

10 In the Moment Responses for Student Incivility & other “Uh Oh/Sigh/Say What Now” Classroom Moments

To get faculty thinking about what they might say to respond to troubling classroom moments, here are a few sample responses that could be used immediately and in the moment:

Turn into a discussion or learning moment

1. *What does our course material say about what was just said?*

- Possible follow-up: How might our course material address these comments? How might scholars in this field respond? How has/might the course content explain this statement? Say? Etc.?

2. *What is the logical extension of what was just said?*

- Possible follow-up: If we extrapolate from what was just said what else could be assumed? What other ideas might be connected to that statement? What does our course material say about this?

3. *You seem to be having a strong emotional reaction to the course material. I am giving you to opportunity to pause and recover before we proceed.*

- Possible follow up: Use this time to think about why that might be the case. We can discuss that reason in the context of learning and mastering the course material.

Tell student to stop/behavior not allowed

4. *Your behavior violates the disruptive behavior/student code of conduct/ground rules/etc. policy and will not be allowed in this classroom.*

- Possible follow up: Remind and reiterate to the student of the next steps of the policy. For example, this is a formal warning and if this behavior continues the next step will be to involve the Dean of Students.

5. A raised voice and personal attacks and language that targets/stereotypes or is aggressive towards any group is not tolerated in this classroom.

- Possible follow up: The options for those who engage in such behaviors are removal from the class session, course or the university since disruptions to the classroom environment and student learning cannot and will not be allowed.

Remind of classroom goals & expectations

6. You do not have to agree with the course material. However, you do have to demonstrate that you understand and can communicate the disciplinary perspective presented in this course's material.

7. This classroom is a place where we can discuss and interrogate ideas however we do so with respect and in the context of the course material.

8. Free speech is allowed as all students are encouraged to respectfully share their perspectives and ideas as a part of the process of learning the course material.

- Possible follow up: As this is a course and classroom in a college setting, ideas and perspectives must be articulated in a manner consistent with the behavior expectations of the classroom/university and which furthers students' mastery of the presented course material.

(Begin to) Recover if you didn't address the uncivil or "Uh Oh/Sigh/Say What Now" moment immediately or you made the problematic statement

9. Ten minutes ago/Yesterday/Last week a statement was made in class that I did not address at that time but want to do so now.

- Possible follow up: I want to return to it now because it is important for me to affirm and uphold the behavior expectations and/or learning objectives of this course. Specifically, a student said/did "_____". This is not in line with the behavior expectations or learning objectives of this course and thus will not be allowed. In the future, I will do my best to more immediately address similar incidents.

10. I apologize for saying/doing “_____”.

- Possible follow up: What I said/did was not in line with the behavior expectations or learning objectives of our course because I _____ (e.g. stereotyped a group). In the future, I will be more mindful and reflective about my statements/behaviors in an effort to maintain the learning environment of our classroom

Faculty are encouraged to edit these starter statements to fit their “voice”, preferred tone, pedagogy and then practice, practice, and practice by saying them aloud. Of course, how faculty respond will depend on the context of their institution, course, pedagogy, the incident itself, etc. The point is that if faculty have an idea of what they might say and practice doing so, it should better equip and prepare them to act—more immediately--when troublesome classroom moments arise.