

## Examples of Community Norms for Class Syllabi

Good pedagogical practice suggests adding a Community Norms statement on your syllabus. Below are some examples from a few of the departments in the College. In addition, there are a couple of links to similar statements from other universities.

We are always looking for more examples, so please send your own to [j11harms@tamu.edu](mailto:j11harms@tamu.edu) if you have a statement to contribute and we'll post it here.

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### *Hispanic Studies*

#### **REMEMBER:**

- Mutual respect is expected at all times, and insulting or discriminatory comments of any kind will not be tolerated.
  - Respect others' rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own.
  - When you disagree, challenge or criticize the idea, not the person
  - Do not interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.
  - Recognize that we are all still learning. Be willing to change your perspective, and make space for others to do the same.
  - An Aggie does not discriminate or tolerate those who do.
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### *History*

**Classroom Climate:** To create a classroom culture of courtesy, collegiality, and cooperation it is our responsibility to ensure that all interactions are respectful and supportive of the views, ideas and thoughts of everyone

**INCLUSION AND RESPECT:** The study of cultural and human diversity is a key component of the study of history. In this course, each voice in the classroom has something of value to contribute to class discussion. Please respect the different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by your fellow students and instructor, and refrain from derogatory comments about other individuals, cultures, groups, or viewpoints. The Department of History supports Texas A&M University's commitment to diversity and welcomes individuals of all ages, backgrounds, citizenships, disabilities, education, ethnicities, family statuses, genders, gender identities, geographical locations, languages, military experience, political views, races, religions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and work experiences (See <http://diversity.tamu.edu/>).

**DIVERSITY AND RESPECT:** The Department of History at Texas A&M University is committed to establishing a community of mutual respect and support for all its members – students, staff, and faculty. This course will involve a considerable amount of discussion. As is evident from watching the news, even 150 years and more after Appomattox, the Civil War is a subject that can arouse heated emotions. The classroom is a forum of intellectual engagement which has as its goal the enhancement of knowledge. Students are expected to engage in respectful dialogue, to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes active participation in a learning community, and above all to direct their remarks to the issues under discussion, not at other participants in the discussions. Verbal or physical abuse, sexual misconduct or harassment will not be tolerated.

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## ***Philosophy***

I am sure that you will disagree with your classmates about these issues. That's healthy, and I expect you to criticize their views, and have them criticize your views. I expect this to be done in a constructive and respectful way. I want to make it clear from the beginning that I have no particular ax to grind. I will not try to encourage you to take up my positions on these issues and you will not be graded harshly for disagreeing with me. What I want is critical evaluation of all positions and to see you develop compelling justifications for the positions you accept."

## ***Civility***

We will sometimes discuss controversial topics in class. Often, we will challenge some of our strongly held beliefs. Topics should always be discussed respectfully. There will be no personal attacks or comments permitted. Your language should not be exclusionary. This applies to me as well. If you catch me breaking any of these rules, you have permission (respectfully) to bring it to my attention."

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## ***Psychological and Brain Sciences***

Your behavior within the classroom should reflect the rights of your classmates and be conducive to an atmosphere of learning. Disrespectful or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. It is my intent that ALL students, regardless of backgrounds or perspectives, are well-served by this course. I view the diversity that different students bring to the class as a resource, strength, and benefit to the ideals of a university education. Therefore, our classroom is a designated safe zone of respect, including toward diversity in gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, culture, political views, etc. Please let me know if you have suggestions about how to improve the value of diversity in this course; your comments will be welcomed.

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## ***Department of Political Science***

### ***Proposed Syllabus Statements (specifically to avoid disruption/harassment in the classroom) August 2020***

#### ***For FTF/Non-COVID teaching:***

- Students are expected to be in the classroom in their seats as close to the start of class time as possible. It is also expected that everyone remains seated (barring a prior excuse or emergency) until Dr. X has announced the end of class. **DO NOT pack up your materials** prior to this time.
  - If you would like to bring a guest to the classroom, please notify Dr. X at least a day in advance. Be sure that all guests are also on time as not to disturb the rest of the class.
- During class discussion, I ask that all students raise their hands and wait to be acknowledged before speaking. Questions and comments must be germane to course material and ought to be stated as concisely as possible. Please leave hypothetical or longer questions for after lecture or

office hours, as to avoid taking away time from other students. And keep questions/comments as **scientific** as possible as opposed to relying on your personal preferences or opinions.

- Note: We will likely discuss topics that evoke certain emotions or strong preferences. During these times, I encourage everyone to remain open to alternative viewpoints and new information. If disagreements arise, our goal will be to engage in **critical analysis** of primary sources and scientific research in order to build our collective knowledge base. In doing so, we will strictly adhere to the Code of Conduct and Student Rule 21, posted below.

## Classroom Code of Conduct

The Department of Political Science at Texas A&M University is committed to fostering an environment of learning and scholarship that is open, respectful, and welcoming to all, regardless of race, religion, gender (identity), ability, age, socio-economic background, or sexual orientation.

As outlined in the department's Code of Conduct (**link to statement on website**), we strive to create a positive climate for all students, faculty, and staff. We are dedicated to providing a harassment-free experience for all members and guests of the department.

Whereas, we expect members of the political science department to adhere to the departmental Code of Conduct in general, respectful behavior by all participants is especially important in the classroom and other course-related interactions (virtual and in-person). An environment conducive to learning and scholarship requires free speech and an open mind, but must be free of harassment<sup>1</sup>, hostile, or threatening behaviors. Faculty, staff, and students ought to be proactive in helping others and speak up to avoid harm in the case that any of these unwelcome behaviors are observed.

(In part based on the Society for Political Methodology Code of Conduct and American Political Science Association Anti-harassment Policy)

**TAMU Student Rule 21** (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule21/>): Classroom behavior that seriously interferes with either (1) the instructor's ability to conduct the class or (2) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program **will not be tolerated**. This may involve but is not limited to: name calling, talking or engaging in other rude/disruptive behavior in class, threatening others in any way, asking inappropriate/personal questions about other students or the professor, etc. An individual engaging in disruptive classroom behavior may be subject to disciplinary action.[1]

- If a student is being disruptive or disrespectful (rude, inappropriate, unprofessional, and/or harmful to others) either in the classroom, in the Zoom classroom or chats, or during *class-related communications outside of lecture* (online or in-person), Dr. X will give one verbal warning.
  - However, if behavior is viewed as seriously disruptive, no warning will be issued and action will be taken. This may involve immediate removal from class.
- If negative behavior persists following a verbal warning, Dr. X will request an in-person meeting with the student and Assistant Department Head to discuss and document a plan for changing behavior. This plan will be signed by the student and forwarded to the Head of the Department of X.

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in the Society for Political Methodology Code of Conduct, harassment includes but is not limited to “degrading verbal comments, discriminatory jokes and language, deliberate intimidation, stalking, harassing photography or recording, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.”

- Further infractions will immediately involve the Department Head and the Academic Dean (per Rule 21)

**COVID-specific guidance:**

In selecting a mask or Zoom background, it is expected that everyone adheres to the above Code of Conduct and refrains from material that is discriminatory or degrading to others.

In the Zoom environment, your screen name must be the name that is listed on the course roster, unless otherwise noted. If you do not go by the name on the roster, please contact Dr. X in the first week of class.

**Baseline Code of Conduct (this can be crowdsourced for student feedback)**

- Respect for all
- Have an open mind; challenge yourself
- Challenge ideas; never attack individuals
- Be present

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[1]You have an established right to free speech on this campus. However, as a student, you are also bound by the rules of this institution. This means acknowledging when your speech or behavior crosses a line to the point of being disruptive/uncivil and assuming the consequences of your actions.

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**Department of Sociology**

DIVERSITY AND CIVILITY STATEMENT (February 2020)

The Department of Sociology supports Texas A&M's commitment to diversity and welcomes individuals of all abilities, ages, citizenships, educations, ethnicities, family statuses, gender identities, genders, languages, military experiences, political views, races, religions, sexes, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and work experiences (<http://diversity.tamu.edu>).

Exposure to many different ideas and viewpoints, and experiences with people from various backgrounds and disciplines is key to your education. Sociology is the research-driven study of our social world, not a set of ideas with which you must agree. This course may feature content and discussions challenging your deeply held beliefs, encouraging you, as a student of social science, to examine your beliefs and why you hold them. Exposure to sociological frameworks with which you disagree develops your ability to navigate diversity around you, and the discomfort it can generate, which you may experience throughout your education, and in your career.

This course promotes learning through respectful and civil discourse. Frame discussions with classmates and the instructor using rules of evidence and present ideas with civility and respect. Each student can make valuable contributions. Beliefs, values and experiences expressed or shared by classmates should be respected if presented respectfully. Discussions should focus on ideas, not individuals. Inside and outside the classroom (including electronic venues such as *GroupMe*), students should engage in reasoned discussion without derogatory comments and dehumanizing language about other persons, groups, or viewpoints. No action(s) counter to this standard will be tolerated and offending students may be barred from further discussions.

Student Conduct Code Rule 21 will be strictly enforced. TAMU respects freedom of expression for instructors and students, but classroom conditions must support the rights of (1) instructors to teach and (2) students to learn. Classroom behavior interfering with exercise of either of these rights will not be tolerated. Disruptive classroom behavior may result in disciplinary action (section 24.4.15; <https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule21/>).

Disruptive or disrespectful behavior (i.e., rude, unprofessional, inappropriate and/or harmful to others) in the classroom, in meetings during office hours, or during class-related communications outside lecture (online or in-person), will result in a warning from the instructor or TA. However, for seriously disruptive or disrespectful behavior, no warning will be issued, and action will be taken, which may involve immediate removal from class. If negative behavior persists following a warning, the instructor and/or TA will require an in-person meeting with the student and Sociology Department Head/Associate Head to discuss and document a behavior modification plan, to be signed by the student and forwarded to the Department Head. Further infractions will immediately involve the Department Head and Academic Dean (per Rule 21).

### **Original Diversity Statement**

#### DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY DIVERSITY AND CIVILITY STATEMENT February 2020

The Department of Sociology supports Texas A&M University's commitment to diversity and welcomes individuals of all ages, citizenship, abilities, education, ethnicities, family statuses, genders, gender identities, languages, military experience, political views, races, religions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and work experiences (see <http://diversity.tamu.edu/>).

A key component of a university education is exposure to a wide range of ideas, viewpoints, and experiences from people of various backgrounds and fields of study. Sociology as a discipline is not a collection of ideas you must agree with; sociology is the research-driven study of our social world. As such, this course may feature content and discussions that challenge your own deeply-held beliefs. This is to be expected. This is done to encourage you, as a burgeoning social scientist, to learn to examine your beliefs and articulate why you support them. Exposure to sociological frameworks with which you may disagree will also help you gain a competency in navigating differences and discomfort, which you will continue to experience throughout your time at the university, as well as within your career.

This course supports a commitment to life-long learning through respectful and civil discourse. As this is a social science class, discussions are to be framed using rules of evidence and should always be presented in a respectful and civil manner when engaging with fellow students and the instructor. In the spirit of this vital commitment, each voice in the classroom has something of value to contribute to discussions. Everyone is expected to respect the different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by fellow students and the instructor and will engage in reasoned discussion that refrains from derogatory comments and dehumanizing language about other people, cultures, groups, or viewpoints. This applies both inside and outside of the classroom, and includes electronic venues such as GroupMe. Discussions are to be focused on the ideas presented and not the individual. This is paramount to a quality educational experience. Any action(s) that disrupt this standard will not be tolerated and the student may be asked not to participate in further discussion.

The **Student Conduct Code Rule 21** regarding classroom behavior will also be strictly enforced:

Texas A&M University supports the principle of freedom of expression for both instructors and students. The university respects the rights of instructors to teach and students to learn. Maintenance of these rights requires classroom conditions that do not impede their exercise. Classroom behavior that seriously interferes with either (1) the instructor's ability to conduct the class or (2) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program will not be tolerated. An individual engaging in disruptive classroom behavior may be subject to disciplinary action. See 24.4.15. (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule21/>).

If a student is being disruptive or disrespectful (rude, inappropriate, unprofessional, and/or harmful to others) either in the classroom, office hours, or during class-related communications outside of lecture (online or in-person), they will receive one warning from the instructor or TA. However, if the behavior is viewed as seriously disruptive, no warning will be issued, and action will be taken. This may involve immediate removal from class. If negative behavior persists following a warning, the instructor and/or TA

will request an in-person meeting with the student and Head or Associate Head of the department to discuss and document a plan for changing behavior. This plan will be signed by the student and forwarded to the Head of the Department of Sociology. Further infractions will immediately involve the Department Head and the Academic Dean (per Rule 21).

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Here are some examples from other universities as a guide for crafting your own statement:

<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/sites/default/files/teachinglearninginitiatives/docs/civilitysamples.pdf>

[https://www.sjcc.edu/PresidentOffice/Documents/Sample\\_Civility\\_Statements2-1.pdf](https://www.sjcc.edu/PresidentOffice/Documents/Sample_Civility_Statements2-1.pdf)