

Teaching Philosophy Statement

Dominic Schmitz

adapted from similar guidelines by Ester Seyffarth, Heinrich-Heine-Universität

In my teaching, I follow a set of guidelines which are outlined in this document. If you participate in one of my courses, please read this document at least once and make sure you've understood everything in it.

Names

I prefer to work on a **first-name basis** with students **in both English and German**. In my experience, this leads to a more relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, removing unnecessary hurdles, lowering the level of reluctance, and enhancing the overall learning effect. Thus, please use my first name when addressing me – in the course room and also in emails. A perfectly fine form of address in emails is “Hello Dominic”.

It is important to me to know the names of my course participants and take them seriously. If you use, or would like to use, a **different name or different pronouns** than the ones officially assigned to you, please let me know, so I can address you correctly. If any of these things change during the semester, please let me know as well.

Discrimination

I do not tolerate any form of **discrimination** or **violence** in my courses. If I observe or learn about a person in my course attacking, harassing, or ridiculing someone else, I will take action to stop this kind of behaviour. Discriminatory **language** on the basis of someone's outer appearance, language, age, origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, abilities, or physical or mental impairments or disabilities will not be tolerated.

I expect you to **respect other participants** of the course, and to avoid any behaviour that might impact other students' ability to do well in the course. This includes **talking loudly or distracting people**. You should feel free to turn your attention elsewhere if you want, but I expect you never to do so at the expense of other students' ability to focus on the class. If you start annoying people in the course room, I will ask you to leave the room in order for other people to be able to pay attention.

Group work

Whenever my courses include group projects, I expect all participants to strive for **constructive collaboration and solidarity** among their group. Stick to promises you make to each other, and **communicate as early as possible** when obstacles arise. Be **respectful** of each other and each other's time, and **don't exploit** other students' labour to profit from it personally.

Special conditions

Usually, my courses can be passed by fulfilling some pre-defined requirements. More information on the requirements can be found in the provided slides and your *Modulhandbuch*. If you haven't fulfilled all the requirements at the end of a course and there are only a few assignments missing, you can **catch up** until the end of that semester.

Some students are subject to **unusually difficult circumstances**. For instance, someone might suffer from one or more illnesses, be impacted by mental or psychological issues, have unavoidable commitments during the semester, be caring for a person close to them, experience housing insecurity, or have some degree of anxiety, depression, or executive dysfunction. I want you to still be able to successfully take my course in such situations. If your situation is not mentioned here explicitly, but you have trouble with my course for other reasons, this applies to you as well.

Special conditions for passing my course are negotiated **individually**. You can contact me to inform me of your needs. Possible courses of action include changing deadlines for assignments, handing in your assignments by mail instead of in course, communicating in a written medium instead of orally, agreeing on a special group project setup, or reducing the number of assignments required for passing the course. Please understand that a certain number of tasks must be fulfilled in all courses, because I have to be able to assess whether or not you've reached the goal of the class.

You can let me know **at any point in the semester** that you require special accommodations, even if you were initially able to participate without obstacles. It's not always visible to a university teacher when a student is dealing with extra challenges, so it's really important that you mention such circumstances to me explicitly, and if possible, **make suggestions for the kinds of accommodations** that would help you pass my course. I will handle any information you share with me **confidentially**.

If you are unsure whether or not you are **eligible** for this kind of accommodation, we can talk about your class participation together. If you want, you can **ask another student to join** us for this conversation in order to make you **feel more secure**.

Making the most out of a course

When you're a student, it's a good idea to **connect with other students** in your program. These are the people with whom you will be discussing teachers, courses, projects, jobs, university politics, and other relevant topics for a few semesters. You could do so, for instance, by creating a group chat on a messenger app.

Should you have issues in a course with a group project due to a **group member being unresponsive or unreliable, or not doing their share of work**, you can talk to me. We can look for a solution together, such as changing groups or assigning subtasks differently.

The best way for you to influence my teaching style and speed is by **asking questions**. This is how I find out when I've explained something too fast or too superficially. By asking questions, you can make sure we focus on the topics that are interesting and relevant to you,

and thereby make most of the time you spend in a course. Feel free to also contact me about the course in between sessions. **Asking questions is not a sign of weakness or stupidity, but of solidarity.**

My behaviour in class

I like teaching. I am convinced that the topics I teach can make you more independent and contribute to your education and future career by helping you acquire important and useful skills. I can only reach my goal of making you independent and imparting knowledge to you if you feel **safe and comfortable** in my class.

I am committed to treating all participants of my classes **respectfully and responsibly**. I aim to follow my own ground rules against discrimination and violence at all times.

In case I say or do something that contradicts these guidelines, **please point out my mistake to me** and be prepared to discuss the issue with me, either in class or in private.

Whenever you share personal information with me, I treat everything you share **confidentially**.

How to contact me

You can reach me by email at dominic.schmitz@hhu.de. I commonly respond within 10 minutes to up to 2 days during the teaching period. If you do not receive an answer after 2 days, please email me again. Replies outside the teaching period might take longer due to obligations like conference visits. Thus, please wait at least 5 days until emailing me again.

To receive a helpful answer, your email should probably contain at least one clearly-phrased question or issue.

If you want to discuss something – no matter whether course-related or not – in person, you can make an appointment. Appointments are not a big deal, and I'm happy to chat.

You can also reach or follow me on Twitter (@dmncschmtz) or message me via the Ang3 discord channel (<https://discord.gg/Cwqh8nc5HT>).

Reference

Seyffarth, Ester. *Guidelines for classes taught by Esther Seyffarth: For an untroubled semester!* Available at: <https://user.phil.hhu.de/~seyffarth/classes/guidelines.pdf>

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