

Appropriate Use of Personal Technology in the Communication Studies Classroom

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Modern technologies provide an ever-increasing opportunity to connect with our friends and colleagues. Devices such as phones, tablets, and laptops can be of benefit in the university environment; however, their misuse can also conflict with educational objectives and be disruptive for the classmates, instructors, and the technology users. Although instructors in the Department of Communication Studies have discretion when defining the appropriate use of these technologies on a class-by-class basis, the goal of this document is to describe policies and practices that may help to limit the potential for these devices to interfere with the classroom learning environment.

Course Policies and This Document

Because Communication Studies instructors are responsible for creating, facilitating, and maintaining a productive learning environment, they may extend or abbreviate the information presented in this document and/or substitute their own policy. Prior to using technologies in class, students should consult with their instructor and review the class syllabus for clarification. Should a syllabus refer to the document describing, "Appropriate use of Personal Technology in the Communication Studies Classroom" (this document), the policies and practices described below shall constitute an instructor's definition of appropriate technology use. All students enrolled in Communication Studies courses should be aware that misuse of technologies may result in the loss of participation points, assignment grade deductions, referral to appropriate campus-based disciplinary bodies, and other penalties as determined appropriate by an instructor.

Three basic guidelines define appropriate use of personal technology in the classroom (additional explanation for each item, below):

1. Students are responsible for personal technology use and needs.
2. If allowed, any personal technologies must be used in a manner that does not create a distraction for the user, classmates, or the instructor.
3. Students are encouraged to be active participants in the maintenance of an environment that is free from distraction due to the presence and/or misuse of personal technologies.

Student Responsibility for Personal Technology Use and Needs

Students who are required to bring technologies to the classroom, or choose to do so of their own accord, must take responsibility for their technology use and needs. In cases in which an instructor requires the use of a device (e.g., clickers, computers in an instructional lab, etc.), students should insure that all items are accessible, in proper working order, and used in a manner that is consistent with the goals of the class.

- In the case of technologies that are required for a course, students should secure access to the necessary equipment, software, and/or accessories either before the start of the semester or shortly after being informed of these requirements

- All necessary items should be tested, maintained, and stored so that they will operate as required
- Any user names or passwords needed for accessing classroom computers, networks, or other resources should be acquired from the appropriate campus entities, prior to the start of class
- To prevent loss or theft, personal technologies should not be left unattended for any period of time
- Individuals who require any form of assistive technology should provide the instructor with an accommodation letter from the Office of Disability Services so that the instructor can make arrangements

Use That Does Not Create a Distraction

When allowed by an instructor, individuals who bring personal technology to the classroom should use the devices accordingly.

Laptop Computers

- Laptop computers should be turned on prior to the start of class.
- Unless required for class content, wireless connections should be disabled.
- Applications that are not relevant to a class session should not be open. For example, do not browse the web, respond to email, check social media, and so forth when these activities are not the focus of the class.
- Display brightness should be reduced to an appropriate level so that it is not distracting to others that may be seated nearby.

Wireless Devices (phones, tablets, etc.)

- Any wireless devices should be set to silent upon entering a classroom.
- Applications that are not relevant to a class session should not be open. For example, do not browse the web, respond to email, use messaging applications, and so forth when these activities are not the focus of the class.
- Under no circumstances should personal, non-emergency calls be placed or answered from within a classroom while a class is in session.
- Individuals who are aware that they may receive notice of an emergency during a class session should speak with the instructor before class. If such a notification is received, either quietly leave the class or wait until a break before responding.
- In the event that an emergency notification is sent via the TXState Alert System, notify the instructor and follow instructions accordingly.

Video, Audio, and Photographs

- Equipment for recording video, audio, or photographs should not be used during classes without prior approval from the instructor. This includes audio or video recording of the lecture or activities as well as photographs of course materials (PowerPoint slides).
- Student speeches, presentations, and other performances should not be recorded without prior approval by the instructor and the student(s) delivering the performance.

Active Participation in the Maintenance of a Distraction-Free Learning Environment

Although Communication Studies instructors work to create and maintain a productive learning environment, it is often not possible for them to observe all events that take place in a classroom. There may be times when another person's technology use may interfere with the learning goals of others. When this happens, students should tactfully engage in efforts that will enhance the learning opportunity for themselves and those around them.

- If another individual is using personal technology in a way that is distracting, politely explain that the use is a distraction and request that the activity be stopped, quietly move away from the distraction, and/or inform the instructor of the problem at an appropriate time.
- Should instructional equipment not be operating properly (e.g., volume is too high or low, visual materials are unreadable, etc.), inform the instructor so that s/he is aware of the issue and can make adjustments.