



## **Civility and Classroom Agreements Exercise**

[Faculty Name]

[Course Name]



The “Civility and Classroom Agreements” exercise may be helpful to use during Weeks 1 or 2

The objective of this exercise is to utilize Civility as a framework for creating classroom agreements (a.k.a. expectations or guidelines)

Student participation is encouraged to increase buy-in, sense of community, and accountability

All slides are customizable and easy to change for the unique needs of each course and Faculty member

If you have any questions about utilizing this exercise in the classroom, please feel free to reach out to the Civility Campaign in the Dean of Students Office at (760) 750-4935.



Civility is conducting oneself with self-reflection, care, respect, and empathy while acknowledging the culture and humanity of others.



Before providing the CSUSM definition of Civility, Faculty may want to engage students in a brief discussion using one or more of the questions below.

Brief Discussion Ideas:

- What do you know about the terms “civility” and “civil discourse?”
- How do you react when you hear the terms “civility and “civil discourse” being used?
- From your perspective, what is civility? How about civil discourse?



## **Civil discourse is *not*...**

- Everyone agreeing or having the same opinion
- Avoiding difficult conversations with diverse perspectives



While some view civil discourse as shutting down dialogue and disagreement, this slide is intended to address the “myths” about civility and civil discourse.

Faculty may want to provide examples of incivility here, such as:

- Interrupting others
- Raising your voice at someone
- Texting in class and not listening
- Putting up a wall or “checking out” when disagreement occurs
- Dominating the discussion without listening to others



### **Civil discourse is...**

- Trying both to understand *and* be understood
- Trying to uncover multiple perspectives rather than becoming entrenched in either/or thinking
- An integral aspect of the learning process



Civil discourse includes both speaking up and sharing one's opinion, AND listening to others' perspectives

Civil discourse helps students learn from one another and think about topics from a different perspective



## Classroom Agreements

What are some guidelines that we could all follow that would create Civility in our classroom?



Engage students in creating a list of guidelines or agreements.

Either a student or the Faculty member can take notes to post in the classroom and/or in Cougar Courses.

As students provide answers, Faculty may want to ask, “What does that look like?” to ensure students are defining words such as “respectful.”

If students say, “Don’t judge people,” help them reframe it to a positive by asking, “So what SHOULD we do?” (e.g. Remain open-minded and non-judgmental)

If students are struggling to come up with classroom agreements, some ideas are as follows:

- Participate, speak up, and express your thoughts and feelings
- Listen to others’ opinions or thoughts
- Ask questions and be curious if there is misunderstanding
- Use “I statements” such as, “I believe...” or “In my opinion...”
- Remain open-minded to similarities and differences
- Provide a non-judgmental space for dialogue
- Maintain open communication
- Listen actively with eye contact when possible
- Put cell phones on vibrate at beginning of class
- Be aware of sharing equally
- Have FUN!



## **Civility Pledge**

As a member of the CSUSM community...  
I will conduct myself with self-reflection, care,  
respect, and empathy...  
while acknowledging the culture and  
humanity of others.



Faculty may want to provide students the opportunity to state the Civility Pledge out loud in class.

### Additional Ideas:

- Students can either take a selfie (picture of them taking the Civility Pledge) or create a video of them reciting the Civility Pledge.
- Students can be encouraged to use #CivilityCSUSM when posting on Facebook and Instagram.
- Students can “Like” or “Follow” the CSUSM Civility Campaign Facebook and Instagram page, and post the photo or video.
- Students can be encouraged to attend Civility learning opportunities such as the Civility Café series (skill-based workshops) or Civility Dialogues (opportunities to engage in civil discourse).
- More information at <http://www.csusm.edu/civility>

## References



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- Knepp, K.A.F. (2012). Understanding Student and Faculty Incivility in Higher Education. *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 12(1), 32-45.
- Schroeder, J. L., & Robertson, H. (2008). Civility in the College Classroom. Retrieved July 28, 2016, from <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2008/november-08/civility-in-the-college-classroom.html>
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