

# AUBURN UNIVERSITY POLICY ON CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

## § INTRODUCTION

The goal of Auburn University and its faculty and students is to foster a dynamic environment of higher learning where all students develop analytical skills, learn to think critically and communicate effectively, promote inquiry, pursue knowledge, and prepare for productive careers. Behavior in the classroom that impedes teaching and learning and creates obstacles to this goal is considered disruptive and therefore subject to sanctions. The purpose of these sanctions is to create and protect an optimum learning experience; they should not be considered punitive, neither by the student nor instructor. Disagreement expressed in a civil fashion, eccentricity, idiosyncrasy, and unconventional behavior are not, per se, disruptive to the classroom experience. These sanctions are intended only to preserve the classroom as a place to pursue knowledge, exchange ideas, and share opinions in an atmosphere of tolerance. Students have the responsibility of complying with behavioral standards. Faculty have a professional responsibility to set reasonable limits on the expression of opinions while treating students with dignity, respect, and understanding while guiding classroom activities.

At the classroom level, clear guidelines for behavior and early intervention are the foundation for an intellectually stimulating experience for students and instructors alike. Instructors are encouraged to include in their syllabi guidelines for classroom behavior. Instructors who state these guidelines early and enforce them at the first appearance of disruptive behavior prevent minor episodes of classroom misconduct from escalating into serious confrontations and help transgressors to avoid the more serious consequences of such actions.

Examples of improper behavior in the classroom (including the virtual classroom of e-mail, chat rooms, telephony, and web activities associated with courses) may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- arriving after a class has begun
- eating or drinking
- use of tobacco products
- monopolizing discussion
- persistent speaking out of turn
- distractive talking, including cell phone usage
- audio or video recording of classroom activities or the use of electronic devices  
without the permission of the instructor
- refusal to comply with reasonable instructor directions
- employing insulting language or gestures
- verbal, psychological, or physical threats, harassment, and physical violence

## § POLICY

1. When confronted with disruptive, but non-threatening behavior, the instructor should issue a general word of caution to the class as a whole rather than to a particular student so as not to exacerbate the problem.

2. If a general caution directed to the entire class does not stop the disruptive activity, the instructor should endeavor to meet in private with the disruptive student. The resulting discussion should include a description of the problem, the reason it is disruptive, and the consequences of continued violations of classroom behavior guidelines.

3. If the disruptive behavior is preventing further instruction, the instructor is authorized to ask the disruptive student to leave the class immediately for the remainder of the class session. Removal from the classroom for more than one class period, for an extended period, or on a permanent basis normally requires the instructor to file charges of a violation of the Auburn University Discipline Code with the Vice President for Student Affairs. The department head/chair or dean may negotiate a withdrawal from the course or a transfer of the disruptive student to a different course section or course, if, in his or her opinion, a different instructor and different classmates would defuse the situation and provide the disruptive student with a new learning opportunity.

4. If threats have been made or physical violence is imminent, the instructor should notify the Auburn University Department of Public Safety immediately. The instructor should also notify the course department head/chair or dean promptly, followed by a memo to the department head/chair or dean documenting the incident and actions taken.

Instructors and administrators are encouraged to maintain records of all disruptive incidents and any actions taken concerning them. Nothing in this policy is intended to infringe or restrict the educational process or the academic freedom of Auburn students or instructors.