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| University of Colorado Boulder |
| Guide for Establishing Course Expectations and Managing Classroom Dynamics |
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| Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance  10-6-2025 |

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# Background

Quote from a CU graduate:

*“I cannot forget the racist and ignorant comments made by students in my class, and what a distraction it was since I was then left to deal with microaggressions in the classroom by myself. This left me feeling like I was not safe to speak up, and I decided to disassociate from my academics, to ‘just get the grade’ and keep it going. I am saddened to have missed the entirety of my schooling because I felt unsafe or uncomfortable in my classes.”* [Statement posted on CU Boulder social media]

*Instructor Effectiveness* data collected in the CU 2021 Campus Culture Survey (CCS) indicate that a substantial proportion of students from all race/ethnicity identities had concerns about their classroom instructors’ ability to navigate challenging classroom dynamics, including effectively responding to offensive comments and managing discussions about sensitive or difficult topics:

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| --- | --- |
| “Offensive comments have been challenged by course instructors in class discussion.”[[1]](#footnote-1) | |
| Race/Ethnicity Identity | **Percent of students who *disagree* or only *somewhat agree* with this statement** |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 54% |
| Asian or Asian American | 46% |
| Black or African American | 54% |
| Latine or Hispanic | 42% |
| Middle Eastern or North African | 53% |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 49% |
| White | 40% |

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| “Instructors successfully manage discussions about sensitive or difficult topics.”1 | |
| Race/ethnicity Identity | **Percent of students who *disagree* or only *somewhat agree* with this statement** |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 30% |
| Asian or Asian American | 30% |
| Black or African American | 40% |
| Latine or Hispanic | 27% |
| Middle Eastern or North African | 32% |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 38% |
| White | 26% |

Further, in the 2021 CCS, this item assessing instructor effectivenessis positively and significantly correlated with scores on the composite variable *Sense of CU Belonging* for undergraduates across all race/ethnicity groups (all r’s ≥ .38, p-values < .0001); this relationship is strongest for Black/African American undergraduates (r=.47, p < .0001) and International undergraduates (r = .49, p < .0001). The close link between classroom instructors’ skills for navigating challenging dynamics and students’ sense of fitting in and feeling valued, accepted, and included isn’t surprising. [“When students walk into a campus, they don’t know who the provost is. They don’t even know what a provost is. … Students, when they walk into a class, whoever is at the front of the class, that is the institution to them.”](https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-colleges-can-support-the-mental-health-of-students-of-color?emailConfirmed=true&supportSignUp=true&supportForgotPassword=true&email=julie.volckens@colorado.edu&success=true&code=success&bc_nonce=b7drj0802cba2uh0zorbn&sra=true)

As a follow-up to the original analyses of the 2021 Campus Culture Survey, the relationship between first-year students’ *Sense of CU Belonging* (measured in mid-fall 2021 in the CCS) and the likelihood of being retained at CU to the spring 2024 semester was examined. A first-year student’s sense of belonging strongly predicted their probability of still being enrolled in spring 2024. Such was the case for students with low, average, and high academic preparedness as measured by high school grade point average, or HSGPA[[2]](#footnote-2).

**A graph of a number of students

AI-generated content may be incorrect.**

Overall, the results of these analyses suggest that students with more effective classroom instructors feel a greater sense of belonging at CU and are more likely to remain enrolled at the university. Given these findings, providing opportunities to support classroom leaders to continue to enhance their skills for managing logistics, dynamics, and difficult situations in the classroom is an important area to target for improving student experiences, success, well-being, and retention.

# Collaborate on Creating Community Agreements

Consider the classroom norms that would lead to a welcoming and engaging learning environment, and build time into the first class (or classes) to co-create these norms *together*. This should include what is expected of them and what students can expect from you. Collaborating with students to establish the classroom ground rules and behavioral norms increases the likelihood for a more collegial and productive classroom culture and provides both classroom leaders and students with explicit guidelines for navigating classroom dynamics.

By creating the expectations together, it will also make it easier for you and your students to respond to problematic comments and derailed conversations. Classroom leaders are encouraged to document expectations for engagement in their course syllabus once the norms and guidelines have been agreed upon.

## What kind of classroom culture do we want?

* Guide students towards identifying explicit behavioral expectations to operationalize shared values and norms. If someone volunteers that students should “treat each other with respect,” press them to identify the behaviors that convey respect (*giving others the benefit of the doubt, not interrupting, not monopolizing the conversation, trying hard to be curious about someone else’s point of view, etc*.). Likewise, have them identify what would constitute a lack of respect (i.e., *name calling, sarcasm, cutting someone off, talking over other people, eye rolling, not trying to understand*).
* Ask what norms (or rules) the class will need to engage in rigorous critical and intellectual discussions but not drift into personal attacks.
* How will members of the class respond when they disagree with what someone is saying (including you)?
* Determine how you and your students will respond when things go wrong (when classroom norms are violated or feel violated). Refer to the resource, [Calling People In: Guidance for Faculty](https://www.colorado.edu/oiec/media/202) on skills for responding to problematic comments and difficult interactions.
* If applicable, ask them to consider how virtual class-related contexts (discussion threads, emails, texts, Zoom meetings and chats) should be different from other online contexts? (i.e., how is posting in a course discussion thread not like/like posting on social media?)
* What behaviors will be out of bounds?

## Be clear about what students can expect from you.

Possible things to include:

* Assure them that you are invested in what they have to say even if you don’t agree with them, and that you expect students to support their arguments with evidence (and you should establish what will count as evidence in your course.)
* Express commitment to address concerning comments or behaviors that come up in the context of the class (either in the moment or the next time the class meets) and let students know that you may follow up with them outside of class time.
* Make them aware that if a conversation strays off topic, you may need to cut it short to get the discussion back on track.
* You reserve the right to remove any posts in discussion forums that are outside the course topic area or that you consider a violation of course rules, community norms, or CU policy without notifying the student.
  + Ideally, before removing a post (and if not possible, definitely right after you remove it), it’s essential to let the student know and set aside time to discuss your action.
  + You could also consider *not* removing a problematic post and use it as a teachable moment, depending on the content and context.
* Alert them that the syllabus was posted in Canvas before the first class meeting.
* Be thorough and transparent about your course content in the syllabus and well in advance of assignments, readings, video, etc. This gives students the opportunity to make an informed decision on whether to remain in your class or choose a different section or course. Encourage students who have concerns to make time to meet with you.
  + Recent research has shown that trigger or content warnings have *no* effect on affective responses to negative material or on educational outcomes[[3]](#footnote-3).

## Work to reach consensus on classroom values and norms.

* Review the list of community agreements together and ask what’s missing.
* Encourage students who seem hesitant to express their ideas or concerns and try to address those concerns together with the class; invite anyone who isn’t comfortable speaking to your office hours.
* If possible, by the end of the first class, get verbal confirmation that everyone can support and commit to the agreements you’ve generated together.
* Make clear that the community agreements can be augmented or revised at a future point in time. Issues may come up during the semester that haven’t been properly accounted for in the original list.
* Once the class has reached consensus during the first week or two of classes, *add these norms to the syllabus prior to the next class meeting*.

## The Fumble Framework

Donna Mejia (Faculty Fellow, Renee Crown Wellness Institute; Associate Professor in the Theater and Dance Department; Interdisciplinary Librarian for Inclusive Studies) has developed a framework for approaching difficult conversations in the classroom called, “Fumble Forward.” At the start of the semester, students make a social contract to extend the benefit of the doubt to each other. A student who wants to share a comment or question that they worry might not come across well asks to “fumble with their words.” The class responds in unison with “fumble forward,” agreeing to suspend judgement and work together to address the comment with an expectation that evidence may be needed to move the problem forward. To clarify, this good will is not extended when the intent is to do harm. When someone makes an out-of-bounds comment without anticipating the harm it could cause, members of the class can respond with something like, “that comment feels like a fumble,” to get the process back on track. [Watch](https://youtu.be/fCFXzL_JRQg?feature=shared) Professor Mejia explain how this approach can be used in the classroom.

## Freedom of Speech

Help students understand that freedom of speech is the right of a person to articulate opinions and ideas without threat or reprisal from the government *or government entities like public universities.* Unless it rises to the level of discrimination or harassment, speech that is hurtful, biased, or offensive in nature is generally protected by the First Amendment. However, this doesn’t mean that students are allowed to personally insult or harass other members of the class *or you*.

The university can’t censor speech but can set expectations in the classroom to ensure the focus stays on a differences of ideas, even those we might find highly offensive, in a way that comports with classroom decorum.

* This is a primary goal of collaboratively creating classroom norms that allow ideas, especially difficult ideas, to be expressed while maintaining a civil space.
* Encourage your students to review the [free expression guiding principles and FAQs](https://www.colorado.edu/about/free-expression#faqs) and campus guidance on [navigating freedom of speech vs. discrimination and harassment](https://www.colorado.edu/oiec/2024/02/16/navigating-freedom-speech-vs-discrimination-and-harassment-campus).
* Consider how you would respond differently to norm transgressions versus direct, identity-based attacks that require [reporting to the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC)](https://www.colorado.edu/oiec/reporting-resolutions).

*The faculty member or graduate student instructor leading the class determines the broad parameters of engagement* including which topics will be considered relevant to the course. *Faculty and graduate student instructors must also abide by these expectations*.

# When Problems Arise Nevertheless

* Consult with the [faculty guide for Calling People In](https://www.colorado.edu/oiec/media/202) for ideas on how to address challenging classroom comments and behaviors including microaggressions.
* Refer to the community agreements when norms get violated to re-center the class and get back on track; if the class collectively agreed to these norms, the norms can be your touchstone for addressing problematic comments and behavior.
* It is never too late to add new expectations to the community agreements. If something unexpected happens that wasn’t addressed in the original document, propose an addition or amendment and work with the class to fine tune the goal and wording.
* Have a plan for when to address, when to diffuse, and when to delay. If you’re caught off guard, it’s appropriate to say so (“I’m not sure how best to respond right now. I need time to think about what just happened and consider our next steps. We’ll take this up the next time we meet.”) Students don’t need you to have a perfect and immediate response. *What’s most important is that they see you leading on the issue and making time to address concerning comments or behaviors in alignment with your community agreements.*
* Think about when to redirect a student who is rambling or taking up too much class time and how you will do that (e.g., “We need to move on, so if you still have questions or feel like you haven’t been able to make your point, we can talk more after class.”)
* If a student violates the agreed-upon norms, you’ll need to follow up with that student individually; it is also important to address what happened at the next class meeting to let other students know that you have handled the situation. Ideally, revisit the classroom norms and discuss how to move forward. *This might include amending the community agreements.* Invite anyone who wants to discuss this with you further to your office hours.

# Clarify your Rules and Expectations[[4]](#footnote-4)

Communicating upfront what you expect in as much detail as possible is foundational for creating a welcoming and productive classroom to support the success of all students. However, consider collaborating with the class on policies and practices where you feel comfortable co-creating the rules. There is substantial research showing that autonomy enhances motivation; for instance, in one randomized controlled study, investigators found that when college students were allowed to *choose* whether to make their attendance a component of their course grade, the great majority opted in and they were subsequently far more likely to attend class than were students whose attendance had been mandated.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Transparency has been shown to reduce student anxiety, increase motivation and learning, and support students in setting priorities, planning ahead, and seeking out help when needed. Making expectations transparent may be particularly important for first-gen students and others who have not had prior exposure to the US higher education system. It is also a trauma-informed practice that supports students who have experienced adversity and other disruptive life events.

In short, build out your syllabus to be thorough and explicit to reduce the possibility for misunderstandings that can derail your relationship with a student and the class.

Specifically, your syllabus should make the following clear and explicit:

* Course learning outcomes: What skills, knowledge, and experiences can students expect to gain through the course?
* Course schedule:
  + What will students read, do, and discuss in (or prior to) each class session?
  + When are students expected to complete readings or other prep work? When are assignments due?
  + When will assessments (quizzes, exams, etc.) take place?
* Course policies: What are your policies regarding attendance and participation, late submissions, and drops (e.g., dropping the lowest of # exam grades).
* AI usage and documentation:
  + [Guidance and sample syllabus statements developed through a partnership between the BFA and CTL](https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/teaching-technology-ai/teaching-ai/ai-syllabus-statements).
  + [CTL’s page on AI Dialogues with Students](https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/teaching-technology-ai/teaching-ai/ai-dialogue-students)
  + [CTL’s AI Assessment Scale](https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/teaching-technology-ai/teaching-ai/ai-assessment/ai-assessment-scale), which is useful for creating an even more granular AI policy for specific assignments or assessments
* Grading:
  + What percentage of a student’s final grade is each assignment or assessment (or group of assignments or assessments) worth?
  + What are your grading policies (if not already explicated above)?
  + What grading system will you use in this course?
  + If you curve grades, how do you plan to do so?
  + What are your cutoffs for final letter grades?
  + Where can students find feedback on their work?
  + Explore the [Grade for Student Success: Faculty Guide to Student-Centered Grading in Canvas](https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/grade-student-success).

Explore [CTL’s Inclusive Syllabus Checklist](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qbAX53N7_f53ZOfP5kTzm3s0osV_5IPU7zPiB6VuJyk/edit?usp=sharing) to learn more about clarifying rules and expectations in your syllabus to support student success.

Invest time on the first day (or two) of class (*and as needed, early in the semester*) reviewing your syllabus, and consider a syllabus quiz during the second week to ensure students have also reviewed it outside of class, understand the goals and content of the course, and agree to your rules and expectations.

Strategies for facilitating an effective first class can be found in [CTL’s First Day Tips](https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/teaching-resources/first-day-tips).

Key details to cover on the first day might include:

## Introductions

* Ask students to introduce themselves to one or two other students including sharing something about themselves (e.g., what’s a place that shaped you as much as any person did?; how did you get your way when you were a kid?) or ask them to discuss something relevant to the course content (e.g., favorite bridge design—defend!, most beautiful math proof and why, their tricks for learning chemical formulas; favorite fine artist of the 20th century.)[[6]](#footnote-6)
  + *Revisit this practice throughout the semester to give them additional opportunities to forge meaningful connections with other students in your classroom (“speed friending”).*

## Course content

* Invite students to share what they hope to learn in your course and clarify whether that content will be covered. Fully informed, students then have the option to switch to a different section or choose a different course.
* When possible, consider whether it’s feasible to add other content/materials to address their specific interests if they are consistent with your course content/goals.
* Share your goals for the course and what new skills or knowledge you want them to have by the end of the semester.

## Course logistics

* What counts as participation, and how much is expected?
* Strategies to increase participation:
  + Send discussion questions ahead of time to help students prepare to participate.
  + Offer different options for contributing (e.g., sharing aloud, posting on Canvas, or in the Zoom chat or course backchannel).
  + Pose a question during the class and give students a few minutes to write down their thoughts *or* have them pair off to discuss with each other and then share out. ([Learn more about active learning strategies from the CTL.](https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/teaching-resources/course-design-development/teaching-style-content-delivery/active-learning))
  + Post discussion questions in Canvas, which often brings shy students into the conversation.
    - These strategies support *all* students and are especially valuable to those who appreciate time to process and organize their thoughts before speaking up.
* What is your policy on being late to class or leaving early?
* How/when should students ask you questions outside of class (*right after class, during office hours, by email, it depends*)?
* How/when will you respond to email? (*Give a timeframe for responding, such as within 48 hours. What about answering on weekends?)*
* Can students post for help with homework from you or other students in your virtual classroom platform (Piazza, Canvas, etc.)? If so, what are the rules for asking for help? For instance, should students elaborate on where they are stuck and share their work up to that point rather than simply post asking for the answer?
* How/when will homework be turned in?
* Do you accept late assignments? If yes, will there be penalties for being late?
* What kind of feedback can they expect on their graded assignments and tests?
  + Where can they find feedback on their work (e.g., annotated directly on their assignment submission in Canvas, in the Canvas gradebook, on the Canvas rubric for that assignment, or elsewhere).
    - This is especially important when external tools, such as Gradescope, contain the feedback.
    - To learn more about students’ experiences in Canvas, this [video shows all the places where students can find feedback on their assignments](https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/103791/pages/finding-feedback-on-your-assignments-students-~7min).
* What is your timeframe for returning corrected assignments and tests?
* What is the timeframe for requesting an accommodation for a religious observance? Point out important dates to alert students to pay attention to potential conflicts and ensure advance notice.
* Other logistics specific to your course.

## Writing and communicating

Touch on during the first class, and review *in depth* just prior to the first assignment that involves writing.

* What counts as proper writing style and in which contexts? (Papers, online posts, etc.)
* What are your expectations for spelling, punctuation, grammar, proofing, and neatness on graded assignments?
* Be clear about whether and when students can use casual language (swearing is okay if it’s not *at* someone), or use slang, especially related to the course content (e.g., when talking about images of human bodies use breasts, not boobs or tits).

## Course standards of evidence

When applicable, touch on during the first class and review *in depth* prior to the first relevant assignment.

* What sources or source materials are considered reliable and valid for the topics you will cover in the course (e.g., NYTimes, Reddit, journal articles in your field, a student’s favorite newsfeed)?
* Do you expect students to cite sources and to distinguish well-supported facts from opinions?
* Let them know that a sample of one (n=1) is information but will not count broadly as evidence in your class (i.e., “We had a black president, so racism doesn’t exist anymore”).

## Artificial Intelligence

* Although it’s a swiftly shifting landscape with exponential improvements occurring over just months and even weeks, Artificial Intelligence (or AI) challenges all classroom leaders to reimagine how and what they teach, what kind of assignments they assign and exams they administer, and how they evaluate their students’ work. You may already be a cutting-edge AI user, or you may be at the beginning of your journey. We strongly recommend that if you haven’t already, you need to become familiar with AI resources such as Gemini and ChatGPT. The widespread availability of generative AI tools has created new challenges and exciting opportunities for educators.
* The CU Generative Futures Lab is an informal and experimental space for faculty, staff and students to interact with generative text, voice, image, and knowledge-management and research tools. Hosted by CU faculty, the lab is open to the campus to learn more about the possibilities and considerations surrounding AI use. The lab is open Monday-Friday from 12-3 pm in the Discovery Learning Center, Room 1B10. If you have questions about the lab, email Diane at [Diane.Sieber@colorado.edu](mailto:diane.sieber@colorado.edu?subject=Generative%20Futures%20Lab).

## Academic honesty

* To what extent are students allowed/encouraged to help each other with graded assignments? When appropriate, consider incorporating [structured peer review](https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/teaching-resources/assessment/assessing-student-learning/student-peer-assessment) during class time to foster skills in giving and receiving constructive feedback, as well as [self-assessment](https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/teaching-resources/assessment/assessing-student-learning/student-self-assessment) to promote metacognition.
* Provide specific and clear instructions about what resources are allowed or are not allowed for assignments and exams. For example, do not say “electronic resources are allowed,” rather specify “Canvas resources are allowed” or “One page of notes is allowed.” Likewise, be sure to [specify clear, granular policies regarding the usage and documentation of generative AI](https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/teaching-technology-ai/teaching-ai/ai-assessment/ai-assessment-scale).
* Proctoring software won’t prevent cheating and can increase students’ anxiety, including around the fear of being falsely flagged for cheating. Making all tests and quizzes open book and open note is one option for addressing the problem. If allowing open notes or books, create assignments and exams that require unique critical thought and application of course material. Learn more about how to design relevant, authentic, equity-minded exams and other summative assessments, and [how to design valid assessments of student learning in context of generative AI](https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/teaching-technology-ai/teaching-ai/ai-assessment/ai-assessment-scale).
* Find information about how AI-related CU Honor Code violations are addressed here: <https://www.colorado.edu/orientation/2023/12/07/3-things-know-about-ai-and-honor-code>.
  + Note: detecting whether a student has used ChatGPT or other generative AI system is notoriously difficult and software that claims to identify work done by AI is unreliable at this time. A better strategy is to incorporate these tools into your teaching and redesign your assignments.

## CU Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policies

* Let your students know that you are a [mandatory reporter](https://www.colorado.edu/oiec/reporting-resolutions/who-required-report) and that you are required to inform the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance ([OIEC](https://www.colorado.edu/oiec/)) of any situation or incident of alleged unwelcome or offensive behavior that you witness (*or that is brought to your attention*) related to campus policies on discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct.
  + Direct students to the [Don’t Ignore It](https://www.colorado.edu/dontignoreit/) website for a comprehensive list of on- and off-campus resources.
  + Familiarize yourself with the Provost’s [required syllabus statements](https://www.colorado.edu/academicaffairs/policies-customs-guidelines/required-syllabus-statements) that address disability accommodations, classroom behavior, preferred student names and pronouns, Honor Code, the Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, and Harassment Policies, and accommodations for religious observances and include them in your syllabus.
  + Become knowledgeable about your obligation to [ensure that your course is accessible to students with disabilities](https://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/resources/faculty-staff-resources), including those who identify as disabled students, whether in person or in the virtual environment.

# Disruptive Student Behavior

The [Student Classroom and Course-Related Behavior Policy](https://www.colorado.edu/compliance/policies/student-classroom-course-related-behavior) applies to both in-person and virtual teaching. However, even with community agreements and syllabus guidelines in place to minimize problems, students may still find ways to disrupt the teaching environment. [Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](http://colorado.edu/sccr) (SCCR) is the CU Boulder resource for enforcing the [*Student Classroom and Course-Related Behavior Policy*](https://www.colorado.edu/compliance/policies/student-classroom-course-related-behavior). They consult on how to respond to disruptive behaviors and will assist you to set course behavioral expectations. If you would like to consult about how to respond to any disruptions, please email [SCCR](mailto:studentconduct@colorado.edu).

Highly disruptive students often have a pattern of escalating disruptions. It’s important that you document these instances from the beginning to establish a pattern. If the student’s disruptive behavior continues, or if a single instance of disruption is egregious enough to warrant it, you may want to [file a report](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofColorado&layout_id=2) with SCCR. Documentation is required if you report a student to SCCR. Upon receipt of the report, SCCR will work with you in setting further behavioral expectations and holding the student accountable for the disruption.

If a situation becomes unmanageable, consider dismissing the class early and focusing directly on the problematic student.

According to the policy:

* If a student is disruptive, you and/or SCCR may ask the student to stop the disruptive behavior and warn the student that such behavior can result in academic or disciplinary action.
* You are authorized to ask a student to leave the classroom or other academic site if you deem it necessary. In this case, you will need to report the matter to SCCR within 24 hours. Your department and/or School/College may also have guidelines about how to report the matter to your Chair or Dean.
* If you feel threatened or worry for the safety of you or your students, call or text the CU Police Department at 911.

If the disruptive incident includes sexual harassment, other protected-class harassment or discrimination, or retaliation related to these issues OR if you become aware that, outside of your class, a student may have experienced other forms of identity-based harassment or sexual misconduct (including sexual assault and sexual harassment), intimate partner abuse, or stalking, all faculty, GPTIs, and TAs [are required to report such incidents](https://www.colorado.edu/oiec/reporting-resolutions/who-required-report) to the [OIEC](https://www.colorado.edu/oiec/reporting-resolutions).

# Example Syllabus Statement

*One of the primary goals of this course is to enhance our skills in scientific argument (modify based on course goal) and to develop sufficient self-awareness to recognize when we are making non-scientific arguments.*

*These topics have been deliberately chosen to stimulate disagreement and much of that disagreement can feel very personal. I will regularly remind us, whenever needed, that our goals center on thoughtful examination of controversial biological ideas, techniques, opportunities, weaknesses, and strengths, but never on individual persons. If I describe my perspective on, say, prenatal genetic screening in connection with abortion options and you disagree with me, it is your job to argue about the strong and weak points of my ideas, but certainly not about me as a person holding ideas that you think are wrong. Persuade me, convince me, show me how my ideas are wrong with thoughtful, evidence-based positions of your own.*

*Students in the class come from different backgrounds and different parts of the country and the world. We aim for a rich mix of perspectives emanating partly because we come from different places, partly because we have different religious and non-religious views, partly because we have different interests, etc.*

*This class aims to encourage you to regularly examine your own views about the topic at hand:  Why do you have this view? Where did you get this view? Is this view open to revision? If not, why not? If yes, how? Throughout the semester, we want to strictly adhere to the principle of making thoughtful arguments, using respectful language, and avoiding personal attacks. Be enthusiastic about your ideas, but don't demean those who disagree.*

*Some of these topics will have been part of your personal experiences or part of your family’s experiences. We will always respect your privacy, and criticism of a particular topic, even if it has affected you personally, will not be directed at you individually. We do want to engage in spirited discussion and arguments where those arguments rest on relevant evidence. If such evidence contradicts or undermines your particular view, are you open to revising your view? Be participative, be authentically curious, and be knowledgeable and thoughtful. And have some fun!*

1. Rating scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These results control for both student race/ethnicity and gender. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bridgland, V.M., Jones, P.J., & Bellet, B.W. (2022). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of trigger warnings, content warnings, and content notes. Clinical Psychological Science, 21677026231186625. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Challenges that happen in the classroom are exponentially amplified in the virtual environment. For online teaching, clarity and thoroughness about your expectations are even more important. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cullen, S., & Oppenheimer, D. (2024). Choosing to learn: The importance of student autonomy in higher education. *Science advances, 10*(29), eado6759. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [2021 Campus Culture Survey Study Peer results](https://viz-public.cu.edu/t/Boulder/views/CUBoulderCultureSurvey2021/FriendsMentors?%3Aembed_code_version=3&%3Aembed=y&%3AloadOrderID=0&%3Adisplay_spinner=no&%3AshowAppBanner=false&%3Adisplay_count=n&%3AshowVizHome=n&%3Aorigin=viz_share_link) show that only 21% of CU undergraduates find it *easy/very easy* to get to know other students in their classes and 56% find it *difficult*. Statistical analyses (see [the CCS Survey Report pdf](https://www.colorado.edu/leadershipsupport/survey-results/survey-report-executive-summary), pgs. 33-38) reveal that difficulty making connections with classroom peers is significantly *negatively* related to Sense of Belonging at CU. Helping students break the ice with peers is a way to scaffold a connection that helps them establish meaningful academic friendships. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)