

**REPORT OF THE RESULTS OF A SURVEY OF UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS STUDENTS AND FACULTY ON CIVILITY IN CLASSROOMS**

**CONDUCTED FOR THE
OFFICE OF STUDENT MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION
SUE THEISS, DIRECTOR AND OMBUD**

**BY THE
SURVEY RESEARCH CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS**

SPRING 2006

Report of University of Arkansas' Students and Faculty on Classroom Civility
For Sue Theiss, Director and Ombud, Office of Student Mediation and Conflict Resolution
By the Survey Research Center, University of Arkansas
July 17, 2006

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the spring of 2006, all faculty and a random sample of students were asked to gauge the level of disruptiveness of selected student classroom behaviors. Students also evaluated the importance of aspects of teacher preparation for the classroom environment. Responding students represent UA students well. About three quarters are undergraduates and all colleges and the School of Architecture are represented. On average, the students were taking a full load of courses and working even more hours weekly in the labor force.

The responding faculty have nearly 20 years of experience, on average; more than 80 percent hold doctorates and the position of professor at some level. About 85 percent describe themselves as white; 6 percent Asian and 3.4 percent black or African American. They taught an average of two undergraduate classes during spring semester and/or one to two graduate classes. Altogether, the faculty who taught spring semester spent more than three hours per week, on average, in the classroom *per se*, but some spent as many as 26 hours there weekly. Responding faculty were more likely to teach undergraduate classes than graduate classes and average class size was much larger for undergraduate classes.

The behaviors considered very disruptive to the largest groups of students and faculty are verbally abusive or disrespectful comments that students make toward themselves or others, and use of vulgar or insulting language or gestures. A sizable share of students also finds lack of personal hygiene very disruptive.

Students and faculty also find chatting, whispering and/or talking in class as moderately disruptive, on average. Both faculty and students consider students preparing to leave before class ends, leaving or otherwise interrupting class before it is finished and using electronic devices in class to be disruptive. Faculty, however, rate these as even more disruptive than students do. On the other hand, students appraise other students interrupting themselves and/or their classmates and dominating class discussions as more disruptive than do their instructors. Overall, students judge the behaviors about which the survey inquires as slightly less disruptive than faculty do.

In their ratings of the importance of teacher preparation to classroom environment, students avow, on average, it is very important for faculty to explain assignments clearly, teach using appropriate and current knowledge of subject matter, set clear expectations about assignments, be approachable and open to receiving questions and concerns, be prepared for class, be respectful toward students, strive to making learning innovative and interesting, maintain a classroom environment that is conducive to learning, provide reliable contact information and response, and provide prompt feedback on work completed. Students view all the other identified aspects of teacher preparation as important, except for the option of evaluating their teachers at midterm.

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Student Mediation & Conflict Resolution, a division of Student Affairs at the University of Arkansas (U of A) asked the Survey Research Center (SRC) to conduct surveys of faculty and students on the subject of civility in classrooms. The surveys were conducted during spring semester 2006 with a random sample of faculty and students. Approximately 29 percent of the surveyed students and 51 percent of the teaching faculty at the U of A responded to the survey. This is a report of the findings of the survey.

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

Demographic Characteristics of Responding Students

Table 1 provides the educational demographics of the students who responded to the survey. About 77 percent of the responding students are undergraduates; of the remainder, about 22 percent are graduate or professional degree candidates and around 1 percent are non-degree seeking students. The most commonly represented college is the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, with 38 percent of responding students. The College of Business, the College of Education and Health Professions and the College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences were represented by between 11 and 18 percent of students, the College of Engineering by around 9 percent of students and the School of Architecture, the Graduate School and the Law School were represented by 2 to 4 percent of students.

Students are enrolled for a wide range of credit hours, but take 13 on average. About 35 percent of students are enrolled for 13 to 15 credit hours and approximately 20 percent each of students are enrolled for 10 to 12 credit hours and 16 to 18 credit hours (Table 1). Students enrolled in 4 to 6 credit hours and students with 7 to 9 credit hours represent around 9 percent each of respondents while approximately 5 percent of responding students are taking 0 to 3 hours and slightly more than one percent are taking 18 to 21 credit hours.

Table 1 Educational Demographics of Responding Students

	Frequency	Percent	Mean
Q37 What is your year in school?			
1 Freshman	56	16.9	
2 Sophomore	49	14.8	
3 Junior	76	23.0	
4 Senior	76	23.0	
5 Graduate - Master's level	46	13.9	
6 Graduate - Doctoral level	18	5.4	
7 Professional school – Law	8	2.4	
8 Non-degree seeking	2	0.6	
Total	331	100	
Mean			3.31

	Frequency	Percent	Mean
Q38 What is your college?			
1 Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences	39	11.8	
2 School of Architecture	7	2.1	
3 College of Arts and Sciences	126	38.2	
4 College of Business Administration	58	17.6	
5 College of Education and Health Professions	49	14.8	
6 College of Engineering	30	9.1	
7 Graduate School	13	3.9	
8 School of Law	8	2.4	
Total	330	100	
Mean			3.77
Q39 How many hours of coursework are you taking this semester?			
0-3 Credit Hours	16	5.1	
4-6 Credit Hours	28	9.0	
7-9 Credit Hours	27	8.7	
10-12 Credit Hours	63	20.3	
13-15 Credit Hours	111	35.7	
16-18 Credit Hours	62	19.9	
19-21 Credit Hours	4	1.3	
Total	311	100	
Mean			12.55

Table 2 displays the personal demographics of the responding students. More than one-third of responding students (36.7%) say they do not work for pay. Another 20 percent work between 11 and 20 hours per week, while between 13 and 16 percent work 21 to 30 and 31 to 40 hours per week, respectively. Almost 10 percent work 1 to 10 hours per week and the remaining 4.3 percent work more than 40 hours per week. The students who do work for pay spend an average of 16 hours per week at work.

About two-thirds of the responding students are ages 19 to 24 (67.7%) and about half of the remainder (16.8%) are ages 25 to 30. Approximately 86 percent of students who responded to the survey were white or Caucasian. Students who are black or African-American and Asian students each represent around 4 percent of respondents. Six students say they are Latino (1.9%), 5 international (1.6%), 1 student declares himself American Indian or Alaskan Native (.3%) and 4 students claim some other race (1.3%). A slight majority (56.8%) of responding students are female.

Table 2 Personal Demographics of Responding Students

	Frequency	Percent	Mean
Q40 Approximately how many hours per week do you work for pay?			
0 Hours per week	112	36.7	
1-10 Hours per week	28	9.2	
11-20 Hours per week	63	20.7	
21-30 Hours per week	42	13.8	
31-40 Hours per week	47	15.4	
Over 40 Hours per week	13	4.3	
Total	305	100	
Mean			16.12
age Age of respondent			
19 Years old	28	9.0	
20 Years old	54	17.4	
21 Years old	46	14.8	
22-24 Years old	82	26.5	
25-30 Years old	52	16.8	
31-40 Years old	30	9.7	
41-50 Years old	15	4.8	
51-60 Years old	3	1.0	
Total	310	100	
Mean			24.91
Median			22
Q42 Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic group?			
1 White or Caucasian	273	86.4	
2 Black or African American	14	4.4	
3 Hispanic or Latin American	6	1.9	
4 Asian	15	4.7	
5 American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.3	
7 International	5	1.6	
10 Something else (Please specify)			
Homo Sapiens	1		
Mix	1		
Total Something Else	2	0.6	
Total	316	100	
Mean			1.44
Q43 Are you male or female?			
1 Male	142	43.2	
2 Female	187	56.8	
Total	329	100	
Mean			1.57

Demographic Characteristics and Teaching Responsibilities of Responding Faculty

Demographic Characteristics

The responding faculty have taught at the U of A or elsewhere for 16.5 years, on average (Table 3). Nearly one-quarter of instructors have taught for 1 to 7 years (24.3%), and about one-fifth each for 8 to 12, 13 to 19, or 20 to 29 years. Faculty who have taught for 30 to 39 years represent 16.2 percent of all responding instructors. While more than one-third of the faculty has worked at the U of A for seven years or fewer, the remainder have worked at the U of A for a slightly shorter period than they have taught.

A large majority of the instructors who responded to the survey are professors or associate professors (61%) or assistant professors (21.7%). Instructors compose 11.4 percent of respondents and administrators 2.4 percent. Librarians, lecturers, postdoctoral instructors, school mentors and faculty who serve in dual roles as administrators each account for 1 percent or fewer of respondents.

Table 3 Professional Demographics of Responding Instructors

	Frequency	Percent	Mean
Q27 How many years have you taught (at the U of A or elsewhere)?			
0 Never	1	0.20	
1 Less than 1 year	11	2.25	
2 1 - 7 years	108	22.09	
3 8 - 12 years	84	17.18	
4 13 - 19 years	88	18.00	
5 20 - 29 years	99	20.25	
6 30 - 39 years	79	16.16	
7 40 or more years	19	4	
Total	489	100	
Mean			16.5

Q28 For approximately how many years have you worked at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville?			
1 Less than 1 year	14	2.86	
2 1 - 7 years	168	34.29	
3 8 - 12 years	81	16.53	
4 13 - 19 years	92	18.78	
5 20 - 29 years	87	17.76	
6 30 - 39 years	40	8.16	
7 40 or more years	8	1.63	
Total	490	100	
Mean			19.5

Q29 Which of the following best describes the positions that you hold?			
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	Frequency	Percent	Mean
1 Professor	185	37.5	
2 Associate Professor	119	24.1	
3 Assistant Professor	107	21.7	
4 Instructor	56	11.4	
5 Administrator	12	2.4	
10 Professor and Administrator	5	1.0	
8 Librarian/Associate Librarian	4	0.8	
9 Post-Doctoral	2	0.4	
11 Lecturer	2	0.4	
12 School Mentor	1	0.2	
Total	493	100	

More than three-fourths of the faculty (78%) who responded to the survey have earned a doctorate and 16.5 percent a master's degree. The lion's share of responding instructors consider themselves to be white or Caucasian (84.8%). Of the remaining instructors, 6 percent say they are Asian, 3.4 percent black or African-American, and the remaining racial or ethnic groups each represent 1 to 1.7 percent of faculty. Women compose 34.3 percent of the responding instructors.

Table 4 Personal Demographics of Responding Faculty

	Frequency	Percent
Q30 What is the highest degree you have earned?		
3 Doctorate (Ph.D. or Ed.D.)	382	78.0
2 Master's degree	81	16.5
4 Professional degree (J.D., M.D., etc.)	25	5.1
1 Bachelor's degree	2	0.4
Total	490	100
Q31 Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic group:		
7 White or Caucasian	397	85.0
2 Asian	28	6.0
3 Black or African American	16	3.4
1 American Indian or Alaska Native	8	1.7
6 International	7	1.5
5 Hispanic or Latin American	5	1.1
8 Something else (please specify)	6	1.3
Other.		
I don't know what racial or ethnic groups are.		
Human being		
Ethnic Jew		
Ethnic group is Hispanic, Race is White as per NSF Guidelines		
American		
Total	467	100

	Frequency	Percent
Q32 Are you male or female?		
1 Male	316	65.7
2 Female	165	34.3
Total	481	100

Faculty teaching responsibilities

While 22 percent taught no undergraduate classes during the spring of 2006, and a handful taught five or more undergraduate classes, faculty who responded to this survey and were teaching at the time, taught an average of two classes (Table 5). Approximately 5 percent taught their class(es) to undergraduate students spring 2006 via distance education. Those teaching undergraduate classes via distance education during spring semester 2006 taught an average of 1.6 classes versus two classes for those teaching undergraduate students in more traditional classrooms.

The instructors report having a total of between 1 and 900 students in their traditional classrooms spring semester 2006 and 1 to 200 in their classes taught via distance education. Faculty say that altogether they taught 76 undergraduate students in traditional classrooms and 26 via distance education, on average (Table 5). The median number of students taught in traditional classrooms, however, was 40 and via distance education 14. When the faculty listed each of their classes and reported the number of undergraduate students in each, class size ranged from a minimum of 1 student to a maximum of 550 students, with an average of 43 students per class, although half taught 25 or fewer students and half taught more.

Table 5 Instructors' undergraduate teaching loads

	Frequency	Percent	Mean
NEWQ17 How many undergraduate classes are you teaching this semester?			
0 classes	105	22.3	
1 class	153	32.6	
2 classes	120	25.5	
3 classes	56	11.9	
4 classes	27	5.7	
5 or more classes	9	1.9	
Total	470	100	
Mean number of undergraduate classes taught Spring 2006 by <u>all</u> responding teachers			1.54
Mean number of undergraduate classes taught Spring 2006 by those who taught <u>at least one class</u>			1.99
DIST How many of these undergraduate classes do you teach via distance education (including on-line, web, ITV, telecommunications &/or any other classes taught primarily via electronic media)?			
0 classes	452	95.0	
1 class	22	4.6	
2 classes	1	0.2	

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	Frequency	Percent	Mean
4 classes	1	0.2	
Total	476	100	
Mean number of undergraduate classes taught Spring 2006 via distance education by <u>all</u> responding teachers			0.06
Mean number of undergraduate classes taught Spring 2006 via distance education by those who taught <u>at least one class</u>			1.61

TRAD How many of these undergraduate classes do you teach in traditional classrooms?

0 classes	115	24.7	
1 class	145	31.1	
2 classes	120	25.8	
3 classes	52	11.2	
4 classes	26	5.6	
5 or more classes	8	1.7	
Total	466	100	
Mean number of undergraduate classes taught traditionally in Spring 2006 by <u>all</u> responding teachers			1.49
Mean number of undergraduate classes taught traditionally in Spring 2006 by those who taught <u>at least one class</u>			1.97

Q19CAT How many undergraduate students do you teach in traditional classrooms this semester?

1 0 students	107	22.8	
2 1 to 19 students	73	15.5	
3 20 to 39 students	102	21.7	
4 40 to 69 students	73	15.5	
5 70 to 99 students	39	8.3	
6 100 or more students	76	16.2	
Total	470	100	
Mean number of undergraduate students taught in traditional classrooms Spring 2006 by <u>all</u> responding teachers			76.55
Median number of undergraduate students taught in traditional classrooms Spring 2006 by those who taught <u>at least one class</u>			40

Q20CAT How many undergraduate students do you teach via distance education?

1 0 students	445	94.9	
2 1 to 9 students	9	1.9	
3 10 to 39 students	11	2.3	
4 40 to 69 students	3	0.6	
6 100 or more students	1	0.2	
Total	469	100	
Mean number of undergraduate students taught via distance education Spring 2006 by <u>all</u> responding teachers			25.92
Median number of undergraduate students taught via distance education Spring 2006 by those who taught <u>at least one class</u>			14

Q26CAT Approximately how many students are in each

	Frequency	Percent	Mean
of your undergraduate classes?			
1 1 to 9 students	66	9.7	
2 10 to 15 students	105	15.5	
3 16 to 20 students	100	14.7	
4 21 to 29 students	104	15.3	
5 30 to 35 students	70	10.3	
6 36 to 46 students	62	9.1	
7 47 to 69 students	75	11.0	
8 70 to 99 students	37	5.4	
9 100 or more students	60	8.8	
Total	679	100	
Mean number of students in undergraduate classes among those who taught <u>at least one class</u>			42.86
Median number of students in undergraduate classes Spring 2006 among those who taught <u>at least one class</u>			25

Approximately 51 percent of the responding instructors report that they taught graduate-level classes during spring of 2006; one class, on average (Table 6). Of these, approximately 5 percent teach their graduate classes via distance education and the remainder traditional classrooms. Faculty avow they taught between 1 and 116 graduate students in their class(es) spring semester. On average, faculty respondents who teach graduate classes, whether by traditional means or distance education, taught about 1.4 classes during spring semester 2006. In classrooms, the faculty say they taught an average of 16 graduate students, but overall they instructed an average of 14 and a median of 10 graduate students.

Table 6 Instructors' graduate teaching loads

	Frequency	Percent	Mean or Median
NEWQ21 How many graduate classes are you teaching this semester?			
0 classes	231	48.8	
1 class	172	36.4	
2 classes	52	11.0	
3 classes	13	2.7	
4 classes	3	0.6	
5 classes	2	0.4	
Total	473	100	
Mean number of graduate classes taught Spring 2006 by <u>all</u> responding teachers			0.71
Mean number of graduate classes taught			1.39
GDIST How many of these graduate classes do you teach via distance education (including on-line, web, ITV, telecommunications and/or any other classes taught primarily via electronic media?)			
0 classes	453	95.2	
1 class	18	3.8	

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	Frequency	Percent	Mean or Median
2 classes	3	0.6	
3 classes	1	0.2	
5 classes	1	0.2	
Total	476	100	
Mean number of graduate classes taught via distance education Spring 2006 by <u>all</u> responding teachers			0.07
Mean number of graduate classes taught via distance education, among those teaching			1.39

GTRAD How many of these graduate classes do you teach in traditional classrooms?

0 classes	250	53.2	
1 class	156	33.2	
2 classes	50	10.6	
3 classes	10	2.1	
4 classes	3	0.6	
5 classes	1	0.2	
Total	470	100	
Mean number of graduate classes taught traditionally Spring 2006 by <u>all</u> responding teachers			0.64
Mean number of graduate classes taught traditionally, among those teaching			1.38

Q23 How many total graduate students do you teach in classrooms this semester?

1 1 or 2 students	30	11.7	
2 3 or 4 students	23	8.9	
3 5 or 6 students	35	13.6	
4 7 or 8 students	30	11.7	
5 9 to 11 students	38	14.8	
6 12 to 14 students	27	10.5	
7 15 to 20 students	34	13.2	
8 21 to 250 students	40	15.6	
Total	257	100	
Mean number of graduate students taught in classrooms Spring 2006 by <u>all</u> responding teachers			15.88
Median number of graduate students taught in classrooms this semester			10

Q26CAT Approximately how many students are in each of your graduate classes this semester?

1 1 or 2 students	27	8.8	
2 3 or 4 students	27	8.8	
3 5 or 6 students	40	13.1	
4 7 or 8 students	45	14.7	
5 9 to 11 students	53	17.3	
6 12 to 14 students	23	7.5	
7 15 to 20 students	46	15.0	
8 21 to 116 students	45	14.7	

	Frequency	Percent	Mean or Median
Total	306	100	
Mean number of students in graduate classes Spring 2006 among those who taught <u>at least one class</u>			13.51
Median number of students in graduate classes Spring 2006 among those who taught <u>at least one class</u>			10

Instructors report having spent between zero and 26 hours per week in the classroom teaching undergraduate and/or graduate level classes during the fall 2005 and spring 2006 semesters. The average total amount of time those who taught spent in classrooms during both semesters was nearly 3.5 hours per week.

Table 7 Instructors' total weekly time in the classroom

	Frequency	Percent	Mean
Q24CAT2 How many total hours per week do you spend in the classroom for the classes you are teaching this semester?			
1 0 hours	36	7.8	
2 1 to 3 hours	96	20.8	
3 4 to 6 hours	171	37.1	
4 7 to 9 hours	74	16.1	
5 10 to 12 hours	51	11.1	
6 13 to 18 hours	26	5.6	
7 19 to 26 hours	7	1.5	
Total	461	100	
Mean hours/week in classroom Spring 2006 for <u>all</u> responding teachers			3.25
Mean hours/week in classroom Spring 2006, among those who taught <u>at least one class</u>			3.44
Q25CAT2 How many total hours per week do you spend in the classroom for the classes you taught during fall semester 2005?			
1 0 hours	46	10.2	
2 1 to 3 hours	75	16.6	
3 4 to 6 hours	172	38.1	
4 7 to 9 hours	74	16.4	
5 10 to 12 hours	45	10.0	
6 13 to 18 hours	33	7.3	
7 19 to 26 hours	6	1.3	
Total	451	100	
Mean hours/week in classroom Fall '05 for <u>all</u> responding teachers			3.27
Mean hours/week in classroom Fall 2005, among those who taught <u>at least one class</u>			3.52

STUDENT ASSESSMENTS OF CLASSROOM CIVILITY

Disruptiveness of Some Classroom Occurrences

Students' Ratings of Disruptiveness of Selected Student Behavior

Students were asked to evaluate 14 classroom occurrences for the degree to which the students consider them disruptive and to assess the overall impact of these disruptions on their learning experiences. The behavior that is considered very disruptive by the largest group of responding students is students making verbally abusive comments toward themselves or others (Q10) (61.3%). Considered very disruptive by large shares of students are situations in which students use vulgar or insulting language or gestures (Q11) (41.2%), make comments that are disrespectful of the professor and/or other students (Q6) (34.6%) or lack personal hygiene (Q12) (33.7%). Behaviors that sizeable groups of students find either disruptive or very disruptive comprise students chatting, whispering and/or talking in class (Q2)(39.8%); preparing to leave before class is finished (Q13) (39.7%); leaving or otherwise interrupting class before it is finished (Q14) (38.1%); interrupting the respondents and/or their classmates (Q5) (33.5%), and dominating class discussion (Q7) (28.7%). About 20 percent each of the responding students regard students' use of cellular phones, beepers or handheld electronic devices in class (Q1) or student tardiness or leaving class early (Q3) as disruptive or very disruptive.

On the other hand, large majorities of the responding students do not regard sleeping (Q9), eating (Q4) or reading newspapers and/or magazines in class (Q8) as disruptive (Table 8). Overall, although about 12 percent of students consider all 14 of the behaviors they assessed to be very disruptive or disruptive, 45 percent view these behaviors as slightly disruptive and 21 percent not at all disruptive (Q15). On average, students assess the 14 behaviors they reviewed as only slightly disruptive (Q15) (Mean = 3.7) (Table 8).

Table 8 Students' Ratings of Disruptiveness of Classroom Occurrences

How disruptive, on average, has each of the following activities been in the classes you attend?	1 Very disruptive	2 Disruptive	3 Moderately disruptive	4 Slightly disruptive	5 Not at all disruptive	Total	Mean
Q1 Students' use of cellular phones, beepers, or handheld electronic devices is:	28 (8.9)	31 (9.9)	46 (14.7)	126 (40.3)	82 (26.2)	313 (100)	3.65
Q2 Would you describe any student chatting, whispering and/or talking in your classes as:	55 (17.1)	73 (22.7)	70 (21.8)	88 (27.4)	35 (10.9)	321 (100)	2.92
Q3 Do you consider student tardiness or leaving class early as	32 (9.9)	31 (9.6)	50 (15.5)	94 (29.2)	115 (35.7)	322 (100)	3.71
Q4 When you or your classmates eat in class - is it:	9 (2.9)	17 (5.4)	24 (7.7)	62 (19.9)	200 (64.1)	312 (100)	4.37

Q5 When your classmates interrupt you and/or other students do you appraise it as:	31 (10.8)	65 (22.7)	73 (25.5)	89 (31.1)	28 (9.8)	286 (100)	3.06
Q6 Do you view classmates' comments that are disrespectful of your professor and/or you or your classmates as:	99 (34.6)	82 (28.7)	42 (14.7)	35 (12.2)	28 (9.8)	286 (100)	2.34
Q7 Would you describe class discussion being dominated by one or more students as:	30 (9.8)	58 (18.9)	65 (21.2)	66 (21.5)	88 (28.7)	307 (100)	3.40
Q8 When or if other students read newspapers or magazines during your classes, do you regard it as:	26 (8.5)	15 (4.9)	32 (10.5)	53 (17.4)	179 (58.7)	305 (100)	4.13
Q9 If students were to sleep in class, would you count this as:	20 (6.4)	18 (5.8)	24 (7.7)	53 (17.0)	197 (63.1)	312 (100)	4.25
Q10 Do you regard students making verbally abusive comments toward yourself or other students as:	155 (61.3)	60 (23.7)	18 (7.1)	16 (6.3)	4 (1.6)	253 (100)	1.63
Q11 Do you consider vulgar or insulting language or gestures by students in class as:	110 (41.2)	48 (18.0)	37 (13.9)	48 (18.0)	24 (9.0)	267 (100)	2.36
Q12 When students in class lack personal hygiene do you believe it is:	101 (33.7)	94 (31.3)	47 (15.7)	49 (16.3)	9 (3.0)	300 (100)	2.24
Q13 When students prepare to leave before you have finished the class, is it:	50 (15.5)	78 (24.2)	61 (18.9)	88 (27.3)	45 (14.0)	322 (100)	3.00
Q14 Having students leave or otherwise interrupt class before it is finished, is, in your opinion:	50 (15.6)	72 (22.5)	61 (19.1)	95 (29.7)	42 (13.1)	320 (100)	3.02
Q15 Overall, how have the above behavior affected your learning experiences in the classroom? Would you say they have been:	9 (2.8)	31 (9.6)	72 (22.4)	144 (44.7)	66 (20.5)	322 (100)	3.70

Students' Comments about Their Ratings and Disruptiveness

Of the 331 students who responded to the survey, more than one-fourth (28.4%) commented on the questions about classroom disruptions as well. The largest percentages of responses indicate that the behaviors about which the survey inquired are not disruptive (12.7%) and that students being disrespectful is disruptive (12.7%). Nearly equally as large proportions of responses reveal, however, that students have not experienced disruption (11.9%) or they consider early and late classroom entering and/or exiting (11.9%) and electronic devices (9.3%) to be disruptive.

Table 9 Other Student Comments on Disruptiveness of Classroom Occurrences

Q16 If you would like to comment on this subject, please do so here:	Frequency of Responses	Percent of Responses	Percent of Respondents
Behaviors mentioned aren't disruptive	15	12.7	16.0
Students being disrespectful is disruptive	15	12.7	16.0
Little or no disruption experienced	14	11.9	14.9
Students entering/leaving class during class period is disruptive	14	11.9	14.9
Electronic devices are disruptive	11	9.3	11.7
Teachers need to control the class better	7	5.9	7.4
Students dominating discussions are disruptive	6	5.1	6.4
Class size affects level of disruptiveness	6	5.1	6.4
Graduate classes have less disruptive behaviors	5	4.2	5.3
Students talking during class is disruptive	5	4.2	5.3
Students eating food during class is disruptive	2	1.7	2.1
Use of profanity in class is disruptive	2	1.7	2.1
Hygiene is disruptive	2	1.7	2.1
Other	14	11.9	14.9
Total Responses	118	100	
Total Respondents	94		

Behaviors about which the survey inquired are not disruptive

Comments through which students indicate that the behaviors on the survey are not disruptive are exemplified in the following:

The disruptiveness for myself depends primarily on my interest in the class. If a class is boring, my attention easily wanders. Although if a professor is very enthusiastic about his or her teaching, it would take a disruption around the magnitude of a lightning storm to disturb class.

...I enjoy class discussions. When one or two people are talking, it is usually because others do not wish to talk. It is not that one or two people are chatty with the teacher but that others do not want to talk. Eating, sleeping and reading newspapers do not bother me. I think they should be allowed in class if that is the way someone wants to spend their class time, as long as they are quiet...

Students being disrespectful is disruptive

Some students who elucidate on other students' disrespectfulness describe these behaviors. Others share their feelings and/or the deleterious consequences. Examples are provided.

Although some of these behaviors are not as disruptive as others, most of them are just plain rude, and insulting to other classmates and professors alike.

The very worst behavior is the incessant undercurrent of talking/whispering which makes it difficult to follow what is going on in class.

When other students talk or gossip about another student or their weekend plans during class I get very frustrated and it is very distracting. Also, when students talk about the professor or disrespect the professor, I get distracted and can no longer focus in the class.

Little or no disruption experienced

Students who profess that they have experienced little or no disruption in their classrooms range from indicating how respectful they find most students to be, to indicating that, in fact, they encounter disruptions, but tolerate them. The following statements reflect these two points of view.

Most of my classes are very professional and I rarely have experienced any forms of disruption.

I haven't really had problems with disruptions in class. Students are usually careful about cell phones, and if they do go off, are careful to quickly turn them off and apologize. I have not encountered rude behavior from students otherwise.

While all of these things are disruptive, I find that they are more of an annoyance or nuisance.

I don't usually have a problem with any of the things mentioned in class. When they happen, it is disruptive but not so much that I won't be able to concentrate for the rest of the class period.

Students entering/leaving class during class period is disruptive

Students who comment further on students entering and/or leaving during a class period tend to be straightforward in their comments. Two examples are these:

The main disruptive behavior that I have been a witness to is students preparing to leave from class before class has been dismissed...

It is extremely frustrating when a majority of students begin to pack their backpacks before the professor is finished lecturing and before the bell has rung. Not only is it insulting to the professor, but it is extremely distracting (and therefore insulting to me as well)...

Electronic devices are disruptive

Students' comments about the disruptiveness of electronic devices indicate that this is a growing problem, as in this comment, "Cell phone use in class, such as text messaging and other uses, are becoming very bad for class disruptions." While several indicate the

disruptiveness of cell phones and other devices ringing or otherwise making noise, one student also indicates the annoyance of hearing the clicking of laptop use, as in "Laptops are especially annoying in a small classroom setting. It's too much clicking when I am trying to listen to the professor."

While several students note the disruptiveness of electronic devices in their comments, at least one contextualizes their use:

I understand if someone forgets to turn off a cell phone every now and then. That doesn't happen too often and people usually react quickly to turn it off. However, I've seen plenty of students text messaging in the middle of class, often in full view of the teacher! ...

At least two, offer support for faculty who set limits or for the University in developing a policy regarding the use of electronics in classrooms:

Professors should do more to limit the use of cell phone text messaging in classes as well as the use of laptops in class for non-academic purposes. Professors should walk around and engage with students as an attempt to monitor student use of technology.

I'm very surprised the university doesn't have a policy regarding cell phones being turned off in the classroom. Students should be aware that disruptions from cell phones are unacceptable and should be instructed to leave them off while in the classroom. Unfortunately, some students lack a sense of courtesy when it comes to classroom etiquette.

Importance of Teacher Preparation to Classroom Environment

Students' Evaluations of the Importance of Teacher Preparation to the Classroom Environment

Students were asked to evaluate the importance of some activities professors could do to establish civil and productive classrooms. The six teaching behaviors advocated by at least 80 percent of the students as very important are explaining assignments clearly (Q25) (89.1%), teaching using appropriate and current knowledge of subject matter (Q19) (85.5%), setting clear expectations about assignments (Q24) (83.7%), being prepared for class (Q17) (81%), being approachable and open to receiving questions and concerns (Q33) (80.3%), and being respectful towards students (Q29) (80.3%). Furthermore, 67 to 73 percent of students avow that it is very important for teachers to strive to make learning innovative and interesting (Q20) (72.8%), maintain a classroom environment that is conducive to learning (Q35) (71.3%), provide reliable contact information and response (office hours, email, etc.) (Q31) (69.4%) and provide prompt feedback on work completed (graded tests/assignments) (Q30) (67.7%).

While students feel very strongly that some of the 19 activities are very important, only four of the options gained more than four percent of student support as being moderately or not at all important. To nearly a quarter of the students (24.1%), allowing students to evaluate professors and instructors at midterm is of moderate or no importance (Q32), although at least equally large percentages of students believe it would be very important (25.7%) or important (28.5%) to evaluate their instructors midway through the semester. While 4 to 10 percent of students regard setting clear expectations of unacceptable behavior (Q26) (9.8%), starting and ending class on time (Q21) (6.3%) and promptly responding to unacceptable behavior (Q27) (4%) of moderate or no importance, on average, students rate each of these teacher behaviors as at least moderately important on average (Table 10).

Table 10 Importance of Teacher Preparation to Classroom Environment

In order for your professors and instructors to establish civil and productive classrooms, how important is it for them to:	3					Total	Mean
	1 Very impor- tant	2 Moder- ately impor- tant	3 Sometimes important and sometimes un- important	4 Moder- ately unimp- ortant	5 Not at all impor- tant		
	Frequency (Percent)						
Q17 Be prepared for class?	268 (81.0)	45 (13.6)	17 (5.1)	1 (.3)	0 (0.0)	331 (100)	1.25
Q18 Use and follow an accurate syllabus?	172 (52.0)	85 (25.7)	65 (19.6)	8 (2.4)	1 (.3)	331 (100)	1.73

Report of University of Arkansas' Students and Faculty on Classroom Civility
 For Sue Theiss, Director and Ombud, Office of Student Mediation and Conflict Resolution
 By the Survey Research Center, University of Arkansas
 July 17, 2006

Q19 Teach using appropriate and current knowledge of subject matter?	283 (85.5)	42 (12.7)	4 (1.2)	2 (.6)	0 (0.0)	331 (100)	1.17
Q20 Strive to make learning innovative and interesting?	241 (72.8)	74 (22.4)	16 (4.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	331 (100)	1.32
Q21 Start and end class on time?	134 (40.5)	94 (28.4)	82 (24.8)	13 (3.9)	8 (2.4)	331 (100)	1.99
Q22 Devote a large proportion of class time to the subject matter?	143 (43.6)	127 (38.7)	53 (16.2)	2 (.6)	3 (.9)	328 (100)	1.77
Q23 Teach class at a level appropriate for the subject, e.g. teach a junior level class on a junior level?	180 (55.0)	97 (29.7)	40 (12.2)	8 (2.4)	2 (.6)	327 (100)	1.64
Q24 Set clear expectations about assignments?	277 (83.7)	46 (13.9)	6 (1.8)	1 (.3)	1 (.3)	331 (100)	1.20
Q25 Explain assignments clearly?	295 (89.1)	27 (8.2)	7 (2.1)	1 (.3)	1 (.3)	331 (100)	1.15
Q26 Set clear expectations of unacceptable behavior?	161 (48.9)	98 (29.8)	38 (11.6)	16 (4.9)	16 (4.9)	329 (100)	1.87
Q27 Promptly respond to unacceptable behavior?	172 (52.9)	97 (29.8)	43 (13.2)	10 (3.1)	3 (.9)	325 (100)	1.69
Q28 Pay attention to students equitably?	170 (53.1)	108 (33.8)	35 (10.9)	3 (.9)	4 (1.2)	320 (100)	1.63
Q29 Be respectful toward students (not condescending, dismissive, or abusive)?	265 (80.3)	47 (14.2)	12 (3.6)	2 (.6)	4 (1.2)	330 (100)	1.28
Q30 Provide prompt feedback on work completed (graded tests/assignments)?	224 (67.7)	83 (25.1)	21 (6.3)	2 (.6)	1 (.3)	331 (100)	1.41
Q31 Provide reliable contact information and response (office hours/email, etc.)?	229 (69.4)	76 (23.0)	22 (6.7)	2 (.6)	1 (.3)	330 (100)	1.39
Q32 Allow students to evaluate professors and instructors at midterm?	82 (25.7)	91 (28.5)	69 (21.6)	46 (14.4)	31 (9.7)	319 (100)	2.54
Q33 Be approachable, open to receiving questions and concerns?	265 (80.3)	60 (18.2)	4 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (.3)	330 (100)	1.22
Q34 Allow a full spectrum of points of view to be discussed?	177 (53.8)	92 (28.0)	52 (15.8)	6 (1.8)	2 (.6)	329 (100)	1.67
Q35 Maintain a classroom environment that is conducive to learning?	234 (71.3)	74 (22.6)	15 (4.6)	2 (.6)	3 (.9)	328 (100)	1.37

Students' Comments about Their Ratings of the Importance of Teacher Preparation

Nearly 19 percent of all students responding to this survey (n = 62) elucidate their ratings of the importance of teacher preparation for the classroom environment. Of these, the largest shares discuss teachers being condescending or rude (14.5%), needing more classroom management skills (9.2%) and doing a good job in managing their classrooms

(9.2%) (Table 11). As Table 11 indicates, approximately 3 to 8 percent of the students' comments about their instructors' contributions to the classroom environment range from criticizing instructors for being slow in grading to how to evaluate them. Some students' comments imply that teaching assistants may have more protracted grading response times than more experienced faculty. The three topics soliciting the largest amount of feedback are discussed herein. All responses to the open-ended questions may be found in Appendix F.

Table 11 Students' Comments on the Importance of Teacher Preparation to Classroom Environment

Q36 If you would like to comment on this subject, please do so here:	Frequency of Responses	Percent of Responses	Percent of Respondents
Teachers are condescending and/or rude	11	14.5	17.7
Teachers do a good job maintaining a civil classroom environment	7	9.2	11.3
Teachers need better classroom management skills	7	9.2	11.3
Slow feedback and/or grading	6	7.9	9.7
Teachers need to have clear expectations/objectives	6	7.9	9.7
Teachers need to be available and willing to answer questions	5	6.6	8.1
Teachers need to better prepare for class & know what they're teaching	4	5.3	6.5
Teachers need to be more open-minded/Willing to discuss other ideas	3	3.9	4.8
Mid-term evaluations	3	3.9	4.8
Syllabus	3	3.9	4.8
Teaching evaluations	3	3.9	4.8
Classroom discussion is important	2	2.6	3.2
Students are responsible for their learning	2	2.6	3.2
Survey is not effective	2	2.6	3.2
Teachers should be approachable, open and/or nice	2	2.6	3.2
Other	10	13.2	16.1
Total Responses	76	100	
Total Respondents	62		

Teachers are condescending or rude

Although their comments compose 14.5 percent of those made by students about teacher preparation, the 11 students who discuss their teachers being condescending or rude account for 3.3 percent of all survey respondents (Table 11). The following exemplify the sorts of ideas students express about teachers' respect for students.

When the teacher is rude while teaching, they don't make it very easy to approach, nor does it make you want to work hard in their class.

There are certain teachers whose behavior lean towards preferential treatment towards select students, conversing in a condescending manner and inappropriate anger/rude behavior displayed towards students.

As an international student I have many things to say about the teaching staff. A majority of them are not really friendly and respectful. Sometimes they don't listen to what we say and isolate us among other classmates. That would be very upsetting to me sometimes but I can't express that anger to anybody. I suggest the university should create a "Comment Department"; therefore, international students would be treated fairly and considerably.

Teachers need better classroom management skills

In the comments that follow, students point out their preferences for faculty to use more effective classroom management techniques. These students compose about 11 percent of all who commented about faculty behavior and their comments compose about 9 percent of all comments made on this subject in general.

The teachers at the University of Arkansas seem to be very intelligent. However, it seems that they are often unwilling, unable or unsure of getting on to students who are out of line. Perhaps they expect college students to behave as adults; however, students are often disruptive and professors seldom seem to correct their behavior.

I think a better environment would be maintained if the professors immediately took care of students who are disrespectful and rude, as opposed to after class or later than that. I think the professor should just be able to ask the student to leave.

I believe that some of my teachers do not respond to chattering and disruptive noise in class. I think it is very important for the teacher just to remind the students that he or she is speaking and that others may be trying to listen.

Teachers do a good job maintaining a civil classroom environment

About 9 percent of the comments students made about the importance of their professors to classroom environment reveal their positive experiences with faculty behavior that provides a suitable learning environment. Students who are not troubled by their instructors' behaviors elucidate their experiences in such comments as:

I think the professors that I have had has generally maintained an atmosphere conducive to learning. It's harder in the classes which have a massive number of students to maintain this atmosphere. At this level, teachers should not have to be (and don't usually need to be) disciplinarians.

Some of the subjects addressed in this portion of the survey have not been a problem for me. I really haven't seen any teachers or professors having difficulty with classroom behavior management.

FACULTY ASSESSMENT OF CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE

Disruptiveness of Some Classroom Occurrences

Faculty's Ratings of the Disruptiveness of Selected Student Behavior

Instructors were asked to evaluate the same 14 potentially disruptive classroom occurrences that the students assessed and to rate their disruptiveness overall. Overall, the instructors deem the 14 occurrences as moderately disruptive (Q15) (Mean = 3.4), although the largest group, 46 percent say they are only slightly disruptive (Table 12).

The three classroom occurrences most commonly purported by faculty as being very disruptive are students making verbally abusive comments toward faculty or students (Q10) (83.1%), students using vulgar or insulting language or gestures (Q11) (69.6%) and students making comments that are disrespectful to instructors and/or students (Q6) (50.6%). On average, faculty members appraise students leaving or otherwise interrupting class before it is finished (Q14) (Mean = 2.4) and reading newspapers or magazines during classes (Q8) (Mean = 2.4) as disruptive. At the other end of the spectrum, faculty regard only two of the 14 behaviors as less than moderately disruptive, on average. Students interrupting them and/or other students, instructors classify as only slightly disruptive on average (Q5) (Mean = 3.95); and students eating in class as moderately to slightly disruptive on average (Q4) (Mean = 3.6) (Table 12). Faculty judge all seven other behaviors in Table 12 as moderately disruptive, on average.

Table 12 Instructors' Perceptions of Disruptiveness of Classroom Occurrences

	1 Very dis- ruptive	2 Dis- ruptive	3 Moder- ately dis- ruptive	4 Slightly dis- ruptive	5 Not at all dis- ruptive	Total	
	Frequency (Percent)						Mean
Q1 In the classes you teach, would you say that the use of cellular phones, beepers, or handheld electronic devices is:	87 (20.5)	77 (18.1)	60 (14.1)	163 (38.4)	38 (8.9)	425 (100)	2.97
Q2 Would you describe any chatting, whispering and/or talking in your classes as:	95 (20.9)	111 (24.4)	85 (18.7)	132 (29.1)	31 (6.8)	454 (100)	2.76
Q3 Do you consider student tardiness or leaving class early as:	99 (20.6)	134 (27.9)	110 (22.9)	112 (23.3)	25 (5.2)	480 (100)	2.65
Q4 Eating in class - is it:	46 (10.7)	58 (13.5)	56 (13.0)	118 (27.4)	153 (35.5)	431 (100)	3.64
Q5 When students interrupt you &/or students do you appraise it as	19 (4.6)	45 (10.9)	49 (11.8)	124 (30.0)	177 (42.8)	414 (100)	3.95
Q6 Do you view students' comments that are disrespectful of you and/or students as:	164 (50.6)	90 (27.8)	32 (9.9)	24 (7.4)	14 (4.3)	324 (100)	1.87
Q7 Would you describe discussion being dominated by one or more students as:	18 (4.4)	69 (16.8)	128 (31.1)	141 (34.3)	55 (13.4)	411 (100)	3.36
Q8 When or if students read newspapers or magazines during classes, do you regard it as:	127 (32.2)	103 (26.1)	69 (17.5)	71 (18.0)	24 (6.1)	394 (100)	2.40
Q9 If students were to sleep in class, would you count this as:	80 (17.8)	72 (16.0)	76 (16.9)	141 (31.4)	80 (17.8)	449 (100)	3.15
Q10 Do you regard students making verbally abusive comments toward yourself or other students as:	245 (83.1)	36 (12.2)	10 (3.4)	4 (1.4)	0 (0.0)	295 (100)	1.23
Q11 Do you consider vulgar or insulting language or gestures by students in class as:	197 (69.6)	50 (17.7)	22 (7.8)	10 (3.5)	4 (1.4)	283 (100)	1.49
Q12 When students in class lack personal hygiene do you believe it is:	50 (15.4)	90 (27.7)	84 (25.8)	80 (24.6)	21 (6.5)	325 (100)	2.79
Q13 How disruptive or not disruptive is having students prepare to leave class before you have finished the class. Is it:	110 (23.8)	114 (24.6)	106 (22.9)	114 (24.6)	19 (4.1)	463 (100)	2.61
Q14 Leaving or otherwise interrupting class before it is finished, is, in your opinion:	132 (28.8)	137 (29.9)	94 (20.5)	83 (18.1)	12 (2.6)	458 (100)	2.36
Q15 Overall, how have the above behaviors affected your teaching experience in the classroom? Would you say they have been:	29 (6.3)	75 (16.2)	100 (21.6)	215 (46.4)	44 (9.5)	463 (100)	3.37

Faculty's Comments about Classroom Civility

About half of the responding faculty (n = 244) took the opportunity to discuss issues related to the civility of the UA classroom environment or the survey itself. Their 342 responses are summarized in the categories list in Table 13.

Table 13 Instructors' comments about disruptive classroom behavior

Q16 In discussing disruptive behaviors, what comments would you like to make?	Frequency of Responses	Percent of Responses	Percent of Respondents
Classroom management strategies used	66	19.2	27.0
Attendance Issues (absence, tardiness, leaving early)	55	16.0	22.5
In-class distractions, such as cell phones, lap tops, newspapers, games, etc.	36	10.5	14.8
No problem/seldom have a problem to speak of	33	9.6	13.5
Manners and courtesy	30	8.7	12.3
Talking	17	5.0	7.0
Graduate students tend to be more respectful	14	4.1	5.7
Lack of involvement/lack of energy/unprepared for class	10	2.9	4.1
Large class size is an issue	9	2.6	3.7
Sleeping	9	2.6	3.7
Students have an entitlement mindset that is disruptive	8	2.3	3.3
Excessive questions/interruptions/students dominating conversation	7	2.0	2.9
Personal hygiene	3	0.9	1.2
Instructors hope the U of A will act on this information	5	1.5	2.0
Inappropriate dress	2	0.6	0.8
Comments on the survey	17	5.0	7.0
Other	22	6.4	9.0
Total Responses	343	100	
Total Respondents	244		

Classroom Management

Nearly one-fourth of the responses relate to the subject of classroom management. Many, if not most of the comments indicate that the faculty view themselves as responsible for classroom management and as proactive, effective classroom managers as exemplified in the comments that follow. Many of the faculty who offer the 66 comments on this topic imply that faculty tolerance of it, is an important cause of classroom incivility.

Most problems I've ever experienced are minimal and often solved quickly. I've included examples of what I perceive as disruptive in my syllabus. As a result most students comply and any problems are kept to a minimum.

I find that if the expectations are given on the front end of the class this is not normally a problem (classroom behavior). So in other words, prevention is a

key. However, there are always those few and I find that it needs to be dealt with personally as soon as possible, unless it is hurting another student and then I deal with it right then.

Some of the responding faculty indicate the lengths to which they go in order to manage their classrooms and lament the need for the effort, as in this case:

I have been pretty successful at reducing disruptive student behavior by first going over the syllabus and stating that points may be deducted for these behaviors. Then before almost every class, I remind students about having good manners and remembering to turn off cell phones and putting away distracting materials. A key feature is that I have to learn each student's name if I am to be successful at managing the class. I have had a class as large as 75 students and I learn their names so I can correct them politely as necessary. It's unfortunate that so much of my time and energy has to be spent on classroom management.

In the following comment, the instructor alludes to the changing nature of students' behavior:

...I have resorted to making a list of unacceptable behaviors, things that a few years ago one could safely assume wouldn't be an issue!!! Thank you for the survey--this is an issue that has been troubling many of my colleagues and myself.

In yet another case, a teacher refers to the size of class as a factor influencing students' behavior, but also how relatively easy it is to ameliorate some of these behaviors.

... This occurs often in a large class. At the beginning of the semester, my students are informed that cell phones are not to be on in the classroom. It is not very often that a student forgets. I will ask students to move if they are talking during class. Most of the time just a reminder to be quiet is all that is needed.

Class Attendance

The largest single issue in addition to classroom management strategies address by the responding faculty has to do with class attendance (Table 13). Some teachers explain the problem, for example, "...Students often left before class was over and attendance was very poor." Another says,

...My pet peeve is having students begin packing up to leave class while I am still lecturing. I also find arriving late to class, more than 10 minutes or so very disruptive. These are the behaviors I am least tolerant of and perceive to be most disruptive to my classroom.

My experiences with students entering more than 10 minutes late, and expecting the same assistance as those on-time is the most frustrating classroom behavior I encounter.

Several respondents note that students arriving late, absence and especially leaving early is increasingly common, as in these comments:

Most of the behaviors you listed I have not experienced. What I have noticed is an increase in students leaving during class and returning during the same class. I have had to "deal" with it in a couple of classes.

Students are much better about turning off cell phones. I believe that leaving class early or coming in late is much more of a problem.

There has been a considerable increase in absences among undergraduates in the last two or three years. I find this inherently disruptive...

...Class attendance across campus is dismal. Faculty expectations are improved learning environments in the classroom with rising ACT and average high school GPA's. Seems like the two are inversely related.

The complaints about infractions of class attendance are written by faculty who are experienced at the U of A and those who are new. Furthermore, in some of their notes, teachers indicate the circumstances they believe are related to attendance problems, e.g. needing to travel long distances between classes, or buildings in which no bell signals the beginning and end of each classroom period, and circumstances in which the attendance problems do or do not seem disruptive.

Sometimes students tell me that they have to leave early, and that is fine with me. I do NOT like it at all when students just get up and leave early without having told me ahead of time. Luckily, such behavior is very rare. I have taught at the University of Arkansas for 26 years, and have luckily not had students be verbally abusive or rude to me or to each other.

I have only been at the University for two semesters. Overall, I find that my students are generally well behaved and not disruptive in class. The one activity that I feel really disrupts class is when students either arrive late or leave early.

I have been teaching at the U of A for over 10 years. My experience is that student classroom behavior has gotten progressively worse. In my experience, while many of these behaviors typically involve individual students, when it comes to having several male athletes in one classroom, these behaviors are often times collective. I have head male athletes engage in some of these in

groups of 3 to 8, and this is when, for instance, leaving classroom becomes very interruptive...

In-class distractions, such as cell phones, lap tops, newspapers, games, etc.

The next largest category of faculty comments, approximately 14 percent of all responses, pertains to classroom distractions including reading of newspapers, doing puzzles and use of electronic technology. Some do mention the annoyance of students reading newspapers, but largely in the context of having already incorporated bans on newspaper reading as part of classroom management. Use of laptops, especially, but also cell phones compose the growing areas of concern among the faculty. The laptop problem is discussed variously as follows but also reflects the benefit and cost of having buildings that support wireless internet networks. The following comments describe the situations and concerns:

I only rarely experience most of the behaviors you ask about. I am increasingly concerned about the use of laptops in class. Students clearly play games and use their computers for non-related things during class. As those sitting behind them can see the screens, this is disruptive not only of the individual student's educational experience but also for others. Worse, in our school we have wireless internet access. Students use the wireless internet access to instant message and email back and forth during class. I am told that some of our classes have created their own chat rooms that they use during classes. Such activities have reached the point that I am considering banning laptops from my classes.

The behaviors you identify are rarities in my classes. To the extent any were very disruptive, I would immediately intervene to establish order. My classes are generally characterized by a high level of civility. Your survey does not address what is probably the most disruptive, but quiet, behavior in our classrooms: using the wireless internet access to pursue activities (web surfing, on-line chatting, etc.) not related to class. A related problem is playing games on the computers. These activities may or may not actively disrupt other students, but they certainly have an overall detrimental impact on the learning environment.

...They seem to feel it is their right to read email on their laptops, talk about classmates via a chat room on their laptops, work on other assignments, chat with each other (even when a guest speaker was invited to the class) and...

I teach studio classes, so some of the behaviors that would be annoying during a lecture (eating for instance) are less of a problem for me. Cell phones are my biggest annoyances...

Managing in-class use of electronic devices

Faculty find the use of electronic devices to be disruptive. But their comments also imply that more of them are finding it difficult than easy to manage the use of electronic

devices in the classroom. One points out that it is especially a challenge for teaching assistants to manage classroom use of electronic devices.

Cell phone text messaging is a problem; they try to disguise it...

...I also think computer playing is a problem, but it is not one that I can tell is happening.

...The most annoying behavior I have noted lately, among students who actually attend class, has been the use of laptops during class. I find this very disruptive, distracting, and almost impossible to curtail.

...I feel I have control over newspaper. Some I do not have control over (cell phones, especially now that the students- not necessarily noisy, but the students will check e-mail or text messages, some of them have other services). I don't like it but so far I have not taken action about it other than firmly requesting on the syllabus that cell phones be turned off.

...However all of the issues addressed here affect the TAs that I supervise. Some handle the disruptions better than others, but in particular, cell phones,...

Generally students are very good at turning off cell phones. Occasionally a text-messenger can be a distraction, but it's easy to minimize by simply asking students to not do this.

Suggestions for limiting use of electronic devices within the classroom are offered in the following:

...I would like to see an electronic blanket over the place where I teach in order to prevent cell phones from ringing. The technology exists if we had the guts to use to it...

...Cell phone calls sometimes need to be received but I have someone call me early in the semester and I respond with the behavior that I do not want in order to joke about it. Many colleagues report they have strong comments about cell phones whereas I am generally more relaxed. However no cell phones are used on exams for calculators due to text messaging, image sharing, and so forth. With text messaging I do stop speaking and wait for the person to finish, or.

No Problem or Seldom Have Problems

Among the comments of the faculty who claim that they tend not to encounter student behaviors that disrupt their classrooms, are those that complement the students at the U of A. Faculty say, "Students tend to be mostly personable and respectful." or that "...[they] find

the students to be interested and excited about learning.” One teacher adds a caveat to his or her complement:

Although I would find most of these behaviors very disruptive and would not tolerate most of them, I really have not witnessed many of them at the University of Arkansas. I find the students at the University of Arkansas to be very pleasant and respectful, more so than I witnessed at my previous university.

A responding instructor observes the following about the few students who do disrupt class,

Really there are not that many disruptions as described in the survey. However, I would estimate there is at least one disruption per class per day. I notice everything the students do, so I am sure that I see more than teachers who don't pay such close attention to students. It tends to be the same students who exhibit the disruptive behavior day after day.

In several of the responses, faculty say they do not encounter classroom disruptions because of the way that they manage the classroom, because they teach small classes or honor classes or they teach in professional programs. The following comments demonstrate these notions:

As a teacher, I have been able to effectively control any potentially disruptive behavior in the classroom. However, I teach in a professional program, so this task is presumably easier for me.

My class is at 8:00 a.m. The engineering students seem to take it very seriously. I have not noticed any deterioration in student civility or behavior over the 40+ years I have been teaching.

I haven't experienced most of the behaviors you asked about, but I typically teach small classes (approx. 15 students).

Manners and Courtesy

About 11 percent of the responses and 12 percent of the respondents discuss the students' manners and courtesy. In this case, at least two faculty distinguish between the courtesy of students taking upper division smaller classes and those taking survey classes or between nearly all of the classes they have ever taught at the U of A and one set of challenging students. While one faculty believes the students are “nice”, albeit “rowdy” and another has observed improvement, the majority of instructors criticize the declining manners, and increasing rudeness and self-centeredness of the students. Faculty describe the situation as follows:

...I have observed very little abusive or vulgar behaviour. Our students can be a little rowdy, but they're nice...

...Most students are more respectful than in past years. Perhaps 20% could benefit greatly by improving their manners and civility in the classroom.

I think many of the items this survey addresses are simply a matter of good manners. Unfortunately, in each class, even graduate classes, there are some students who never learned good manners.

I don't know what's wrong with students these days. Generally half of them are rude individuals with no respect for anyone but themselves.

After 10 years in the classroom, I have seen a marked decline in the courtesy and general behavior of students... ..often be rude to other students... ..Some students seem to feel they are entitled to complain and debate about due dates, exam dates, requirements in assignments and of course, any grade they don't like. They increasingly show little respect for the class, their classmates, and the lecturer. What a sad commentary about some of our current college students! And even more alarming, I hear from employers that they are experiencing the same type of behavior on the job.

Students are bringing with them a lack of appropriate considerations to all when engaging in the above mentioned activities during class. Generally, there exists a lack of respect of the proper roles that students and faculty should assume in the learning environment.

I often teach in the SE Auditorium, ... [Other than an event that occurs once a year] I would characterize most of my large classes as having nearly every problem that you have asked about, and I find them all disruptive to some extent. I wish students were simply less rude.

I find that many students, but clearly not all, have no respect for the classroom environment. They disrespect the entire class...

Students are more disruptive than in the past. I think they do not have the same civility toward each other as they are "connected" to others through the cell phones so therefore do not think they have to consider the students sitting beside them.

One of the faculty compares students at the U of A unfavorably with those he or she has taught elsewhere:

...In my more than forty years of teaching in elementary, high school, community college, small college, university, and medical school, I have

never seen as much class disruptive behavior as I have seen at the University of Arkansas. The students treat faculty as if faculty are hired hands on a farm or worse. When upper level administration in Dean and Associate Dean offices listen to student complaints without insisting the students go first to the faculty member or at least faculty members' department chair, to discuss their issues, the faculty cannot expect to receive any respect or dignified treatment in the classroom. Then when the administration takes action on the faculty member, we are subjected to being judged "guilty" without the ability to face our accuser or even attempt to rectify the issues. The administration is encouraging disruption in the classroom by students through their lack of attention to procedure and placing the faculty members in the position of hired hands of the students. As Rodney Dangerfield stated (more or less), "It's no wonder we don't get no respect!" I hope I have made it perfectly clear that I feel strongly about this issue and wish that we had administrative support to teach civility in our classrooms rather than to allow students to treat us with the level of contempt that they currently do. However, I do not expect any change to result and as I plan to retire soon, I hope I leave before it gets any worse than it already is.

Hope for University Support

In other comments, like the faculty member who wrote the comment directly above, at least two additional instructors express the hope that faculty will receive UA administrative backing to uphold standards for classroom behavior. One, for example, says,

...More specifically, we validate inappropriate and bad behavior based on familial or personal circumstances. The U of A needs to back professors who want to put a stop to this nonsense. I know when I was an undergraduate and graduate student I would never think of doing some of the things I witness students doing today.

Talking

At least 17 comments, 5 percent of all comments, pertain to students talking in class. In approximately 10 of the 17 comments, instructors indicate that talking in class is a problem or it is the worst problem they face. One says, for example, "The most disruptive behaviors my students have engaged in are talking in class..." At least two note that inappropriate talking in class has risen in recent years. These ideas are reflected in the following comments:

...In the large introductory classes (150-200 students), the most serious problem I have faced is students talking to each other. Other students complain about it most of all. There should be a University policy to eject these students from the class so that the rest of the class can go on.

I teach large sections of General Geology and find that the most discouraging thing many students do (25%) is to talk to friends during lecture. It doesn't

really bother me as much as it provides a distraction to other students seated nearby. When I can actually hear this conversation at the front of the room, I will sometimes stop the lecture and address the situation. This puts an end to the distraction for the remainder of the class, but the next time we meet for class it starts up all over again. If the students are reprimanded often about this, the instructor will suffer a lowering of ones evaluation score at the end of the semester.

...I have had to stop a lecture to ask students to quit talking and being disruptive to other students. I have had students come to me to talk about the 3-4 who are so disruptive in class. And a couple of times I asked students to leave the classroom. And the saddest thing about it was that they were seniors...

...and talking to a neighbor as disruptive both to other students AND me. I have noticed more of these behaviors occurring in the last couple of years- don't know what that says about this generation of students...

Graduate student behavior

Faculty who commented about teaching graduate level classes unanimously note that in these classes they have not encountered the potentially disruptive behaviors the survey asked them to assess. In addition, at least two contrast undergraduate and graduate students in the following comments:

Some of the above behaviors were observed in an undergraduate class I taught a couple of years ago. Now I teach a graduate course, and most of the above have not been observed with graduate students.

Students in graduate classes tend to be much less disruptive than is the case for undergraduate classes.

Level of student involvement

About 4 percent of the instructors' comments pertain to student involvement. But because the comments mention many sources of distress, if not disruption, not covered by the survey questions, therefore all of the comments are included. These faculty are concerned about the students' interest in what they are learning and their ability to pay attention.

...There was no question about lack of involvement, but students who simply will not participate and project boredom during student presentations and/or lecture is distressing/disruptive. I look forward to learning about the results of this study.

...and lack of interest in what I'm trying to convey.

I have experienced a major change in the student body in the past 5 or 6 years. They have a 10 minute attention span, and if they are not being entertained there is a higher potential of the disruptions that you identify in your survey...

My observations relate to my CIV classes - I have one class in person and two or three other sites -- lack of attention in the other sites is more of a problem than anything done in my in-person class; we cannot see all the distant sites at the same time.

... Despite efforts to get a sizable percentage of the class enrollment to be attentive and respectful, they continue to be disruptive...

In another group of comments, faculty view ill preparedness as disruptive. They say it influences students' success in completing assignments that instigate and/or reinforce learning and their ability to discuss subjects, according to the faculty making the following comments:

...The most disruptive behavior that I have seen is students who are not prepared for class!
...students who do NOT read or bother to read the assignments,...

Perhaps the most disruptive classroom behavior is the lack of preparedness, the inability or lack of caring when it comes to following directions...

Students are getting less energetic, do less work,...

The main problem I have encountered is to get discussion going. I have tried everything I can think of, but some classes are apparently afraid to offer an opinion. It is for this reason that I actually encourage interruptions if they are relevant to what we are studying.

Inappropriate Dress

Two faculty members mention student dress. One believes it is too revealing. Another wonders how to encourage professionalism among an entire college of students. Some faculty teach classes via distance education. The questions on this survey, tend to pertain to students in traditional classrooms. However, one faculty member encourages the U of A to,

...come up with some disruptive items in distance learning courses such as use of unprofessional language, dominating the discussions, not responding to e-mails as requested, not completing assignments on time and using rude language.

Other Comments

One faculty member mentions student antics that occur on Halloween only. It is recognized herein because it clearly disrupts at least one large class on Halloween and may affect others as well. This teacher portrays the situation by saying,

I often teach in the SE Auditorium, and one very disruptive activity not on your survey is the antics that go on at Halloween. Students who are not in my class come dressed in costume and totally disrupt the class - throwing things and running up and down the stairs. ...

In their other comments, at least four faculty point out that "It is a small minority of students that demonstrate these behaviors." A couple of teachers look past their own discomfort to the effects of the disruptions on student learning and one offers an economic argument about the nature of the classroom as a public good¹ in the following comments:

Such behaviors dampen my classroom teaching experience. It does not affect my delivery or discussion of the topic, but affect the learning of other students. It creates an undesirable learning atmosphere.

Students are the customer (or consumer) of an educational product. The issue should focus on the issue of a student behaving as to be disruptive is effectively reducing the product value to the other students.

Some faculty, reinforce the idea that the disruptiveness of student behavior is a function of numerous factors and thus can't be studied superficially. Others offer a variety of opinions.

¹ A public good (or bad) is one in which consumption by one does not preclude consumption by others. Disruption in the classroom is consumed by all who participate, just as global warming has consequences for all who inhabit the earth.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

All faculty and a random sample of students were asked to gauge the level of disruptiveness of selected student classroom behaviors. In addition, students evaluated the importance of aspects of teacher preparation for the classroom environment. Responding students represent UA students well. About three quarters are undergraduates and the largest share study in the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, although all colleges and the School of Architecture are represented. On average, the students were taking a full load of courses as spring semester 2006 drew to a close. In addition, the students work for slightly more hours weekly than the number of hours of coursework they take. Half of the students are ages 22 or younger and 86 percent describe themselves as white, while at least 4.4 percent each describe themselves as black or African American or Asian.

Responding students were slightly more likely to be female than male, but the converse is true for responding faculty as men outnumber women two to one. The faculty who responded have nearly 20 years of experience, on average; more than 80 percent hold the title of assistant, associate or full professor, and nearly as many earned doctorates. About 85 percent describe themselves as white; 6 percent Asian and 3.4 percent black or African American. Faculty who were teaching undergraduate courses spring semester 2006 taught an average of two classes and those teaching graduate classes taught fewer. Altogether, the faculty who taught spring semester spent more than three hours per week, on average, in the classroom *per se*, but some spent as many as 26 hours there weekly. Instructors taught from 1 to 550 undergraduate students per class, and one to eight undergraduate classes during spring semester. Only nine respondents say they taught more than 5 undergraduate classes during the semester. Professors of graduate students teach one graduate class on average. Half teach 10 or fewer graduate students per class and half teach more.

The behaviors considered very disruptive to the largest groups of students and faculty are verbally abusive or disrespectful comments that students make toward them or others, and use of vulgar or insulting language or gestures. A sizable share of students also finds lack of personal hygiene very disruptive.

Students and faculty also find chatting, whispering and/or talking in class as moderately disruptive, on average. While both faculty and students consider students preparing to leave before a class finishes, leaving or otherwise interrupting class before it is finished and use of electronic devices in class, disruptive, faculty rate these as even more disruptive than students do. On the other hand, students appraise other students interrupting themselves and/or their classmates and dominating class discussions as more disruptive than do their instructors. Overall, students judge the behaviors about which the survey inquires as slightly less disruptive than faculty do.

In their comments, both faculty and students note that the disruptiveness of some behaviors is contingent upon circumstances. Many faculty members, for example, seem to think that frequency of disruptions increases with class size. Sizable fractions of both students and faculty indicate that they have either never or rarely experienced disruptive behaviors in classrooms. In their comments, however, some students seem not to take the disruptions as seriously as do faculty. Both students and faculty discuss problems with

students text-messaging during class periods, among other issues with electronic equipment. Both advocate for stronger policies regarding use of electronic devices in classrooms.

Comments of faculty are naturally broader than those of the responding students. The largest set of such comments elucidates teachers' opinions about their responsibilities for classroom management and strategies they use. Many seem to believe that if teachers set limits on student behavior, students will comply. Among the implications of faculty's comments are that students' classroom behavior is largely a function of the teacher. One opportunity for discussion with faculty may be the extent to which this supposition is true. Another theme that appears, over a variety of discussion topics, is some faculty members' beliefs that students' behavior has deteriorated in the past few years. The frustration of some faculty who are expending significant effort to manage classrooms so as to maximize learning is apparent in their comments. Very few also express a desire for better administrative backing for their efforts.

While several instructors indicate gratitude for the opportunity the survey afforded them to address this topic, many also want to be sure that the findings are not judged as frequencies of the occurrences of these behaviors in their classrooms. Rather, they point out the importance of interpreting the findings strictly in relation to their opinions on how disruptive certain behaviors are or could be to the classroom environment.

Students also rated the importance of teacher preparation to classroom environment. On average, students avow it is very important for faculty to explain assignments clearly, teach using appropriate and current knowledge of subject matter, set clear expectations about assignments, be approachable and open to receiving questions and concerns, be prepared for class, be respectful toward students, strive to making learning innovative and interesting, maintain a classroom environment that is conducive to learning, provide reliable contact information and response, and provide prompt feedback on work completed. They view all the other identified aspects of teacher preparation as important, except allowing students to evaluate their teachers at midterm. On average, these students deem midterm teaching evaluations as sometimes important and sometimes unimportant. Teachers' rudeness and/or condescension is the subject of the largest share of students' comments.

APPENDIX A: METHODS EMPLOYED IN THE SURVEY OF UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS STUDENTS AND FACULTY ON CIVILITY IN CLASSROOMS

At the request of Sue Theiss, Director and Ombud of the UA Office of Student Mediation and Conflict Resolution, the Survey Research Center (SRC), University of Arkansas (U of A), conducted a survey of U of A students and faculty to determine how classroom environment is affected by various things and how important various activities are to a productive and civil classroom. The feedback provides information that UA faculty can employ to maintain and continually improve the quality of education they offer students.

Sue Theiss developed the questionnaire based on one used at the University of Arizona.² The Web questionnaires for both faculty and students are located in Appendix B in the form of codebooks.

The SRC administered the survey via the Web. An introductory letter was mailed to all faculty and a random sample of students April 26, 2006. SRC subsequently mailed four waves of emails to all non-responding members of the faculty and sample of students. The last email was sent to students prior to graduation on May ; the last to faculty was emailed May 15. An address to the survey on the web and a unique PIN number were included in each letter, whether standard or email. The last surveys were received at the end of May and the Web survey was closed June 12th.

All University of Arkansas personnel who are considered to be faculty were included in the initial list of faculty to be surveyed. The list was supplied by UA Human Resources. This list was scrubbed of faculty who were thought to be working outside the classroom including those serving as post-doctoral associates, high level administrators, and certain specialists such as curators. As a result the list of 1,111 faculty was reduced to 993 for purposes of the survey. These are considered to be a census of all teaching faculty and probably include many who do not teach. Of the 993 faculty who were surveyed, 499 responded, 79 refused or left the survey too incomplete to use and 15 were undeliverable. Thus, the response rate is 51 percent and the cooperation rate 86 percent.

Names, addresses and e-mail addresses of all surveyed students were obtained from the University of Arkansas data base. A random sample of 1,219 students was selected from the 16,506 students whose data indicate they were enrolled. Of these, 331 completed surveys, 65 refused and 59 were undeliverable. The response rate is 29 percent (rounded up from 28.51%) and the cooperation rate, 83 percent.

The SRC collected, recorded and analyzed the data and wrote the report.

² <http://dos.web.arizona.edu/Assets/pdf/files/facultysurvey.pdf> and
<http://dos.web.arizona.edu/Assets/pdf/files/studentsurvey.pdf>