

## SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR SYLLABUS

We recommend including specific behavioral expectations in your syllabus. Be specific and outline consequences that can arise from disruptive behavior. 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 X.
2. Classroom participation is also a part of your grade in this course. To participate, you must arrive to class on time having prepared the materials for the day. Questions and comments must be appropriate and relevant to the topic at hand.
3. Classroom discussion should be civilized and respectful to everyone. Everyone is entitled to an 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 on (name the medium you are using for formal class discussion) should adhere to these same expectations.
4. Avoid side conversations that disrupt the class, my ability to teach, or students' ability to learn.
5. To allow everyone to be heard, you must raise your hand and wait for me to recognize you.
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 and to report the matter to Student Accountability & Restorative Practices for accountability.
  - 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 option to ask you to leave the classroom if your behavior is disrupting the class. I also can report disruptive behavior to SARP for additional accountability.

## Campus Resources

### Student Accountability & Restorative Practices (SARP)

Sadler Center 383  
(757) 221-2509

[www.wm.edu/sarp](http://www.wm.edu/sarp)

### Undergraduate Education

Shelly Laurenzo-Assistant Dean  
[mmlaurenzo@wm.edu](mailto:mmlaurenzo@wm.edu)  
Ewell Hall

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

### Counseling Center 240 Gooch Drive

<https://www.wm.edu/offices/wellness/counselingcenter/>

### William & Mary Police

(757) 221-4596

911 for emergencies

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

## *Managing the Learning Environment*



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Student Accountability &  
Restorative Practices

Sadler Center 383

(757) 221-2509

[sarp@wm.edu](mailto:sarp@wm.edu)

<http://www.wm.edu/sarpt>

[www.wm.edu/sarp](http://www.wm.edu/sarp)

## MANAGING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

We have designed this brochure to help you establish behavioral expectations in your course, address problematic 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, referral for formal accountability, or immediate emergency response. Feel free to contact us at any time for consultation on student behavior in your classroom.

### WHAT IS DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR?

Disruptive behavior includes “engaging in disorderly or disruptive action that interferes with the normal living and work environments (including classes). 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.

Examples of disruptive behavior include:

- ◆ Loud and distracting noises
- ◆ Answering cell phones, texting, and noises emanating from electronic devices
- ◆ Repeatedly 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
- ◆ Repeatedly making comments that are off-topic or not germane to classroom discussion

**Note: Students do have 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment rights, which includes the right to disagree civilly. Civil disagreement generally is not considered disruptive behavior.**

### PREVENTION

You have the authority to set and maintain reasonable behavioral standards for your classes. Establishing clear expectations at the beginning of the term may save you and your class the trouble of dealing with disruptions down the road.

Suggestions:

- Include behavioral expectations in your syllabus. Provide clear guidelines regarding attendance, tardiness, class participation, and appropriate conduct, and specify the consequences.
- Discuss norms and expectations with your students so they can develop an understanding of how they should act in your class. Engage them to discuss what behaviors contribute to, or detract from, an effective learning environment.
- Role model and exhibit the behavior you expect from your students. Responding “in-kind” with sarcasm or disrespect usually escalates the situation.

### RESPONSE

Suggestions to help you minimize the negative impact of disruptions and to address them in a professional and appropriate manner:

*Do not ignore the behavior.* It’s rare that a student will self-correct without coaching and guidance. Other students disturbed by the conduct will expect you to address it and could view a failure to do so as a tacit endorsement of the behavior. Addressing behavior early on will give you more options than if you allow a situation to escalate.

In some cases, students don’t realize they’re disturbing 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; could we all agree to focus on the same topic?”

If the behavior does not stop, you can ask the student to refrain from the behavior and that they see you after class. If the student continues the behavior, you can ask them to leave the class using clear language (ex: “I’ve asked you to stop [interrupting class discussion], and, unfortunately, you have not, so I need you to leave class, and I will contact you to speak with you about this matter later”).

When you meet with the student, explain why you consider this type of behavior inappropriate, stress your expectations of students, and warn the student that further occurrences of disruptive behavior may result in a referral to SARP. Use “I” statements such as, “When I see you..., I feel..., and I am asking that the activity stop.”

**Note: A student cannot be removed permanently from a class unless this results from formal accountability by SARP.**

If the behavior persists, or if the matter has escalated to the point you’ve asked the student to leave class, submit a report to SARP ([www.wm.edu/report](http://www.wm.edu/report)). If in doubt, err on the side of reporting your concern; doing so permits us to assess the situation considering any prior reports or information we have about the student.

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

If a student is posing a threat to the safety, or if the student becomes physically or verbally abusive, contact WMPD (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 addressing the inappropriate behavior, as students with disabilities are bound by the same behavioral expectations. For more information, please contact SAS ([sas@wm.edu](mailto:sas@wm.edu); 221-2512).

### RESPECT AND PRIVACY

Try to arrange a private discussion with the student to the extent you’re comfortable. Embarrassing a student in front of peers generally proves counterproductive.

You can only discuss the matter with campus officials who have a legitimate educational interest, such as your department chair, your Dean’s Office, the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs, or SARP. The privacy of a student’s educational record (e.g., grades, reports of misconduct) is protected under FERPA.