



**Western Illinois
University**

AMERICAN ACADEMIC CLASSROOM CULTURE

The American Classroom

The culture of the American classroom might be very different from what you have experienced. Many classes encourage and require student participation.

Classes may have several quizzes and tests during the semester instead of one large exam at the end. Independent thinking and honesty is highly valued. Cheating (having someone write your papers/take your exams/give you answers during a test) and plagiarism (submitting someone else's work as your own) is not allowed. Doing so can lead to punishment and possible expulsion from the University. It is important to become familiar with the University's policies on academic integrity:

[Policy on Academic Integrity](#)

Relationships with Professors and Students

- Students tend to be less formal in the US than in most other countries. Professors schedule office hours outside of class so that students can discuss questions about the course. Use this time to get to know your professor, ask questions, and voice concerns.
- **Classroom participation:** Student and teacher relationships tend to be more equal in the United States. Professors expect and reward active student participation in the classroom. They want students to discuss their concerns, give opinions, and share information.
- **Helper sources:** In the US, there are many sources available if you need help. If you have trouble with a course, talk with your professor, faculty adviser, or counselor, or seek tutoring from the Tutoring Centers on campus. Seeking help is not a sign of weakness.

Additional Information

- International students are sometimes surprised by students' behavior in class. American students are likely to dress casually, may bring drinks or snacks to class, and may speak to the instructor in an informal manner
- Students are expected to contribute to, and are often evaluated on, their participation in class. It is not disrespectful to question or engage the professor; it is considered a sign of interest and original thought.
- Some instructors run a more formal classroom than others. The best thing to do is observe and adapt to the degree that you are comfortable.
- EducationUSA You Tube video – [EducationUSA video on classroom culture](#)

Classroom Etiquette

- **Take responsibility for your education.** Instructors are here to create a learning environment. Whether you learn depends on your willingness to listen, ask appropriate questions, and do the work necessary to pass the course. College courses are rigorous and demanding; you may have to work harder and seek more help in order to succeed.
- **Attend every class.** You will find that students who attend every class, listen to the instructor and take good notes will be more likely to pass (with a higher grade). If you have an emergency or illness, contact your instructor ahead of time to let her or him know that you will be absent. *Important note:* If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to meet with the instructor, outside of regular class time, to determine a plan to make up the missed work.
- **Get to class on time.** Students who walk into the classroom late distract other students in the learning environment. Check the course syllabus for the professor's attendance policy.
- **Do not have private conversations.** The noise is distracting to other students.
- **Turn mobile phones off while in class.**

Classroom Etiquette - continued

- **Respect your instructor.** Instructors' classroom policies, procedures, and teaching styles vary: Some instructors, for example, enforce attendance policies vigorously, while others are more lenient about attendance. Assignments and classroom activities are at the prerogative of the instructor. Consult the instructor's syllabus for specific information pertinent to each class.
- **Your classmates deserve your respect and support.**
- **Come to class prepared.** Students who forget common classroom supplies (such as a pencil, paper, books, test materials, etc.) usually waste class time.
- **Turn in your work on time.** It is important to plan ahead. Students who wait until the last minute to do their work usually make lower grades and are more likely to miss deadlines. Study and do your assignments every day. Doing so ensures that if a problem occurs at the last minute, such as a computer malfunction, you will still be prepared.
- **Do not bring children to class.** Children in classrooms are distracting to the instructor, other students, and you. You need to plan ahead for childcare.
- Remember, if you have questions, ask your instructor. Instructors have regular office hours or you can email them directly.



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