Attendance policy

Attendance is a source of a lot of conflict every semester. Instructors need to record attendance in every reporting and editing class. Your attendance policy needs to be stated clearly in the syllabus and you need to follow it with a process that is defensible – shoddy bookkeeping can result in error and successful grade appeals. Most instructors in the School of Journalism allow no more than one unexcused absence in a once-a-week class and no more than two unexcused absences in a twice a week class. After that, you can administratively drop the student if the third absence occurs before the add/drop deadline (the end of the eighth week of classes) or give him/her a failing grade if the absence occurs afterward.

Online classes must state the class participation policies – what constitutes participation and how that will be evaluated. Most of the following language below is recommended and you are advised to copy and paste it into your syllabus, but you may adjust the first paragraph and the number of unexcused absences allowed:

Attendance in most journalism classes is mandatory. Students who don’t attend class miss a lot. Many of our classes are taught without textbooks and are highly experiential in nature, making it difficult to make up later. Unexcused absences will have a major impact on your grade, because in most cases, you will not be permitted to make up missed assignments. [XX number] of unexcused absences will result in your being dropped from the class. If the [XX] absence is after the drop deadline then you will receive an E in the course.

Excused absences are granted only for valid, documented reasons and only if the reason makes your presence at the scheduled time impossible. By school policy, acceptable excuses are limited to five: serious illness, jury duty, religious observance, dean’s excuse and military reserve obligation. If you have a reason for missing class that you think is legitimate, it is your responsibility to ask your instructor ahead of time if at all possible. This is expected even if you are ill. Excuses are subject to verification. Presenting a false excuse will be considered cheating, a violation of the academic integrity rules.

These three following bullet points are required by the UA to be included:

- The UA’s policy concerning Class Attendance, Participation, and Administrative Drops is available at: http://catalog.arizona.edu/2015-16/policies/classatten.htm.
- The UA policy regarding absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance or practice will be accommodated where reasonable, http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/religious-accommodation-policy.
- Absences for groups of three or more for university activities that are pre-approved by the academic dean and UA Dean of Students (or Dean Designee) shall be honored by instructors. Instructors have the option of accepting or rejecting Dean of Students excused absences granted to individuals, but not to groups. See: https://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/absences

The best thing to do is for you to communicate directly with me regarding your absence or whether excused absences are likely to interfere with your ability to learn the course material. Other than group excused absences approved by the Dean of Students, I am the only person who can excuse your absence, and determine if alternatives or make-up work is an option. The Dean of Students Office does provide Emergency Notifications in situations where students must be absent from class due to an emergency situation but are unable to contact their instructors themselves due to their condition. Be aware that Emergency Notifications are not excused absences.