

Classroom Decorum Statements

Classroom decorum is an issue that occasionally comes to the fore. The department has established the two statements on this and the next page, one for students and one for faculty. The statement for students may be incorporated into syllabi. Instructors teaching online should bear in mind that decorum can also be an online issue. Including a “netiquette” statement in the syllabus or elsewhere in an online course is highly advisable.

Faculty Decorum Statement

The ISU Faculty/Staff Handbook stipulates that students must “respect the rights of others in the maintenance of classroom order and in the observation of that standard of elementary courtesy common to every intellectual discipline.” The ISU Department of English and Philosophy endorses this stipulation and insists moreover that respecting the rights of others and observing common courtesy is the obligation of all persons present in the classroom, instructors included.

The Handbook further states that classroom instructors have broad authority over “control of the order and direction of a class” and that “disruption of the classroom insubordinate of the instructor’s immediate authority is forbidden.” The Department of English and Philosophy would like to clarify the nature of the instructor’s authority with respect to two broad categories of “disruption.”

Grossly disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to, shouting, drunkenness, and verbal or physical harassment. Less disruptive but clearly discourteous behavior includes, but is not limited to, entering the classroom late, leaving early, talking at inappropriate times, sleeping, and reading non-class materials. In general, the latter form of disruption, while less severe than the former, nonetheless distracts students from full participation in the class and prevents instructors from doing their jobs to the best of their abilities.

Instructors should not tolerate grossly disruptive behavior; it constitutes grounds for the instructor to tell the disruptive student to leave the classroom.

Instructors should deal with less disruptive but clearly discourteous behavior by taking the following steps:

1. Inform the student (before or after class) that his/her behavior violates normally accepted standards of personal deportment in an academic setting; if the behavior is specifically mentioned in the course syllabus, this should also be pointed out to the student.
2. Keep a formal written record of the student’s conduct and of any warnings given to the student.
3. Notify the Department Chair in the event that the student continues to conduct him/herself in a discourteous manner, and schedule a meeting between the instructor, the chair, and the

student in order to determine whether the problem can be resolved or if the student will be removed from class.

Instructors are encouraged to discuss academic courtesy and deportment with their students at the beginning of the semester, to refer their students to the Department's handout on student decorum, and to outline any specific classroom policies in their course syllabi or other documents available to their students.

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Student Decorum Statement

Because university course work requires focused study and open exchange of ideas, the Department of English and Philosophy expects the classroom to be a place of courteous interaction. The demonstration of mutual respect between teachers and students includes arriving and leaving class at designated times, participating in classroom activities, and adapting to new and varied learning styles and tasks. Academic communication requires that all of us listen carefully to each other (whether we agree or not), and to state our positions with clarity and our disagreements with tact.

Classroom standards for academic courtesy apply to group work and student-teaching conferences as well.

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