

Responding
TO THE **DISRUPTIVE STUDENT**
a Faculty Guide

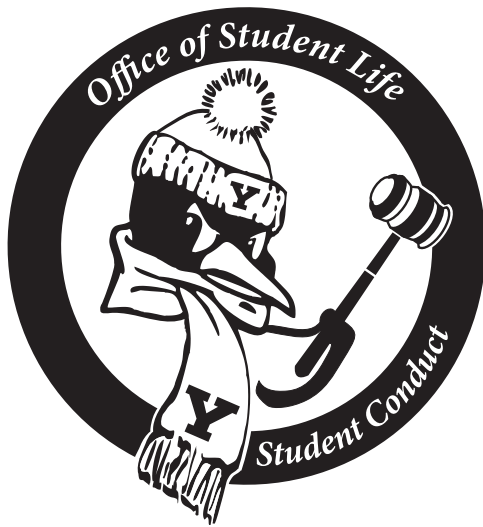





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Introduction

Youngstown State University is committed to fostering and maintaining a positive learning environment for all members of the University community. In support of this commitment, faculty members maintain responsibility for management of the classroom environment and enforcing appropriate behavioral expectations for their students. Unfortunately, incidents of disruptive behavior challenge the faculty members' ability to maintain a positive learning environment in the classroom.

The Office of Student Life provides the following advice to assist faculty members in responding to disruptive behavior. The Office of Student Life, a unit of the Division of Student Affairs has the responsibility for administering the University student conduct process when a student has been alleged to have violated regulations contained in *The Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct (The Code)*. *The Code* is contained in the *Penguin Connection Student Handbook* and is available online and in the Office of Student Life.



The Code

is available online and through the Office of Student Life.

Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom

Faculty members maintain responsibility for the management of their classroom. In performing this function, faculty members focus on relevant issues, establish reasonable time limits, evaluate the quality of ideas and expression, and ensure that students are heard in an orderly manner. Although the policies outlined in *The Code* may not be used to discipline civil classroom dissent, the University student conduct process has been established to respond to student misconduct including classroom disruptions. The term classroom disruption is best understood as behavior that a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with the conduct of a class (e.g., repeatedly leaving and entering the classroom without authorization, use of cell phones, making loud or distracting noises, persisting in speaking without being recognized, or making physical threats or personal insults). In responding to this type of behavior, faculty members should incorporate the following strategies in a consistent and proactive manner.

Strategies for Responding to Disruptive Behavior

- Clarify expectations concerning student conduct in your class. For example, you should explicitly state if you want students to raise their hands for permission to speak. You should include a general statement in your course syllabus regarding your expectations regarding classroom conduct. Faculty members are encouraged to create their own statement that addresses the specific behavioral expectations of their course. The following statement is intended as an example:
The classroom environment will provide a safe environment for exploring ideas and challenging

assumptions. Students will be expected to respectfully listen to the voices of other individuals and share their own opinions and values in a positive, respectful manner. Students and the instructor are expected to treat each member of the class with respect and civility. Classroom behavior that a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with the conduct of the class will not be tolerated in this course. Students who engage in disruptive behavior will be subject to the University student conduct process.

- Set the tone in the classroom by modeling the type of behavior you expect from your students.
- In situations where the faculty member believes inappropriate behavior is occurring, a general word of caution should be directed to the entire class rather than confronting a particular student in some situations (e.g., “we have too many conversations taking place on the side; let’s all focus on the same topic”).
- Ask a student to meet with you after class when their classroom behavior is annoying, but not necessarily disruptive. Address your concerns with the student in a direct and sensitive manner. Students are often unaware of distracting habits or mannerisms and do not intend for their behavior to be offensive or disruptive.
- In rare circumstances, it is necessary to confront a student’s behavior during class. In these situations, you should communicate your concerns and expectations in a firm and respectful manner. Let the student know that you will be happy to discuss the concerns further after class. Public arguments and abusive language should be avoided.
- A student who persists in disrupting a class may be directed to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period. Prompt consultation should be

undertaken with the Department Chair and the staff in the Office of Student Life (330-941-4704). The faculty member should complete a Report of Student Misconduct to initiate the University student conduct process. A student may not be suspended for more than one class without appropriate student conduct action within the University process.

- In the case of a serious disruption where other reasonable efforts have failed to redirect the student's behavior, the class may be adjourned and University police summoned. Faculty members should not use force or threats of force except in cases of self-defense. Provide University Police with a written statement regarding the incident and identify witnesses for the police.

Reporting Disruptive Behavior

Faculty members are encouraged to report disruptive incidents promptly to the Office of Student Life, even if they appear minor. Reports of Student Misconduct may be filed directly with the Office of Student Life or a report may be filed with the University Police. The student conduct process is intended to support the educational mission of the University. As such, the Office of Student Life will issue appropriate sanctions and take steps to provide the student with a clear understanding regarding expectations for appropriate behavior in the University community. In addition, a student may be suspended immediately, pending student conduct proceedings, in the most serious cases.

Acknowledgements

In completion of this guide, material has been adapted from similar publications at the University of Maryland at College Park, Purdue University, and the University of Akron.



Office of Student Life
Student Conduct
Youngstown State University

