

# Contract on Classroom Behavior

Most students exhibit appropriate behavior in class, but there is some disagreement on what "appropriate" behavior is. At times, a consumer culture creeps into the classroom, with students sometimes perceiving faculty as employees hired to serve them. This is not the appropriate comparison—a professor is not here to give you what you *want*, but rather to help you obtain what you *need*. A professor is more like a physician. Just as any doctor who tells you "everything is fine" so that you will be happy (when everything is not fine) should be sued for malpractice, any faculty member who gives you an "A" regardless of your performance or allows anything to happen primarily because that is what will make you happy is doing you and other students a disservice.

Learning is a group activity, and the behavior of each person in class in some way or the other affects the learning outcomes of others. If we keep these thoughts and the following rules in mind, the classroom experience will be a better one for everyone involved.

## Rules:

1. Class begins promptly at the beginning of the class period. You should be in your seat and ready to start participating in class at that time. That same rule also applies to me—I should be ready at the start of class, which means having the technology operational.
  - a. Always bring the required supplies and be ready to be actively engaged in the learning process. This communicates preparedness and interest.
  - b. If you come into class after an assignment has already been passed back, please do *not* ask for your assignment until after the class is over. It is unfair to the other students in class to wait while the professor searches again for your paper because you were not there the first time. Just ask for it after class, and I will be happy to supply it to you.
  - c. In deciding whether to attend class, please do not ask your professor if she/he is covering anything important on that day. The course is carefully planned out—every day is important.
2. If you bring a newspaper to class, put it away *before* the start of class. If you sat in a business meeting and read the *Wall Street Journal* while the boss was outlining a new strategy, you would likely be fired or demoted. The same standard applies here. In return, I promise to listen when you are talking to me and to treat you with respect.
3. Similarly, do not study material from other classes during this class. If you feel that you must spend our class time studying or doing homework, please go to the library.
4. Turn your cell phone off or to vibrate before the start of class. I will also turn mine off.
5. It is fine to bring a drink or a snack to class, as long as it is not distracting. However, please remember that someone else will be coming into the room after your class is done, *so pick up your trash*. You would not visit a friend's house and leave newspapers, cans, bottles, and wrappers lying around after you left, so please do not do it here.
6. I expect to have your attention for the full class period. This means:
  - a. Avoid conversations with people sitting around you. It is a small room—even if you whisper, please realize that other people can certainly see you, and that is distracting to them (and to me.)
  - b. *Do not* start zipping up your backpack and rustling papers before the end of the class period. There is sufficient time for you to get to your next class without

disrupting the last few minutes of this class. If one person does it, it seems to trigger others to do it, and it makes the last few minutes (when announcements are often made) less than optimal for everyone.

7. If you know that you will need to leave before the class is over, try to sit as close to the door as possible so as not to disrupt others. Similarly, if you arrive in class, just slip in as quietly as possible and take the first available seat you come to.
8. If you are so tired that you cannot keep your head up, you should leave. I realize that environmental factors affect this, including warm rooms, dimmed lights, and material that may not be interesting to you. However, laying your head on the desk or sleeping in class is rude, and it is distracting to others. (Would you consider me rude if you invited me to a party and I slept on your sofa during the party?) I will try to make class interesting, but remember that my primary goal is to teach you, not to entertain you.
9. Turn in assignments on time. Earthquake, fire, flood, and catastrophic illness are the only reasonable excuses for a late submission. You want the professor to know who you are for the right reasons.
10. Being courteous in class does not mean that you have to agree with everything that is being said. However, you will rarely get your way with anybody in life by being rude, overly aggressive, or just plain hostile. If you disagree with me (or I with you), it is a good idea to wait and discuss the situation when you are not angry.
11. The rules of the syllabus, content of the exams, content of lectures, and calculation of the grade you earned are not a starting point for negotiations. While I am always willing to work with students on an individual basis, I cannot negotiate individual terms with each student.
12. Your questions are not an imposition—they are welcome and one of the professional highlights of my day. Chances are, if you have a question, someone else is thinking the same thing but is too shy to ask it. Please ask questions! You will learn more, it makes the class more interesting, and you are helping others learn as well. But when you have a question or comment, please raise your hand first. Blurting out a question or comment when someone else has already raised their hand is rude—it is like jumping ahead of someone else in line.
13. If emergencies arise that require an absence from a session, be sure to get the notes and all other information that was covered in class from a colleague you trust. Expecting the faculty member to outline the class session in an independent message to you is not realistic as a professor typically has approximately 100+ students in his/her classes each semester.
14. The time to be concerned about your grade is in the first fourteen weeks of the course, not in the last week.

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Student Name  
Professor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date