

# Civility in the classroom is important

**By: Paula Sachs Wise**

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According to a letter I received today, the University Programming Council, a group of Student Services professionals, has identified “civility” as the theme for this school year.

I’m all for civility! I try to live my life in a civil manner. As a long-time faculty member, however, I have heard and seen numerous examples of less-than-civil behavior in classrooms.

The following is a guide to behavior in college classrooms.

1. Attend class regularly, arriving on time and staying until the class is officially over. If you’re going to be absent or late, it’s a good idea to let your professor know in advance.

If you miss a class, it’s not the professor’s responsibility to fill you in on what you missed. In class, don’t wander around, stand up, or leave and come back unless you are instructed to do so, you are having a health problem or you are being attacked by insects.

If you do have a reason for causing a distraction, such as the aforementioned insect attack, explain it to the professor as soon as possible.

2. Unless otherwise instructed, don’t eat, smoke, sleep, read newspapers, work on projects for other classes, talk to classmates, chew tobacco, crack gum, spit, click your pen, talk on the phone, hum, sing, tap your feet, listen to music or write notes to friends during class.

These are irritating to the professor and your classmates. Cell phones should be turned off!

3. Unless otherwise instructed, call your professor Dr., Mr., or Ms. depending on degree and gender. If I want you to call me by my first name, I’ll let you know.

4. Do not come to class drunk or stoned. Also, don’t tell your professor that you missed a class because you were too hung over.

5. If you disagree with a grade on a paper or an exam, come to see her or him privately during office hours or before or after class rather than arguing during class. If you meet privately about the grade, speaking politely and rationally will probably be more convincing than yelling, swearing, insulting, or threatening.

It’s human nature (yes, professors are human) to become defensive when attacked.

6. Reading and other assignments should be completed before class begins. Take notes, pay attention, and, for heaven’s sake, cover your mouth if you’re going to yawn during class.

7. Although it's probably true that one of the functions of school is mate selection, don't consider class time as an opportunity to meet new friends and/or lovers.

If you meet your future spouse in my class, feel free to invite me to the wedding but refrain from public displays of affection during class.

8. Don't call your professor at home unless specifically asked to do so or in case of an actual emergency.

One guideline might be unless a professor has her or his home phone number on the syllabus, you won't need it.

That's about it for now. I welcome additional ideas from faculty or students regarding civility in the classroom. You may e-mail me at [PS-Wise@wiu.edu](mailto:PS-Wise@wiu.edu) (but please don't call me at home).