

SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR SYLLABUS

We recommend that you include specific expectations that you have of your students in your syllabus. Be specific and outline consequences. Review these with students and refer to them as needed. Possible expectations include the following:

1. Classroom attendance is a necessary part of this course. You are allowed no more than x number of unexcused absences. More than x unexcused absences will result in a grade penalty of .
2. Classroom participation is also a part of your grade in this course. In order to participate, you must arrive to class on time having prepared the materials for the day. Questions and comments must be appropriate, relevant to the topic at hand and must not disrupt the class.
3. Classroom discussion should be civilized and respectful to everyone and relevant to the topic we are discussing. Everyone is entitled to his/her opportunity to participate. Classroom discussion is intended to allow us to hear and learn from a variety of viewpoints. This can only be achieved if we respect one another and our differences.
 - Any discussion from class that continues on any listserv or class discussion list should adhere to these same expectations.
4. Side conversations that disrupt the class, my ability to teach, or students' ability to learn will not be tolerated.
5. In order to allow everyone to be heard, you must raise your hand to be recognized.
6. Use of cell phones and texting in class is prohibited. I reserve the right to confiscate your device for the class period if you are not complying with this directive. I also reserve the right to report the matter to the Office of Student Conduct for review and action.
 - On test days, you may not possess any technological devices. Place cell phones, calculators, etc. in your backpacks and leave your backpacks [at the back of the room?].
7. You are expected to be on time. Class starts promptly at x. You should be in your seat and

ready to begin class at this time. Class ends at x. Packing up your things early is disruptive to me and those around you.

8. Any continued disruption of class will not be tolerated. I reserve the right to ask you to leave the classroom if your behavior is disrupting the class. Disruptive behavior will also be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

Campus Resources

Office of Student Conduct

Campus Center 109

(757) 221-2510

www.wm.edu/studentconduct

Dean of Undergraduate Studies

Ewell Hall 124

(757)221-2469

<http://www.wm.edu/as/deansoffice/index.php>

Counseling Center

Blow Hall 240

<http://web.wm.edu/counselingcenter>

William & Mary Police

(757)221-4596

911 for emergencies

<http://www.wm.edu/offices/police/index.php>

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Managing Disruptive Behaviors in the Classroom



**WILLIAM
& MARY**

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MANAGING CLASSROOM DISRUPTIONS

We have designed this brochure to help you establish behavioral expectations in your course, assess problem student behavior, and determine appropriate courses of action. Most inappropriate behaviors can be handled by you at the time of the disruption. However, some behavior may require consultation, College disciplinary action, or immediate emergency response. Feel free to contact us at any time for consultation on student behavior in your classroom.

WHAT IS DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR?

The definition of disruptive conduct contained within the *Student Handbook* includes “Disrupting or obstructing the normal living and work environments of other members of the College community or the functions or activities of the College” If a student is disrupting your class to the point that you find it difficult to teach or students are finding it reasonably difficult to learn, then disruptive behavior may be occurring.

The following are examples of disruptive behavior:

- ◆ Making loud and distracting noises
- ◆ Answering cell phones, texting, or noises emanating from electronic devices
- ◆ Persisting in speaking without being recognized
- ◆ Repeatedly leaving and entering the classroom without authorization
- ◆ Interrupting class discussion
- ◆ Making physical threats or verbal insults to the faculty member or other students
- ◆ Exhibiting erratic, irrational behavior

PREVENTION

You have the prerogative to create and maintain reasonable behavioral standards for your classes. By establishing clear expectations at the beginning of the semester, you may be saving yourself and your class the trouble of dealing with disruptions down the road. Keep these suggestions in mind:

- Include behavioral expectations for you and your students in the course syllabus (see suggestions section.) Articulate clear guidelines regarding

attendance, tardiness, class participation, and appropriate conduct. Specify fair and consistent consequences.

- Discuss these norms and expectations with your students, so they can gain an in-depth understanding of how they should act in your class. Engage them in the discussion about what behaviors contribute to, or detract from, an effective class environment.
- Serve as a role model and exhibit the behavior you expect from your students. Responding “in-kind” with sarcasm or disrespect usually escalates the situation.

RESPONSE

Unfortunately, any class at one time or another may experience a disruption. The following suggestions will help you minimize the negative impact of disruptions and to address them in a professional, developmental and appropriate manner.

Do not ignore the behavior. It is rare that a disruptive student will self-correct or have an epiphany in your class. Students who are disturbed by the conduct will expect you to address it and may see your failure to do so a tacit endorsement of the behavior. Addressing behavior early on will give you many more options than if you allow a situation to escalate.

In some cases, students do not realize they are bothering others. One suggestion is to move closer to the inattentive students, pause until everyone quiets down, and make direct eye contact. Then use general statements like “We have too many private conversations going on at this time; let’s focus on the same topic.”

If the behavior does not cease, you may ask the student to refrain from the behavior and ask that he/she come to see you after class. When you meet with the student, explain why you consider this type of behavior inappropriate, stress your behavioral expectations of students, and warn the student that further occurrences of disruptive behavior may result

in disciplinary action. Use “I” statements such as, “When I see you , I feel , and I am asking that the activity stop.”

If the disruptive behavior persists, you may ask the student to leave the class; refer him/her to the Office of Student Conduct (a report form is available on our website at www.wm.edu/deanofstudents). We encourage you to err on the side of reporting your concern; doing so permits us to assess the situation in light of any other reports or information we have about the student, and we would be happy to offer you tips and support in dealing with a situation.

If you see a pattern of odd behavior and are concerned by it, consult your department chair, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Counseling Center, or our office for consultation.

If a student is posing a threat to the safety of himself/herself or others or if the student becomes physically or verbally abusive, contact William and Mary police (221-4596) immediately and submit a report to our office using the URL above.

The fact that a disruptive student may have a documented disability should not inhibit you from acting on the inappropriate behavior. Students with disabilities are bound by the same behavioral expectations. For more information, please contact us.

RESPECT AND PRIVACY

Try to arrange a private discussion with the disruptive student to the extent you are comfortable. Embarrassing a student in front of peers accomplishes little. Any information you learn while speaking privately with the disruptive student should be handled carefully. You may only discuss the matter with campus officials who have a legitimate educational interest, such as your department chair or the Dean of Students/Office of Student Conduct. The privacy of a student’s educational record (e.g., grades, reports of misconduct) is protected under FERPA. For more information, please contact our office.