Civility Code for Mr. Caggia's Classroom[1]

In any environment in which people interact in meaningful ways to gain knowledge, it is essential that each member feel as free and safe as possible in their participation. To this end, it will be course policy and expected that everyone will be treated with mutual respect. We certainly do not have to agree, but everyone deserves to feel they are heard. We learn by engaging in constructive evidence-based dialogue. Therefore we shall establish in this course a general understanding that members of this class (including students, instructors, or any participants) will be respected and respectful to one another in discussion, in action, in teaching, and in learning.

Rationale for Inclusion of Civility Code:

School is intended to prepare students to become contributing and educated members of society. As members of society and especially the workplace, they will be expected (and rewarded) for being respectful of others.

Students and teachers thrive and education is at its best when there is culture of respect in the classroom. Students and faculty both suffer when the content of course is lost due to lack of respect among class participants and between students and teachers. While faculty members have a great deal of power in the classroom, it only takes one student who intentionally or unintentionally disrespects another student or the teacher, for the classroom to become a place of hostility instead of a place of learning. Ideally students should see the classroom as a place in which they are encouraged to engage with the material and a place free of intimidation from others.

Even in courses where issues of diversity have not traditionally been addressed, a Civility Code will encourage students to ask questions of the instructor and of each other in the comfort of knowing that the Civility Code is in place. Such a code communicates to the student that the teacher will take an active role in mediating classroom interactions to ensure respectful and constructive dialogue. To truly encourage diversity in the student body, it is essential that teachers recognize that students from diverse backgrounds are present in the classroom which may lead to different life experiences and perspectives. The use of the Civility Code assists in creating an inclusive learning environment as students from various backgrounds collectively learn course material.

What does this mean? The spirit behind such a code is to encourage expression and engagement from all students and faculty in the classroom. At this level of education, exposure to a diverse set of ideas is part of the educational experience and should be encouraged with appropriate facilitation by faculty to ensure these are shared in respectful ways.

The Civility Code[2]

In order to provide a safe, caring, and orderly environment, Mr. Caggia expects Civility from ALL educational stakeholders – including students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Mutual respect, professionalism, and common courtesy are essential qualities that all need to demonstrate in promoting an educational environment free from disruptions, harassment, bullying, and aggressive actions.

Unacceptable Behaviors

- Behaviors which interfere with or threaten to interfere with school or class activities
- Using loud offensive language or profanity
- Intimidating, harassing, bullying and inappropriate display of temper
- Threatening verbal or physical harm
- Threatening, abusive, or obscene telephone conversations, written communication, electronic mail or voice mail
- Disrespecting other students' or teachers' and the purpose and goal of the class or lesson
- Displaying intolerance for other's ideas and points of view

Encouraged Behaviors

- Displays of appreciation towards others
- Cooperation and collaboration with students and teachers (in the correct setting and when appropriate to the lesson)
- Genuine curiosity toward the subject matter and the points of view of others
- Seeking an understanding of opinions that differ from one's own perspective.
- A caring regard for others' situation and perspective
- Conducting oneself with high moral standards
- Viewing differing opinions and perspectives objectively

[1] A majority of the rationale this civility code was taken from the University of Idaho proposal. (Proposed Civility Clause. University of Idaho, www.uidaho.edu/~/media/Files/orgs/Diversity%20and%20Human%20Rights/DHR/Proposed_Civility_Clause. Accessed 22 Aug. 2017.)

[2] Some of the language of the code and unacceptable behaviors was borrowed from the Student Handbook for Hillsborough County Public Schools in Florida. (Student Handbook. Hillsborough County Public Schools, www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/assets/pdf/studenthandbook.pdf. Accessed 22 Aug. 2017.)