for instructor behaviors that positively impact online civility.

- **Be approachable.** Frequently remind and encourage students to take advantage of your virtual office hours. The more they hear you say it, the more likely they will be to take advantage of your availability. The more opportunity you have to connect with your students one-on-one, the better you will be able to understand and address difficult behaviors they may exhibit (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016).
- **Check for tone.** Always re-read messages and discussion board posts to try to ensure that you are striking the right tone. Remember that humor can be difficult to communicate in a text-based format and can easily be misinterpreted. On the flip side, a serious tone can come off as more serious than intended. Always strive for an encouraging tone, even if dealing with difficult situations.
- **Respond quickly to questions and emails.** Let students know that you will respond within 24 to 48 hours to questions posted on discussion boards and emails. Then, make sure to live up to this commitment. Failure to address student concerns in a timely fashion can send an unintended message that you are not interested in or supportive of them.
- **Address disruptive behaviors effectively and promptly.** Below are some basic guidelines.

Low-level disruptions. If the behavior is mild, such as posting off-topic comments, writing in all caps, or using sarcasm, use the opportunity to remind the entire group of the netiquette guidelines or group norms discussed at the beginning of the course. This assures the students that the instructor is paying attention and caring for the group. You may also follow up with a private email to the offending student to make sure that they got the message, but try to ensure that you don't cause them to 'check out.' One strategy is to reframe the negative behavior by thanking them for the opportunity to remind the other students of the importance of the guidelines or offering encouragement by highlighting the things they are doing well in the course. Ask if they would like to schedule an online or phone meeting to discuss further. Sometimes the personal touch goes a long way.

Midlevel disruptions. If the behavior involves something unintentionally offensive, such as using out-of-date terminology that is offensive to some identity groups, you should first reach out to that student. Explain that although they did not mean any offense, their comments might have had a negative impact. Let them know that you are going to post a response on the discussion board because other students might need the information. Then post to the discussion board without mentioning the student, but rather focus on what was said and correcting the information.

High-level disruptions. If the behavior involves direct attacks or intentionally offensive language, you should remove the post immediately. To make sure that students who saw the offending post know that you are handling the situation, you can post a comment referring to the course guidelines and any other campus policies that might apply. Then reach out to the individual student and give them the opportunity to discuss the issue that is causing the behavior. It's important to remember how little we may know about some students, their troubles, or mental health. In the best case, these students might just need some additional support. In the worst case, they could be a danger to themselves or others. As a starting point, you can prepare for this conversation using the FICA (facts, impact, context, and action) feedback tool. If the student persists in the disruptive behavior and/or reacts negatively to your attempts to discuss it, you should consider contacting their academic advisor to seek input. You might also consider other mental health or safety resources available at your institution.

**Adapted from (Stavredes, 2011)*

Reflecting on Instructor Behaviors That Impact Classroom Civility

Read each statement and then circle the frequency with which you exhibit the behavior. Learn about the impact the behavior can have on students and, if you circle “sometimes” or “rarely” for any statements, consider the suggestions to ensure you are contributing to the classroom civility.

Statement	Frequency	Impact on Students	Suggestions
I am well-prepared for my classes.	Always Often Sometimes Rarely	Not being prepared can lead to downtime in the classroom, leaving an opening for disruptive behavior to take place.	Be prepared by having materials and handouts organized and ready. Go to the classroom early to set up technology and have a backup plan if it’s not working. Have a few short activities that can be used to engage students if you need to take some time to get organized.
I arrive for class on time.	Always Often Sometimes Rarely	Being late to class communicates to students that tardiness is acceptable and that they are not your priority.	Plan ahead. Let students know if you are going to be late. Ask a colleague or student to post a sign indicating how late you are going to be if that is the case.
I end class on time.	Always Often Sometimes Rarely	Repeatedly ending class late tells students that you do not respect their time. Ending class early communicates that the class may not be worth their time.	There are times when an early dismissal is warranted. In these situations, give students your rationale for ending early (“You all worked really hard today....” “You have quite a bit of reading for next class, so I will let you go early to get a head start....”). If you do need to keep students beyond the end of class, be sure to let students know why and how long you are expecting to keep them. Then allow students to leave if they have other obligations.
I address student disruptions promptly.	Always Often Sometimes Rarely	Not addressing disruptions promptly can allow low-level disruptions to build and can frustrate students who are not being disruptive. The longer you let the incivility continue, the higher the level of response you will have to take later.	Be aware of the environment in the classroom and address disruptions with the lowest level of intervention possible. Use proximity and move frequently throughout the room. If your class is large, engage TAs in this task as well.

I actively engage students in various activities throughout the class.	Always Often Sometimes Rarely	Disengaged students can lead to disruptive behaviors such as the inappropriate use of technology and side conversations.	Plan interactive lectures and activities that engage students throughout the class period.
The material I cover in my classes is necessary and appropriate to the needs of the students.	Always Often Sometimes Rarely	Work that is too easy can lead to bored students, while work that is too difficult can frustrate students and lead to disruptions.	Implement formative assessment techniques that allow you to meet students' instructional needs.
Students find me approachable.	Always Often Sometimes Rarely	Balance authority with approachability to create an instructor persona that encourages civility.	Chat casually with students before and after class. Use student names. Assume a relaxed posture in the classroom. Nonverbally, you can communicate your respect for and interest in students by making regular eye contact, speaking with energy and enthusiasm, listening to them intently without interrupting, standing with an open body posture, and smiling frequently.
Students see me as the authority figure in the classroom.	Always Often Sometimes Rarely	Balance authority with approachability to create an instructor persona that encourages civility.	Stand and move throughout the classroom while teaching. Refer to your own scholarship in class where appropriate. This establishes you as an authority on the subject and elevates you in your students' eyes.
I regularly ask students for feedback on how things are going from their perspective.	Always Often Sometimes Rarely	When instructors ask students for feedback and act on it, their engagement and buy-in to the class increase, which often leads to a more cooperative classroom.	In larger classes, feedback can be solicited by identifying three or four different students each week to meet with to discuss how things are going. In smaller classes, ask students for written feedback.

Sample Policies Addressing Classroom Conduct

Setting policies addressing classroom conduct, explaining them in your syllabus, and reviewing the policies with your students on the first day of class are key to establishing expectations for civility. Be sure to check with your institution about any required language you may need to include.

Setting Policies in Your Syllabus

- Include a section in your syllabus that addresses expectations for classroom civility. When developing your expectations, take time to recall situations that have disrupted your classroom or your colleagues' classrooms and write expectations designed to address those situations.
- Areas to address include, but are not limited to, academic honesty, classroom disruptions, attendance, class participation, tardiness, food in class, laptop use, participation in discussions, and showing respect for other students.
- Here are some examples of classroom behavior expectations:
 - Classroom attendance is a necessary part of this course; therefore, (include specific requirements and any impact on grades).
 - You are expected to do your own work. Cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in (include consequences).
 - Meaningful and constructive dialogue is encouraged in this class and requires a willingness to listen, tolerance for different points of view, and mutual respect from all participants. All course members will be expected to show respect for individual differences and viewpoints at all times.
 - The use of electronic devices can be disruptive to those around you. As a result, the use of such devices should be limited to class-related tasks.
- Set only those rules and penalties you are willing and able to enforce.
- Define and distribute policies at the start of the term.
- Align your policies with university and department policies.
- Include a statement regarding what your students can expect from you. An example follows:
 - What you can expect from me: I will be prepared and on time for class; I will not leave early; I will respect you and your opinions.

Sample Syllabus Language

General Statement: This syllabus contains the policies and expectations that have been established for this course. These policies and expectations are intended to create a productive learning atmosphere for all students. Please bring any concerns you may have to my attention.

Example 1

To create and preserve a classroom atmosphere that optimizes teaching and learning, all students share the responsibility of creating a positive learning environment. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that does not disrupt teaching or learning, and they are expected to follow these standards:

- You are expected to be on time. I intend to begin class promptly at the designated time, and you should be in your seat and ready to begin class at this time. Class ends at the designated time. Please refrain from packing up your belongings early. It is disruptive to me and to others around you.
- Classroom participation is a part of your grade in this course. You must attend class prepared to fully participate. Questions and comments must be relevant to the topic at hand.
- Classroom discussion should be civilized and respectful to everyone and relevant to the topic we are discussing. Classroom discussion is meant to allow us to hear a variety of viewpoints. This can only happen if we respect each other and our differences.
- Any discussion from class that continues online should adhere to these same rules and expectations.
- Cell phones must be turned off during class, unless you have informed me ahead of time that you are expecting an emergency message.

Example 2

It is important that students are respectful toward their instructor, teaching assistant, and fellow classmates, and that their behaviors do not interfere with nor disrupt class activities. Therefore, students are expected to adhere to the following rules in this class:

- Because random arrivals and exits are disrespectful and distracting, please plan to arrive to class on time and to stay for the entire class period. If circumstances dictate that you must be late or you know that you will need to leave early, please take a seat close to the door so you do not distract others during class time.
- All cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off and hidden from view during class time.
- Talking and other disruptive behaviors are not permitted while lecture is taking place. Please pay attention, and do not hesitate to ask me any questions.

Techniques for Addressing Low-Level Interruptions

Even when you have established clear expectations and procedures and shared them with your students, you should expect at least a few instances where students do not follow your expectations. Nilson (2010) suggests, “When you sanction a student for these and other mild, garden-variety uncivil behaviors, smile through your firmness. A smile conveys not only warmth and approachability but also unflappable cool and relaxed confidence. It says you don’t take the misconduct personally, that you are just doing your job to maintain a productive learning environment, and that student misbehavior doesn’t get under your skin. With this kind of cool, students sense they can’t bait you, so they won’t” (p. 79).

Use name-dropping, proximity, and reminding to address low-level interruptions.

Name-Dropping: When you notice a student who is not following an expectation, simply “drop” their name into your lecture. For example, “So, John, remember that it’s important to use APA formatting in your research paper.” This technique simply draws the student’s attention to the fact that you have noticed him and his behavior. This prompts the student to think about what he is doing and whether or not it is within the expectations of the class.

Proximity: When you are lecturing or monitoring student work and notice a student who is not following your expectations, simply move closer to the student. This action often encourages the student to stop the behavior and to refocus on the class.

Reminding: If the behavior continues, remind the student of the expectation that he is not following. Use a calm, quiet voice and assume that the student has simply forgotten what he should be doing and you are giving him a reminder. For example, “John, just a reminder that the use of technology in this class should be restricted to class-related uses.” Be sure to use a friendly tone of voice to avoid confrontations.

Mitigating Implicit Bias in an Online Environment

In an online environment, there are fewer physical cues about students' backgrounds and identities than in a face-to-face setting. However, research suggests that implicit or unconscious biases can still be triggered simply by seeing a name and can impact how students are evaluated and judged (Baker, Dee, Evans, & John, 2018; Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012; Reeves, 2015). Implicit biases are often based on stereotypes and assumptions about groups of people. These stereotypes and assumptions are also at the root of microaggressions.

Microaggressions are verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, invalidations, or insults, often based on stereotypes and assumptions, directed at people from marginalized identity groups. Like unconscious bias, microaggressions are often subtle and unintentional (Sue, 2010). In an online environment, *verbal* microaggressions can take the form of something the instructor or a student verbalizes or writes. *Environmental* microaggressions can include course materials or digital media that portray negative stereotypes or erase or minimize certain identities.

Recommendations for Counteracting Implicit Bias

1. **Explore the impact of implicit bias in our work and social lives.** Watch the videos found in this website to understand implicit bias and learn how to counter its effects. [Who, Me? Biased?](#)
2. **Acknowledge (then avoid) assumptions.** We may unintentionally make inaccurate assumptions about a student based on their name and/or profile picture. These assumptions can lead to positive or negative biases when interacting with and evaluating a student's participation or coursework. The first step is to pay attention to and acknowledge (to yourself) any assumptions or ideas that you might have about your online students based on their names and/or profile pictures. By bringing these thoughts to your conscious awareness, you can more consciously avoid applying the assumptions when interacting with or evaluating these students.
3. **Increase awareness of your own implicit biases.** In order to mitigate implicit bias, we need to first become aware of our own implicit biases. You may take [Harvard's Implicit Association Test](#) to learn more about yourself and any implicit biases you may have.

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Soliciting Feedback on Your Use of Inclusive Practices

Student feedback can be particularly useful to faculty as they continually work to learn and improve their inclusive teaching practices.

Use an Online Survey to Secure Student Feedback

The goal of asking for student feedback is to gauge student perceptions of the impact of your use of inclusive practices, such as using inclusive language, establishing norms for respectful dialogue, and ensuring your course reflects a diverse society. Online surveys are an effective way to collect this information anonymously. Seeking feedback early in your course can allow you to make adjustments for your current group of students. Depending on the length of your course, you may want to consider continuing to ask for feedback throughout the course.

Setting up an anonymous survey that students can use to provide you with feedback at other times can also be beneficial. For example, a student may be impacted by a student comment in a small group breakout session during a synchronous discussion or something may be written in an asynchronous discussion forum that gets by you. Providing an opportunity for students to share their experiences sends the message that you are there to support them.

Some important guidelines to keep in mind when seeking feedback from your students:

1. Allow students to give feedback anonymously to make it more likely they will be honest and open.
2. Explain why you are requesting student feedback and stress the importance of their honest and anonymous responses.
3. Once the survey is complete, report back to the students what you learned and what your next steps will be.

Sample Questions

Consider adapting these questions or creating your own.

- Do you feel welcome in this class?
 - Very welcomed
 - Welcomed
 - Somewhat welcomed
 - Unwelcomed
 - Very unwelcomed
- Do you feel comfortable reaching out to me with concerns, questions, or suggestions?
 - Very comfortable
 - Comfortable
 - Somewhat comfortable
 - Uncomfortable
 - Very uncomfortable
- Have you made friends with others in the class?
 - Yes, many
 - Yes, a few
 - There are one or two classmates I know I can reach out to if I have a question
 - I have reached out but no one has responded
 - I prefer to work alone
- Do you feel your contributions in class discussions are valued?
 - Very valued
 - Valued
 - Somewhat valued
 - Unvalued
 - Very unvalued

- Do you feel comfortable sharing your opinion or viewpoint in a class discussion?
 - Very comfortable
 - Comfortable
 - Somewhat comfortable
 - Uncomfortable
 - Very uncomfortable
- Do you feel you been graded fairly?
 - Yes, always
 - Yes, most of the time
 - There are a few times I have questions about the grading in this class
 - I am not sure
- Do the class resources and materials represent a diverse society?
 - Yes, class resources are very diverse
 - Yes, most of the class resources are diverse
 - There could be more diversity represented in the course
 - I am disappointed in the lack of diversity represented in this course.
- Please share if you have experienced or witnessed any behavior, including anything I might have done, that has caused you or a peer to feel disrespected or hurt in any way.
 - Open-ended

Foster Respect for Diverse Student Identities

According to the Center for American Progress, “Research shows that the overall academic and social effects of increased racial diversity on campus are likely to be positive, ranging from higher levels of academic achievement to the improvement of near- and long-term intergroup relations” (Kerby, 2012, reason 7).

Diverse campuses give college students the opportunity to learn from peers with different perspectives shaped by a variety of life experiences. Diverse courses present students with opportunities to engage with people of different backgrounds, helping them develop an appreciation for people different from themselves. For many students, college is an opportunity to challenge stereotypes that may have been developed by being raised around people of similar socioeconomic, racial, or cultural characteristics.

To foster respect for diverse student identities in your courses, consider taking the following steps:

Establish and model clear expectations for the type of language students are expected to use in your course environment

- Model the standards you expect to observe between students.
- Explain the type of language you expect students to use.
- Remind students to avoid statements that appear to judge or offend others such as, “that’s dumb,” “you’re crazy,” or “you must be stupid if you believe that.”
- Ask students to refer to others by name, not by labels or physical characteristics. For example, avoid such phrases as, “those people” or “that girl with the...”
- Remind students to use the preferred pronouns and names of their peers and to ask for clarification if needed.
- Intervene when you observe students who are not following your expectations for respectful language.

For additional information on setting classroom norms with students, please see *2G Online PG_HotMoments*.

Reference

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Impact of Implicit Bias on Students

Implicit bias refers to the unconscious attitudes and assumptions that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions (De Houwer, 2019). These biases develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages (De Houwer, 2019).

Research has shown that before we even begin to engage with students, we often have formulated opinions based on the student's name, race, appearance, and other factors. Whether these biases are positive or negative, they can have an impact on our expectations, and these expectations can impact how we teach. Studies show that teacher expectations are closely linked to student achievement and success (Garcia, 2018).

Research has shown that repetitive microaggressions have a negative impact on an individual's self-esteem (Sue, 2010). Microaggressions can also negatively impact a person's sense of self-efficacy. Originating from Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to engage in behaviors that support their success (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment. Self-efficacy motivates us and can help us deal with setbacks and challenges (Bandura, 2009). A lack of self-efficacy can result in low academic performance.

Examples of Implicit Bias

- assuming that students who speak with an accent will have poor writing skills
- thinking that students who are affiliated with a particular identity group may be treated as experts on issues related to that group
- assuming that students from lower socioeconomic groups will have lower academic ambitions
- assuming that students with substandard writing abilities lack intellectual ability
- expectations that students of certain groups may have particular participation styles (e.g., quiet, demure, argumentative, forceful; Boysen & Vogel, 2009).

Mitigating the Impact of Implicit Bias on Students

- **Avoid asking any one student to speak for a group.** It is impossible to know what students' group identities mean to them or how that identity has affected their lives or points of view; therefore, avoid asking students to speak for a culture or group with which they may or may not identify. Instead, without calling on or pointing out specific students, ask for input from varied perspectives. For example, you might ask, "How does hospital privatization impact people in rural environments?" or, "What challenges could this design idea present to a person with physical disabilities?" Students are then able to choose if they want to share experiences of their own or of someone close to them.
- **Pay attention to pronouns.** When giving examples that refer to people, consider using a gender pronoun that runs counter to the stereotype. For example, if you are using an example about an airline pilot, you might use the pronoun "she" to refer to the pilot.
- **Identify people using identity characteristics only when relevant.** In some cases, race is relevant, such as "Dr. Samuel P. Massie Jr. was the first African American organic chemist to teach at the U.S. Naval Academy." However, in many cases, race is not relevant; for example, consider whether it is important to refer to a person's race in this sentence: "Dr. Gerald is an African American organic chemist who helps develop solar cell mixtures." If Dr. Gerald were White, his race would not be mentioned. By mentioning his race, it makes it seem as if it is notable that an African American man is an organic chemist.
- **Use visuals to broaden ideas about people.** When choosing pictures or videos of people, try to avoid images that reinforce stereotypes, and instead look for images that broaden students' ideas about other people or places.

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Ensure Your Syllabus Sets the Tone for Diversity and Inclusion

Creating an inclusive classroom or online environment means making an intentional and ongoing effort to ensure that all students feel they belong and can thrive in the learning environment. One step you can take right at the beginning of your course is to set the tone for diversity and inclusion through your syllabus by including the following:

1. **Diversity Statement.** Including a statement that explains why diversity and inclusion are important to the educational process in general, and the course specifically. Writing a diversity statement is a self-reflective process. To develop your own diversity statement, consider your own background, your students' backgrounds, and the importance of diversity for the educational process. For examples of diversity statements, visit <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/DiversityStatements>.
2. **Expectations for respectful dialogue.** Be explicit about your expectations for respectful dialogue by including a statement such as:

We all come to the table with differing experiences and viewpoints, which means that we have so much to learn from each other! In order to get the most out of this opportunity, it is important that we don't shy away from differences. Rather, we should show respect for differences by seeking to understand, asking questions, clarifying our understanding, and/or respectfully explaining our own perspective. This way, everybody comes away with new perspectives on the issue and respecting others with different values or beliefs.

If someone says something that bothers you for any reason, assume that your peer did not mean to be offensive and ask your peer to clarify what they meant. Then explain the impact it had on you. If your classmates tell you that something you said or wrote bothered them, assume that they are not attacking you, but rather that they are sharing something that might be important for you to know.

For additional information on setting expectations for respectful dialogue see 2G Online PG_HotMoments.

3. **Inclusive resources.** In addition to the subject matter content in your curriculum, the topics and texts you select communicate to your students the ideas and types of knowledge that are considered important, as well as who are considered legitimate producers of such knowledge. Take an inventory of the texts, films, and articles that you include in your current curriculum and ask yourself the following questions:

- ☐ Who is being represented, studied, or discussed? Whom is the knowledge about?
- ☐ Whom is the information directed toward?
- ☐ What type of knowledge is considered important?
- ☐ Who is the producer of the knowledge?
- ☐ Are there other perspectives (e.g., racial, gender, geographic, socioeconomic, ability, etc.) that could be offered on this topic?

For additional information on including diverse resources see 2G Online PG_Curriculum.

4. **Policies, statements, and/or resource information that address the needs and concerns of all of your students.** Including information in your syllabus that supports students from different identity groups communicates to them that you are aware and that you care. It is important to try to address the concerns of all students who may need additional support by providing them with relevant information and resources.

Examples of Information and Resources to Add to Syllabus

Students with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] policy • Location of disability services • Invitation to speak to you about accommodations
Students who have mental health issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of on-campus mental health services • Online mental health resources • Helpline information
Students who celebrate religious holidays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement of major holidays (avoid scheduling exams or presentations on major Muslim or Jewish holidays) • Religious accommodations policy
Transgender students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred name policy • Usage of preferred pronouns • Locations of gender-neutral bathrooms
Students with financial challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated workspaces on campus • Food pantry or other assistance available on campus or in the community • Open-source or other free resources • Options to buy equipment from previous students or through a financial assistance program • List of resources on campus or online that help students with financial aid
Underrepresented Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on campus affinity groups

Invite Diverse Perspectives and Viewpoints

According to the Center for American Progress, “Research shows that the overall academic and social effects of increased racial diversity on campus are likely to be positive, ranging from higher levels of academic achievement to the improvement of near- and long-term intergroup relations” (Kerby, 2012, reason 7).

The number of students engaging in online education has rapidly increased in the last two decades in most colleges and universities across the United States (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Larger numbers of students bring more diversity to the online learning environment with different cultural, educational, and social experiences that can enrich learning in all content areas.

Encouraging students to share their diverse viewpoints enriches discussions, encourages creative problem-solving, and helps students develop critical thinking skills. Students also learn to listen respectfully and respond to various viewpoints, a key career-ready skill.

Use the ideas below to encourage students to share their diverse perspectives and viewpoints.

Create a Supportive Learning Environment

- Acknowledge that there will be differences between peers and these differences can be powerful learning opportunities.
- Establish a “judgment-free” zone that allows for the open exchange of ideas.
- Encourage students to share their viewpoints and experiences.
- Intervene as soon as possible when students violate respectful communication expectations.

Provide Opportunities for Students to Share Their Viewpoints and Experiences in Discussion Forums

- Create prompts that invite students to share their experiences, viewpoints, and opinions.
- Use LMS functions to require students to post before they can read other students’ contributions.
- Encourage students to respond to someone with a different point of view.
- Engage in the discussion forum or assign a student to engage as a “devil’s advocate” to encourage deeper dialogue.
- In synchronous discussions, ask directly for opposing viewpoints.

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