

Syllabus_Suggestion_for_Civility

Possible civility tool for use in a course syllabus:

San Jose City College /Evergreen Valley College is attempting to foster the practice of civility within the classroom and on the campus. Civility is both a civic virtue commonly associated with politeness and good manners and an ethical principle that underlies respect for persons and for the foundation of the civil state.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines civility, in part, as: 1.) connected with citizenship, a community of citizens collectively; 2.) ordinary courtesy or politeness, as opposed to rudeness of behavior; 3.) respect; consideration; decency.

Behaviors that reflect civility in the classroom include:

- ✓ **Comments are made on issues, not on persons**
- ✓ **Comments are supported by reasons**
- ✓ **Speakers take turns, don't interrupt.**
- ✓ **Respectful words and strategies are observed**
- ✓ **Understanding of other's ideas observed**
- ✓ **Neutral or positive tone is observed**
- ✓ **Neutral expressions are observed**



Examples of statements that could be used in a syllabus:

1) Teaching and Learning Center, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Teachers are committed to developing and actively protecting a class environment in which respect must be shown to everyone in order to facilitate and encourage expression, testing, understanding and creation of a variety of ideas and opinions.

Any successful learning experience requires mutual respect on behalf of the students and the instructor. The instructor, as well as fellow students, should not be subjected to any student's behavior that is in any way disruptive or rude. A student should not feel intimidated or demeaned by his/her instructor and students must remember that the instructor has primary responsibility for control over classroom behavior and maintenance of academic integrity.

2) SJCC and EVC faculty members drafted sample civility statements in a series of workshops on civility on the classroom:

Respect should be shown to everyone in order to facilitate the expression of ideas and to create a positive educational environment.

To demonstrate your respect for your classmates and your instructor, it is expected you will arrive in class on time and ready to work, turn off cell phones and audible pagers, refrain from talking while the instructor is talking, and stay the whole class period until dismissed by the instructor.

Vigorous and uninhibited debate of ideas is encouraged during class discussions, but personal attack on other class members is inappropriate and will not be tolerated.

The classroom is first and foremost a place of learning and teaching within an atmosphere of respect and caring for each other and ourselves. Every student is entitled to full participation and to full expression of their individuality and diversity within the bounds of courtesy, sensitivity and respect. Interruptions and disruptions of the classroom atmosphere inhibit and prevent learning and teaching, as well as convey disrespect to others in the room.

In an atmosphere of courtesy and mutual respect – in which racism, sexism, and the use of vulgar language will not be overlooked – we will pursue questions and debate ideas. This college is an institution of learning and teaching. We strive to maintain a climate of respect, sensitivity and courtesy. We recognize that each of us has an obligation to support acts of civility in the classroom. We will take pride in our achievements and celebrate our differences.

3) San Jose Evergreen Community College District Policies – Section V Student Services Policies Section 5065.03 Standards of Student Conduct

Behavioral standards include showing mutual respect to students and college staff and adherence to District and College rules and regulations and State/Federal laws.

4) The De Anza College Catalogue (1998) “Mutual Respect”:

(The) College shall take all steps necessary to provide a positive educational and employment environment, which encourages equal educational opportunities. The college will actively seek to educate staff and students on the deleterious effects of expressions of hatred or contempt based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, or physical or psychological disability; and will promote equality and *mutual respect and understanding* (italics mine) among all groups and individuals.

5) Suggestion for language appropriate for an educational community, adapted from American Bar Association Report of the Professionalism Committee, August 1996.

The hallmarks of an educational community are respect for truth, deliberation, reflection, and openness to ideas and to the pursuit of learning.

Instructors and students should act and speak civilly to one another, abstain from disparaging remarks, and uphold standards of respect and dignity, endeavoring in good faith to conduct college matters in a professional manner.