

## COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT POLICY ON ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

*The following policies and procedures relate to class attendance and participation in all COM or SPC undergraduate courses offered through the Communication Department at Buffalo State.*

**Student Responsibilities.** In the Communication Department at Buffalo State, we believe that regular and punctual attendance and active class participation are necessary for a student's academic success.

It is the responsibility of each student

- (1) to prepare for every class by having read assignments, written papers and/or prepared projects,
- (2) to attend every scheduled class meeting,
- (3) to actively participate in class discussion and activities,
- (4) to take notes on discussions, presentations and activities conducted within the class, and
- (5) to complete all course assignments, even if they are absent from a class meeting.

It further is the responsibility of each student

- (6) to know the attendance and participation policy for each course,
- (7) to request permission in advance of any anticipated absence, providing appropriate documentation if the absence is related to academic, professional, curricular, religious, or campus activities or for personal reasons,
- (8) to notify the instructor prior to class if an absence is related to illness or accident, and
- (9) to communicate with the instructor within 24 hours following any unplanned absence, and
- (10) to provide any documentation requested by the instructor.

**Class Participation.** By enrolling in a COM or SPC course and entering the classroom, each student makes the tacit commitment to participate in the class. Active class participation involves more than mere physical presence. Students are expected to be actively involved in the class. They should take the initiative in discussion and projects, ask

relevant questions, and contribute to the over-all learning environment of the class. This is known as *active learning*, and it should be the model for Communication classes.

**Mutual Respect.** Students can expect to be treated with respect by instructors and by other students. At the same time, students are expected to treat instructors and their fellow students with respect and to act in a dignified manner at all times. In some courses, class discussions are wide-ranging and open, with no relevant topic off-limits. Students are encouraged to share their relevant experiences, insights and professional observations. Class discussions must be conducted in an environment of respect and tolerance – for both people and their ideas.

**Classroom Behavior.** Instructors will not tolerate student behavior that is disruptive of the educational environment of the classroom. Improper classroom behavior includes arriving late and/or leaving early, using cell phones and computers in activities unrelated to class work, leaving and/or re-entering before the end of class, or any type of harassing, intimidating, belligerent or abusive language or action or that any behavior that is distracting to the instructor or other students.

**Grade Impact.** Attendance and participation may be calculated to affect the student's final grade. The department takes for granted that students should be in class. Therefore, attendance policies do not reward class attendance but rather they may penalize non-attendance.

(over)

**Penalty for Non-Attendance.** The department has determined that missing more than 20 percent of classes is justification for a maximum grade of “C-minus” (with “C” being the minimum passing grade for any COM or SPC course applied to a student’s graduation requirements in the major). Thus, a failing grade would result from

- more than three absences in a class that meets once a week
- more than six absences for a class that meets twice a week

Fewer absences may cause a lowering of the final course grade, which the department recommends for students missing between 10 and 20 percent of classes. Thus a maximum of a “C” grade would result from

- more than two absences for a class meeting once a week
- more than three absences for a class meeting twice a week

Alternatively, instructors may choose to lower incremental letter grades for each incidence beyond three absences.

Late arrivals and/or early departures by more than 10 minutes may be counted as an absence. The department recommends that instructors count three late arrivals and/or early departures as the equivalent of a missed class.

**Excusable Absences.** In general, absences may be considered excusable and not subject to non-attendance penalties if they are related to personal illness or medical emergency, death or critical illness in the immediate family, participation in university-related activities such as varsity sports, jury duty, military duty, and religious observances.

Instructors will use their discretion about other absences. However, the department does not consider the following as necessarily excusable reasons for missing class: vacation, job-related responsibilities, working on class assignments, activities sponsored by other departments or associated with other classes, child-care responsibilities, or extended personal leave.

Students are advised to schedule activities that do not constitute excusable absences – such as job or internship interviews, or non-emergency medical appointments – outside of class times.

**Documentation of Emergency Absence.** For a prior absence to be excused, students should make the request in writing within one week of the emergency absence. The request should be accompanied by appropriate documentation such as a physician’s note, obituary notice, etc.

**Preponderance of Absences.** Students should be aware that, even with excusable absences, there may come a point at which too many absences make it impossible for them to meet the course requirements. Instructors thus may advise students with many absences (regardless of the reason) to withdraw from the course – not necessarily as penalty for having missed class but simply as a recognition that the student is unable to complete class assignments. Note that that instructors may give “incomplete” grades only if students have made satisfactory progress throughout the semester.

**Make-Up Work.** Instructors allow students to make up work for exams, quizzes and other in-class assignments if students miss class for excusable reasons. Make-up work will not be allowed unless the instructor has excused the absence or considers it justifiable.

**Notification of Excessive Absences.** At mid-point in each semester, instructors should notify students who are in danger of failing the course because of excessive absences (or for other reasons). Students have until the 10<sup>th</sup> week of each semester to withdraw from a course without jeopardizing their GPA.

**First-Day Attendance.** The department requires that all enrolled students must attend class on the first day of the semester or term, or their seat may be given to another student. Accommodations are made for students not initially enrolled to enter the course during the drop-add period.

~~~~~

*This document outlines standard expectations for attendance and participation in any Communication Department course. Full-time faculty may explicitly modify provisions within this policy to meet particular course needs.*