

Decision-Making for Magistrates: Attendance and Participation Policy

In creating a course for the Judicial College, my colleagues and I aspire to structuring an educational experience that requires students to be active participants in their own learning. I talk less, and you talk more. Whether offered in the classroom or over Zoom, Judicial College seminars demand a commitment from students different from that are often associated with continuing education events. I want it to be easy for students to be engaged. I want your minds to be generating ideas and questions and thoughts for future implementation. I want to provoke and support your curiosity – and your drive for excellence. And when I plan our time together, I'm making a bet: that we can accomplish those goals by using our time in the classroom (whether real or virtual) in a highly focused way. Not by requiring lengthy homework assignments. Not by threatening you with a test at the end. But by **DOING** in the classroom what you're called upon to do in the courtroom.

This sort of educational experience absolutely requires students to be whole-heartedly present, attentive, and engaged. There are lots of ways that degree of involvement can manifest; I'm well aware of individual differences in how students interact with instructional material as well as in how they comfortably participate in a classroom setting, and I'm committed to being respectful of those differences. Magistrates who are uncomfortable with talking in front of lots of people may prefer to ask questions through the Chat Box or speak mostly in the small group meetings, for example. And that's fine. For the sake of clarity, however, I want to be very specific in stating expectations that apply to everyone for our time together.

1. You must be present for the entirety of every class. Here's the fine print:
 - a. If you have an internet outage or similar technical glitch causing you to miss class, use the telephone option to participate by phone. Be prepared to do this before you actually need to do this. Keep that telephone number handy.
Also, send Jess an email right away telling her what's going on.
Finally, note the start and end time of your absence. That will let us know precisely what content you missed, which helps greatly in assessing what we need to do next.
 - b. If you have a family, medical, or other emergency, email Jess when you're able (after you've taken care of the emergency).
 - c. Do not plan to work while you're attending class. This should go without saying, but I'm saying it just in case.
 - d. Do not engage in other activities while attending class. This includes driving, participating in meetings, or any other activities that require your attention. (Stretching is fine, and as for playing with your cat, I would say that depends on your cat.)
 - e. Re-schedule prior engagements and don't make new engagements that overlap with class time. Again, this seems obvious
2. Be on time for class. I'll start on time and end on time and expect the same from you. (I'm always happy to hang around afterwards to answer questions or just chat, but I promise to release you on time.)
3. I will offer ample opportunity for you to vote on various questions, using the Zoom reaction button and perhaps other polling devices, as well as to respond to end-of-class (super-short) surveys. I'll also sometimes ask you to use the "Chat" feature in Zoom. These are low-risk methods of participating in class exercises and discussions, designed especially for those of you on the quieter side. Everyone should respond to these invitations to participate. Even if you're completely uncertain of the correct answer, your brain learns more if you take a guess and then discover whether you were right or wrong.
4. Take small group discussions seriously, in terms of your attendance and participation. Keep your camera on and follow the rules for participating in those discussions. (We'll be talking more about those rules later.) A "breakout" group is not intended to be a break.

5. Just as if we were in Chapel Hill, you should always feel free to take a brief break for any personal needs. Take care of yourself as a learner. If you are away for more than five minutes, send a chat to Jess explaining why you needed to be absent, including how long you were gone. (I apologize for what seems like a truly petty rule, but experience has taught me that 5 minutes turns into 25 minutes with surprising regularity.)
6. Keep your camera on, with yourself in front of your camera, unless technical problems make that impossible. If that is the case, let's talk to figure out whether we can resolve the problem. If your camera is not on, you should be in communication with Jess about why.
7. Despite the emphatic tone of some of these expectations, I really do understand that things come up and life goes on. That happens in the classroom, and it happens on Zoom. These expectations are flexible to some degree, and I am open to adjusting expectations when individual circumstances require it. My guiding principle is that communication is a good thing. If you have concerns about your ability to participate in the class given the participation and attendance expectations, please reach out to me so that we can work together to work out a solution.

If you have questions or concerns you'd like to discuss, feel free to email me at Lewandowski@sog.unc.edu or contact Jess Schoonmaker, the Program Manager for this seminar, at schoonmaker@sog.unc.edu.