

## **Policy on Classroom Civility and Dealing with Disruption**

Faculty members are responsible for establishing and managing the seated and online learning environment and stating clear classroom conduct expectations. Disruptive behavior is behavior that the faculty member deems to interfere with or prevent normal classroom functions or activities. Disruptive behaviors can range from mildly distracting to clearly disorderly, violent, or dangerous, expressed verbally or in written or presented work, inside or outside of the classroom.

Both students and faculty members have some measure of academic freedom. University policies on classroom disruption cannot be used to punish lawful classroom dissent. The lawful expression of a disagreement with the teacher or other students is not in itself “disruptive” behavior.

It is essential for the instructor to set reasonable and clear behavioral expectations for classroom conduct, discussion and written and presented work in the syllabus and at the beginning of the semester/class. Faculty lay the groundwork for the management of student behavior by:

- establishing the key elements of seated or online classroom conduct;
- setting expectations for seated or online classroom discussion and for written and presented work;
- articulating expectations for interaction with the instructor in and outside of class.

Describe, explain, and model the learning environment you expect:

- State your expectations in the syllabus, which should be distributed or made available on a class Blackboard site.
- Explain the reasons for your classroom expectations and involve students in a discussion of expected conduct, so that everyone may contribute to establishing and understanding expectations. Provide your students with very specific examples of desired conduct as well as behavior you deem unacceptable. Examples of behavioral expectations you may wish to state include,
  - Arrive promptly for class, so as not to disrupt the class by entering late.
  - The use of cell phones, texting, or checking of electronic devices during class meeting times will not be tolerated. These devices should be completely shut off until class ends.
  - Please respect requests to stop any behavior determined to be disruptive.
  - In cases where a student does not comply with a request to stop an identified behavior, I (the faculty member) retain the right to ask you (the student) to leave the class, and that class will count as an absence.
- Model expected class behavior by setting and maintaining clear boundaries for your own interaction with students, both in and outside of the classroom.

## **Responding When Disruption Occurs**

Depending on the level of disruption, the following responses are available to the instructor:

- Cautioning the whole class and directing that the disruptive behavior be stopped.
- Asking to speak to an individual student about disruptive behavior after class or at a break.
- If the situation requires an immediate response in class, calmly and courteously asking the student to stop the conduct and to talk to you after class or during office hours. A student should be asked to leave class if he/she engages in disruptive behavior that impedes your ability to teach the class productively. If the behavior of a student creates a safety risk or makes it impossible to continue class, dismiss class for the day.
- Be sure to document each incident as it occurs. Jot down notes on who, when and where the incident occurred with a detailed description of the behavior. This is essential for tracking, as you may not be aware that the student is demonstrating the behavior in other courses (or even in other schools on campus) and the college cannot begin to address behavior without documentation.
- Utilize the new campus tool entitled “Incident Reporting Form,” which may be found by logging into my.newpaltz.edu, going to the Faculty/Staff Tab and viewing Resources. Completing this form will document the incident, provide the Dean of Students with the information, and generate a follow-up response. The Dean of Students will have a conversation with you, determine whether the student should be required to attend an ‘Official Request’ meeting with the Dean of Students, and discuss appropriate next steps for you and your Associate Dean.

### **Measures Available to the Instructor**

#### Within Academic Affairs

If a student’s behavior continues to be disruptive after the faculty member has taken the steps bulleted above, the instructor is encouraged to consult with the chair, dean, and assistant provost.

#### Disciplinary Procedures through Student Affairs

The faculty member serves as the Complainant when student behavior is referred to the Office of the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. The student may be referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action under the Code of Conduct. Relevant ‘Rules and Regulations of the State of New York’ support standards for orderly conduct (p. 5) 535.3(i), and as a result, the SUNY New Paltz Student Code of Conduct includes the following general statement:

*“No person, either singly or in concert with others shall ....disrupt or prevent the peaceful and orderly conduct of classes, lectures and meetings or deliberately interfere with the freedom of any person to express his views, including invited speakers.”*

The most common code violations specifically addressing a student’s disorderly behavior include:

*“No person shall...recklessly create a public inconvenience or disturbance by fighting, making unreasonable noise, using abusive or obscene language, disturbing a class or meeting...or creating a hazardous or physically offensive situation by an act which serves no legitimate purpose.”*

*“No person shall fail to comply with a legitimate, reasonable and lawful request or direction by members of the faculty and administrative staff, other employees of the college, or officially recognized volunteers acting in accordance with their official duties.”*

*“No person shall use computers and network services to harass or threaten other computer users, or to publicly display offensive or obscene messages.”*

In order to pursue disciplinary action under the code of conduct, the referral must be accompanied by a detailed description of the behaviors and by any relevant documentation that led to the referral and/or removal from class.