



Course Agreements

Course agreements can be helpful for setting norms and expectations for respectful and learning-centered behavior in your classes. Daniel Choe (Department of Human Ecology) and Sue Ebeler (Department of Viticulture & Enology) share their processes for establishing course agreements in their classes.

Daniel Choe, Ph.D., Assistant Professor Department of Human Ecology

In both small and large classes, I've actively facilitated a whole class discussion about what makes a classroom a safe, inclusive space for learning. I'll write students' suggestions on the board and poll the class in real-time with a show of hands about whether they believe certain rules should be included and what revisions should be made. Once we come to a consensus, usually on the first day of meeting, I'll take a picture of the rules and post it to our Canvas site as an agreement among all parties to follow with widespread buy-in.

I've never done this online but I intend to do so in Zoom for both my classes this fall as they are discussion-heavy. I'll encourage students to write suggestions in the chat box, which I can copy and paste onto the whiteboard or in a screen shared Word document. I'll ask students to provide feedback through the chat box and elicit yay/nays with the thumbs up and thumbs down emojis in Zoom. TAs can help out tremendously during this process in either reading aloud the text entries so they're captured on lecture recordings, or copy and pasting text entries into a document. Obviously this process excludes students who cannot join lectures live, but opportunities for them to provide feedback can be created within Canvas when you post the rules.

Sue Ebeler, Ph.D., Associate Dean and Professor Department of Viticulture & Enology

In a class that I teach, I put in the syllabus the following:

Classroom Agreements

As an instructor I am committed to creating a classroom learning climate where each individual is respected for their contributions to the class:

- Diverse perspectives and ideas are celebrated
- We each take ownership for our learning and we all learn from each other
- We learn from our mistakes



How will we learn together? What classroom environment do you want to create?

And then on the first day of class we go over this and I get suggestions from the students on what they want to include for the classroom agreements/classroom environment. We discuss together and then I post all of the agreements on the syllabus and course Canvas site. Below is an example of what the students agreed to for this spring in my class—some of these are very specific to the online environment this quarter which I found interesting and which I appreciated and helped me to better understand their thoughts and feelings about the situation:

How will we learn together? What classroom environment do you want to create?

- Don't speak over each other.
- Listen to each other.
- Be respectful of things going on around each of us. Many of us are joining in from homes and personal spaces. Please be respectful of this and recognize that sometimes there are things going on around us that we may not be able to control.
- Respect all questions that are asked.
- Share names with each other; try to build community with each other.
- Have fun while learning!