Interview 1

1. Describe some student behaviors that you observe in your undergraduate classes that are problematic. What made them problematic? Give me an example from last week.

Some problematic behaviors are negative attitudes, entitlement, negative communication styles, and the tendency to argue. These are problematic because they disrupt the flow of the classroom, they have a negative effect on the collaborative piece, and they cause tension and stress.

Last week, I dealt with a negative attitude in one of my online classes. My students were to exchange papers to provide feedback on a 10-page paper they were working on. Students were to provide feedback focused on content and there was a rubric style feedback form for them to follow. One student turned her paper in 48 hours late, so I posted in the classroom asking if there was anyone willing to pick up the paper to provide feedback.

Two students picked up the paper and they both provided feedback that was mainly focused on content and writing choice. The comments they gave were pretty similar -- both picked up on problems with structure and organization, and made some suggestions to strengthen a few areas. Both made a general observation that although the feedback wasn’t supposed to be based on grammar and mechanics, the paper’s grammar and mechanical issues were detracting from the readability. Both suggested careful editing. The feedback given was a good mix of positive and constructive feedback, and it was delivered in a professional manner.

The student receiving the feedback was not pleased. She posted in the discussion board that she felt ridiculed and shamed. She said she was going to contact her advisor and have the assignment and the feedback reviewed because it wasn’t fair and it wasn’t constructive. She also sent personal e-mails to both of the students that provided the feedback (one of which, she pointed out a couple of grammatical errors in the feedback itself) telling them both that they needed to consider other peoples’ feelings before tearing up and redlining somebody’s work. She also e-mailed me and told me that she received hurtful response e-mails from both students that were “full of insults” and “degrading.” As it turned out, the student could not produce a copy of those e-mails when asked by her advisor, and subsequently she dropped the program.

2. Based on teaching experiences, how would you define incivility?

Incivility is any behavior or incident that negatively affects the positive culture of a classroom, and interferes with the learning process for groups or individuals. Incivility in any learning environment can take the focus off the student and disrupt progress towards the common achievement goals of the classroom. Additionally, incivility can bring a level of stress and strife into the classroom.

3. What are some behaviors that you would describe as uncivil? When was the last time this occurred? What happened?

• Arguing with someone in a discussion forum. I deal with this once a term or so - the last time was about two weeks ago when somebody responded to a post by simply saying “I disagree.” The original poster managed to stay out of it, but before I even got back in the classroom (and I sign in daily) three people had responded negatively. I had to step in and redirect the focus.

• Rude comments. For the most part, students I’ve worked with have been polite and courteous to one another. About six months ago, I was on a group video conference with a cohort of students, when one told another student she was “a good looking woman, and maybe that’s why she is so cocky.” Fortunately, I didn’t have to deal with that one on my own.

• I had a student that responded to a discussion post from another student by saying that her post was too hard to read because all of the errors in her writing. I handled it by e-mailing the individual and asking her to remove her comment and keep future comments focused on extending the discussion or reflecting on the material.

4. Can you share one or two examples of student incivility that you have experienced in classes?

I had a student complain in the discussion board about a writing tutor associated with the university. He mentioned the tutor’s name, and complained in detail about the advice that was being given.

5. How do you feel when students are uncivil?

When students are uncivil in my class, I feel like I have the responsibility to step in and redirect the conversation because it affects the culture of my classroom. Relationships, communication, and that circle of peers is important to the success of my programs. Uncivil behavior disrupts the culture of my classroom, and I fear that it will leave individual students with a negative view of not only my class, but my teaching.

6. What factors or situations contribute to student incivility in your classes?

• If I am not present in my classroom and participating actively in the discussion that can contribute to a culture of incivility.

• Use of sarcasm or sardonic comments.

• Allowing students to control the discussion.

• Making evaluative comments on student submissions where other members of the class can see.

• Allowing for discussion to get off topic and away from the material.

7. What strategies do you use to handle incidents of student incivility in your classes?

• I try to prevent it in the first place. At the beginning of every class, I post an announcement just kind of giving an overview of the expectations for classroom/discussion conduct and some general guidelines for acceptable and professional behavior in the classroom.

• I try to direct the conversation and keep it focused on the content by asking questions in response to posts that keep the conversation heading in the way I want it to go.

• If a problem does arise, I try to redirect the conversation and return to an acceptable topic.

• If there is a problem, I address it individually with the students involved, reminding them of the classroom discussion and communication expectations.

• If it is something that I feel like I’m going to lose control of, or is escalating, I will contact my course administrator and seek the counsel and involvement of the necessary admin.

Interview 2

1. Describe some student behaviors that you observe in your undergraduate classes that are problematic. What made them problematic? Give me an example from last week.

Some problematic behaviors are texting or surfing the Internet with cell phones during class, and talking to peers while I am trying to teach. Some students sit at the back of the classroom and state that they cannot hear. When asked to move up, they do not want to. Students sometimes do not prepare for class in terms of reading and/or pre-work. Then, the class does not progress as intended due to the fact that I have to direct teach the background information. This puts us behind schedule and does not let the students process information at the level needed. Other times I have an activity scheduled and students balk at the hands-on approach, preferring to “sit and get.” Last week, I had assigned a case study for students to read and be prepared to interact with others in their group to develop a solution. Not all of the students in two of the groups had done their part of the assignment or weren’t properly prepared, so this left the entire group without the ability to complete the classroom activity.

2. Based on teaching experiences, how would you define incivility?

Incivility includes student or faculty behaviors that impact the culture and community of the class. Incivility can also include actions taken by students and/or faculty that interfere with teaching and learning.

3. What are some behaviors you would describe as uncivil? When was the last time this occurred? What happened?

• Students will text during class when I am trying to lecture or teach.

• Students will forget to set their cell phones to silent or will take a phone call during class time, starting the conversation even before they get out of the room.

• Students will come to class late and then disrupt class by asking the instructor to get them caught up.

• Students will “surf” the Internet rather than work on the class assignment.

• This happens on a regular basis in class. I think sometimes students feel that since they are paying for the classes, they can do what they want during class time.

4. Can you share one or two examples of student incivility that you have experienced in classes?

• I had one student in an online class who disagreed with the content on learning styles. He took one source that disputed the validity of learning styles as the sole word on the topic. Then, he was combative in the discussion forums, challenging others to the point that two students e-mailed me with concerns and refused to interact with him.

• Sometimes students challenge a grade. When I ask them to highlight where they feel they have addressed the part of the grade they challenged, they can’t do so and then still believe their grade should be changed.

5. How do you feel when students are uncivil?

Primarily, I feel disrespected and hurt. I go to great lengths to prepare for classes and don’t understand why students don’t want to engage and learn. When students are uncivil to each other, I feel the need to step in and focus the conversation and learning.

6. What factors or situations contribute to student incivility in your classes?

• Students can actively contribute to incivility by interrupting class with ringing cell phones, talking above the lecture, coming in late, and leaving early. Not being prepared for class contributes to negative feelings among and between peers, especially during active learning. One unprepared student can impact the entire group.

• Students can passively demonstrate incivility by surfing the Internet, playing games on the cell phone, texting, etc.

7. What strategies do you use to handle incidents of student incivility in your classes?

• I post a detailed syllabus and classroom policies that include a schedule and assignments so students can work ahead.

• In the beginning stages of a class I ask the students to create a set of norms that we can all follow to establish expectations for how we will treat each other.

• I am present and active in classroom discussions and in the discussion forum to redirect students if needed.

Most importantly, I

Interview 4

1. Describe some student behaviors that you observe in your undergraduate classes that are problematic. What made them problematic? Give me an example from last week.

Some problematic behaviors are negative attitudes, side conversations/cell phone use, and negative communication styles. These are problematic because they disrupt the flow of the classroom, they have a negative effect on the collaborative piece, and they cause tension and stress in the classroom for individuals and group projects.

Last week, I assigned a group project for my classes. My students were to work together to conduct research for a presentation, to be given in two weeks. One of the groups started talking about the project while I was giving instructions, and then when it came time to work, they had missed some of the instructions so there was some confusion about the assignment. They began arguing about who was going to do what in the assignment, and one of them got up and left the group, refusing to work with the rest.

The problematic behavior in this situation was the side conversation, first, followed by the negative communication style. Both of these issues made it difficult for learning to take place, and disrupted the collaborative nature and focus of my classroom.

2.  Based on teaching experiences, how would you define incivility?

Incivility is any behavior or incident that negatively affects the positive culture of a classroom, and interferes with the learning process for groups or individuals. Incivility in any learning environment can take the focus off the student and disrupt progress towards the common achievement goals of the classroom. Additionally, incivility can bring a level of stress and strife into the classroom for both the teacher and students.

1. What are some behaviors that you would describe as uncivil? When was the last time this occurred? What happened?

* Arguing or using an aggressive communication style (interrupting, sarcasm) during classroom discussion. I tend to see this happen if the discussion takes a controversial turn. The last time it happened in my class, it was two people arguing over a presidential candidate. One student called the other a derogatory term so I had to redirect the conversation back to topic.
* Cell phone use can be uncivil, especially when it is excessive. I have students who forget to turn it off and it makes some type of noise, or students who will text or be playing games throughout class. This is probably the most common behavior I have to address, and I usually just ask the student to step outside and complete their conversation or task, and then join us when they are done.
* I had a student that was not happy with a grade she received on her test. She came in at the beginning of class and asked if she could talk to me, but class was about to start so I asked if she could come see me during my office hours. She said, “Of course, I figured that’s what you would say.” Shen then went and dropped her bag down by her chair, and left the classroom. She came back about 20 minutes later and sat in her chair, doodling all through the notes that I was giving the students for the next test. Because of the negative attitude, she missed out on an important review for the next test.

1. Can you share one or two examples of student incivility that you have experienced in classes?

* I had a student in class that was upset with a teacher from another class, and was talking to the students around him about the situation. After a couple of negative comments, I walked over and struck up a conversation with the group to redirect the subject.

1. How do you feel when students are uncivil?

When students are uncivil in my class, I feel like I have the responsibility to step in and redirect the conversation because it affects the culture of my classroom. Relationships, communication, and that circle of peers is important to the success of my programs. Uncivil behavior disrupts the culture of my classroom and I fear that it will leave individual students with a negative view of not only my class, but my teaching.

6.  What factors or situations contribute to student incivility in your classes?

* If I am not engaged in my own activities and participating actively in the discussion, that can contribute to a culture of incivility.
* Use of sarcasm or sardonic comments
* Allowing students to control the discussion
* Addressing minor issues publicly -- it can escalate the situation
* Allowing for discussion to get off topic and away from the material

7.  What strategies do you use to handle incidents of student incivility in your classes?

* I try to prevent it in the first place. At the beginning of every class, I distribute a syllabus just kind of giving of overview of the expectations for classroom/discussion conduct and just some general guidelines for acceptable and professional behavior in the classroom.
* I try to direct the conversation and keep it focused on the content by asking questions during discussions that keep the conversation heading in the way I want it to go.
* If a problem does arise, I try to redirect the conversation and return to an acceptable topic.
* If there is a problem, I address it individually with the students involved, reminding them of the classroom discussion and communication expectations.
* If it is something that I feel like I’m going to lose control of, or is escalating, I will contact my course administrator and seek the counsel and involvement of the necessary admin.