

OBSTRUCTION OR DISRUPTION IN THE CLASSROOM — POLICIES  
UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO  
SPRING 2000

The University recognizes that faculty members are responsible for effective management of the classroom environment to promote conditions which will enhance student learning. Accordingly, instructors should set reasonable rules for classroom behavior and must articulate these rules, in writing, in materials provided to the students at the start of the semester.

Fortunately, student obstructions or disruptions in UB classrooms are rare and seldom lead to disciplinary actions. The term “classroom disruption” means behavior that a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with the conduct of a class. Examples could include persistently speaking without being recognized, continuing with conversations distracting the class or, in extreme cases, resorting to physical threats or personal insults.

Lawful, civil expression of disagreement with the instructor or other students is not in itself “disruptive behavior” and is not proscribed under these or any other regulations. However, when student conduct interferes with or prevents the conduct of classes or other university functions or when the safety of members of the campus community is endangered by threats of disruption, violence, or violent acts, the administration has approved the following course of actions:

- If a student is disruptive, he/she should be asked to stop and warned that continuing such disruptive behavior can result in academic or disciplinary action. Many students may be unaware that their behavior is disruptive so that a private conversation with the student is often effective and preferable as an initial step.
- Should the disruptive behavior continue, the faculty member is authorized to ask the student to leave the classroom or site.
- A student may be dismissed from the course for the remainder of the semester, subject to Student Conduct Regulations and due process proceedings, as appropriate.
- If a student refuses to leave the area after being instructed to do so, the student should be informed this refusal is a separate violation subject to additional penalties.
- If, in the instructor’s best judgment, the behavior creates a safety risk or makes it impossible to continue class or function, the instructor should contact Public Safety to assist in removal of the student and/or may dismiss class for that day.

DISTRACTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM – BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS  
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To prevent and respond to distracting behavior faculty should clarify standards for the conduct of class, either in the syllabus, or by referencing the expectations cited in the Student Conduct Regulations. Classroom “etiquette” expectations should include:

- Attending classes and paying attention. Do not ask an instructor in class to go over material you missed by skipping a class or not concentrating.
- Not coming to class late or leaving early. If you must enter a class late, do so quietly and do not disrupt the class by walking between the class and the instructor. Do not leave class unless it is an absolute necessity.
- Not talking with other classmates while the instructor or another student is speaking. If you have a question or a comment, please raise your hand, rather than starting a conversation about it with your neighbor.
- Showing respect and concern for others by not monopolizing class discussion. Allow others time to give their input and ask questions. Do not stray from the topic of class discussion.
- Not eating and drinking during class time.
- Turning off the electronics: cell phones, pagers, and beeper watches.
- Avoiding audible and visible signs of restlessness. These are both rude and disruptive to the rest of the class.
- Focusing on class material during class time. Sleeping, talking to others, doing work for another class, reading the newspaper, checking email, and exploring the internet are unacceptable and can be disruptive.
- Not packing bookbags or backpacks to leave until the instructor has dismissed class.

DISTRACTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM – STRATEGIES  
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To establish a classroom environment conducive to effective learning and student participation, faculty should:

- Model the conduct expected of students.
- Consider a general word of caution, rather than warning a particular student (e.g., “we have too many simultaneous conversations at the moment; let’s all focus on the same topic”) if inappropriate behavior is occurring.
- Speak with individual students after class. If the behavior is irritating, but not disruptive, most students are unaware of distracting habits or mannerisms, and have no intent to be offensive or disruptive.
- Speak to a student during class about his or her behavior, in a firm and friendly manner, indicating that further discussion can occur after class. Public arguments and harsh language must be avoided.
- Direct a student who persists in disrupting a class to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period.

For more information, contact:  
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