

Guidelines for classes taught by Esther Seyffarth

For an untroubled semester!

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TLDR

As a university student, you are mostly responsible for your own success. But that doesn't mean that you are alone in navigating university life or dealing with upcoming issues!

You should be able to have a pleasant and useful time in the classes that you take. These guidelines spell out my recommendations and expectations that will help you be successful in my class. You can also find some tips here concerning possible problems that might come up in the context of the class.

Accessibility

I aim to make all my lecture materials usable for people with **limited or impaired visual or auditory perception**. If I miss or underestimate accessibility issues, I have to rely on your feedback. When you point me towards accessibility issues, I can work on them and update my materials accordingly.

Most of my classes are taught in **German**. If you have trouble working with the German lecture materials, you can catch up using additional materials that I can make available to you upon request. In my lab sessions, you can communicate with me in either German or English.

I sometimes **speak faster** than other people. Please let me know when this happens. It is my responsibility to present class contents in a way that enables you to follow what I'm saying.

Accessibility in in-person classes

I teach exclusively in rooms that are located on the **ground floor or accessible via elevators**. If you have any difficulties reaching the classroom, please let me know. I can book a different room.

Large classrooms often have a **microphone setup**. I will use the microphone whenever necessary in order to be heard by all participants of my class.

A high concentration of **CO₂** in a classroom is detrimental to participants' health, wellbeing, and ability to pay attention. Therefore, I will make sure to open the windows before (and, if necessary, during) my class. I also typically take a break of 5 to 10 minutes in each class session.

Accessibility in digital classes

Classes that take place exclusively in a digital format have their own accessibility issues. I rely on written teaching materials in addition to videos, in order to make my class accessible to different types of students. There are **asynchronous and synchronous** ways to participate in my class: Students can work with the provided materials at their own pace, or attend regular live sessions in which we discuss the week's contents together.

If you need subtitles for my teaching videos, please get in touch with me.

Students who lack the necessary technical equipment to fully participate in online classes can receive support from me. Please contact me as early as possible so we can look for an individual solution.

Special conditions for passing my course

Usually, my classes can be passed by fulfilling some pre-defined requirements. More information on the requirements can be found on the class website. If you haven't fulfilled all requirements at the end of a class and there's 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. In digital classes, additional challenges include technical obstacles and the lack of a quiet space to study. I want you to still be able to successfully take my class in such situations. If your situation is not mentioned here explicitly, but you have troubles with my class 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 hand-in dates for assignments, handing in your assignments by mail instead of in class, communicating in a written medium instead of orally, agreeing on a special group project setup, or reducing the amount of assignments required for passing the class. Please understand that a certain amount of tasks must be fulfilled in all cases, 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.

Your behavior towards other class participants

I do not tolerate any form of **discrimination or violence** in my classes. If I observe or hear about a person in my class attacking, harrassing or ridiculing someone else, I will take action to stop this kind of behavior. I particularly reject harrassment focusing on someone's outer appearance, language, age, origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, abilities, or physical or mental impairments or disabilities.

Historically, computational linguistics has attracted particular groups of people to a higher extent than other groups, similar to computer science. However, **underrepresented groups** belong in this discipline, too, and must be able to feel welcome and included. Any excluding behavior towards members of underrepresented groups is unacceptable in my classes.

I expect you to respect other participants of my class, and to avoid any behavior that might impact other students' ability to do well in the class. This includes **talking loudly or distracting people during in-person lectures**. You should feel free to turn your attention elsewhere if you want, but I expect you to never do so at the expense of other students' ability to focus on the class. If you start annoying people in the classroom, I will ask you to leave the room in order for other people to be able to pay attention. Since attendance is not mandatory in my classes, there will be no negative repercussions for you.

Your behavior in group projects

Wherever my classes 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 with each other and each other's time, and don't exploit other students' labor to profit from it personally.

My behavior 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 on 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.

It is important to me to know the names of my class 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.

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

Tips for making the most out of my class

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, classes, 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 class 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 the most out of the time you spend in my class. Feel free to also contact me about the class in between sessions.

In digital classes, you always have access to some sort of forum or chat platform to interact with other participants. Use this platform to ask questions that are relevant to everyone in class, and to support each other. **Asking questions is not a sign of weakness or stupidity, but of solidarity.**

What to do if you're unhappy in my class

If you're having trouble with the contents of one session, you can **catch up** on that session at home. You can talk to other class participants, go through the lecture materials, or use Youtube, other online resources, or books to read up on specific topics.

If you need additional materials, feel free to talk to me. I will be happy to **provide resources** as needed. Share good resources among each other as well!

If you have no idea how to **get started on an assignment**, start by rereading the relevant lecture script. You can also discuss the task with other students. If you ask for tips in the lab session, I or my co-teacher/teaching assistant will help you **develop your own approach to the problem**.

If you are unhappy throughout several sessions of the class and feel like you're not doing so well, please **talk to me**. Together, we can figure out what the problem is and find solutions that work for you.

If you have any concerns that you're not willing or able to approach me with, you can consider contacting the following people:

- The *Fachschaftsrat Linguistik*, who represent students of linguistics and computational linguistics at this university
- The *Sekretariat der allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft* (room 24.53.00.86)
- The general and psychological counseling offered by the [Studierenden Service Center](#)

How to contact me

You can reach me by email at seyffarth@phil.hhu.de or on Rocketchat using my name. I aim to always **respond to your emails** quickly, typically after 10 minutes to 5 weekdays. If you ever wait longer than that without hearing from me, please mail me again.

In order to make sure that I receive your message, take care to avoid misspellings in my name.

You will probably receive a more helpful answer from me if your email contains at least one clearly-phrased question or request.

If you want to discuss something in person, you can make an appointment. Appointments are not a big deal, and I'm happy to chat.

For anonymous questions or feedback, you can send me a message anytime using this [form](#). I will receive a notification and will be able to react to your message. Make sure to leave some form of contact information (e.g. an anonymous email address) if you'd like me to be able to reach you personally.

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