Establishing and Maintaining Classroom Civility

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My background & Office of the Ombudsperson
- Attorney
- Civic Education
- Instructor at DePaul University College of Law
- Office of the Ombudsperson
  - Confidential
  - Neutral
  - Informal
  - Resource office for conflict resolution

Your Greatest Fears re: Teaching?
Scene from The Breakfast Club by John Hughes, the best teen movie director EVER.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTeYncx1xmI

First day sets the tone
Lead by example
Be clear and upfront about expectations
Be consistent
Rules are not “one size fits all”

Presenting Yourself and Classroom Management

Reasonable Expectations
- Titles
- Attendance
- Late Policy
- Absences
- Attentiveness
- Participation
- Electronic Devices
- Food
- Behavior and Interactions

Student Impressions
- Start stern, and become more lenient
- Connect with your students
  - Learn students’ names
  - Mandatory office hours one week?
- Connect, but not too much
  - Know your boundaries
The Civility Spectrum – When Incivility Erupts

- Annoyance
- Minor Disruption
- Significant Disruption
- Aggressive Challenge
- Physical/Mental Distress or Threats

When to Intervene?

- Immediately?
  - Redirect
  - General statements to class
  - Emergency
- Later?
  - Ask for a few minutes after class
  - Invite to office hours
- Publically or privately?
  - Speak privately if possible

Reacting to Undesirable Behavior

- Assume good/inoffensive motives
- Model good behavior
  - Calm
  - Respectful
  - Don’t escalate
- Remind of an existing rule

When the Discussion Goes Off Track

- Reframe student remarks to get them back on topic
- Elicit participation from others
- Intervene when students make offensive, prejudicial remarks
- Teach students to handle conflict through LISTENING

Guidelines for Intervention

- Be assertive
  - Describe
  - LISTEN to student
  - Explain
  - Specify
    - Needed Behavior
    - Consequences
    - Other Options
- Seek support
  - Coordinator
  - Chair
  - Assoc. Dean
  - Office of Ombudsperson
  - Community Standards & Student Conduct

Classroom Disruption Policy

... When a student’s behavior in a classroom, laboratory, or other formal learning environment is such that the rights of other enrolled students to an effective learning climate are being violated, the student shall lose the privilege of attending receiving credit in the class. ...

Source: NIU Undergraduate Catalog 2013-2014
Last Little Bits of Goodness:

- Don’t be afraid to say that you don’t know the answer
- Gracefully admit when you are wrong
- Bottom line: You will always know more than your students – SO, no need to prove your authority with incivility

What would you do?

- Breakfast Club Clip

The Dreaded GRADE APPEAL

- Be Proactive
  - Treat students respectfully
  - Make it a mutual endeavor
  - No “gotcha” philosophy or relationship
  - Explanation of syllabus
    - Direct, complete, straightforward
    - Minimize the subjective – grade performance, not effort

Responding to a Grade Appeal

- Don’t take it personally. Really.
- Talk to the student
  - In person, if possible
  - Verify whether or not one of you made an error
  - Respond to student questions
  - Invite student to visit ombudsperson and/or chair
  - Advise chair of issue/respond to chair

Talking with Parents

- You CAN talk with them
- You CANNOT talk with parents about a particular student without student permission
- Talk about class in general, syllabus, grading standards
- Refer to supervisor/department chair

Questions and Answers

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwHJscGqgs