

Sarah Anderegg

From: Jonathan Eldridge
Sent: Tuesday, November 8, 2022 11:37 AM
To: Jonathan Eldridge
Subject: Fall 2022 Faculty Information & Updates, Volume XV
Attachments: Cell Phones in Class.pdf

Dear College of Marin Faculty:

I want to remind you about the need for all of us to complete the **cybersecurity training** I wrote about earlier in the semester. This training counts for flex obligation, takes about 15 minutes, and needs to be completed by December 16.

Here are the details from IT:

Ransomware attacks are common threats to our educational institutions. College of Marin's cybersecurity insurance policy requires all employees to receive training yearly. Please login into your ProLearning site through the MyCOM [portal](#). Search for the following courses.

- Browser Security Basics
- Copyright Infringement
- Cybersecurity Overview
- Email and Messaging Safety
- Password Security Basics
- Protection Against Malware

You are required to complete at least ONE of them.

I have also attached a piece that looks at the pros and cons (and various faculty perspectives) on **cell phones in class**. I'm sure it will foster some good debate!

Finally, I hope to see you at some of the events below celebrating our student athletes and the inaugural **Barksdale Basketball Invitational**.

Bounce: The Don Barksdale Story Documentary Viewing and Q&A

TUE · NOV 8

12:40 PM — 2 PM

ACADEMIC CENTER, AC 255

Join filmmaker Doug Harris and learn about the contributions of legendary Mariner Don Barksdale. Barksdale was a professional basketball player, civil rights advocate, and Bay Area community leader. Eligible for Flex credit. Refreshments provided.

50 Years of Title IX: Perspectives of Women in Athletics

WED · NOV 9

12:40 PM — 2 PM

ACADEMIC CENTER, AC 255

Learn about the impact of Title IX and strategies for empowering female athletes. Featuring COM Mariners coaches and Ashley Davis-Carter, Owner of LeadHERship Athletics. Eligible for Flex credit. Refreshments provided.

Cheer for our Mariners! Homecoming Week Games

All games take place at the College of Marin. Come out and show your support!

TUE • NOV 8

MEN'S SOCCER — 3 PM Mariners vs Contra Costa

MEN'S BASKETBALL — 4 PM Mariners vs West Valley

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL — 6 PM Mariners vs Modesto

WED • NOV 9

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL — 6 PM Volleyball Last Home Game Mariners vs Los Medanos College

DON BARKSDALE COURT First Annual Barksdale Basketball Invitational

FRI • NOV 11

BEGIN AT 3 PM

DON BARKSDALE COURT

First Annual Barksdale Basketball Invitational, Day 1 Join us in support of our women's Mariners team as they take on their first opponent.

SAT • NOV 12

BEGIN AT 3 PM

DON BARKSDALE COURT

First Annual Barksdale Basketball Invitational, Day 2 Join us in support of our men's and women's Mariners teams as they go for the victory!



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The Cellphone Challenge

A few weeks ago I [shared](#) a story from a reader who felt as if she was constantly competing with cellphones for her students' attention. She had a no-usage policy, but students sometimes ignored it, and she didn't want to turn into a cellphone cop. She was wondering how other professors handled this challenge.

As expected, the responses varied, yet they were specific in their reasoning. Some professors are adamant that phones are detrimental to class cohesion and students' ability to truly be present. Others see real value in phone breaks, or even active use in class, arguing that phones have become integral parts of our lives. What's clear is that this longstanding debate has not been resolved by the increase in tech use during the pandemic.

I've categorized responses into three groups: no phones, limited use, and integrated into class.

No Phones

Heather Dubrow, an English professor at Fordham University, explains her reasoning as follows:

“On many other issues I'm flexible. But I feel strongly it's not in students' interest to consult their telephones during class: Rather than tuning out on our work (and not least, implicitly undervaluing contributions by other students), they can check the phones afterwards. And we are, I'd argue, serving students' broader interests by encouraging them to see that digital devices are not the be-all and end-all. Let's help them learn that there are many kinds of valuable reading, some suitable for some situations and some for others, and in many circumstances slow reading and rereading, not rapid scrolling, are demanded.” (She does make exceptions when students with disabilities approach her with a need for their phone.)

Jerise Fogel, an adjunct professor in the classics and general-humanities department at Montclair State University, describes her approach:

“I deal with phone usage that I notice partly by addressing everyone no more than once in a session to ask that ‘everything digital’ be put away. Today in class I spoke to

two students in the back of the class who were using their phones very openly, and explained that I don't feel comfortable prohibiting people from using phones if they are on emergency watch, for instance, with someone close to them in the hospital, etc. BUT, that said, could they please put the phones away in class if it's not an emergency? Personally asking generally gets a good short-term response at least, I have found.

"I have a colleague who has had success using the hanging-shoe-closet approach by assigning everyone a number and having them place their phone into the appropriate pocket at the beginning of class. She says some students seem relieved, and do it very willingly, which is what I often found pre-pandemic, when I would give folks who placed their phones upfront on my desk for the class one extra credit point per day. They were free to keep the phones and just forfeit the extra credit point, but most did not do that regularly."

Limited Use

Matt Bellis, an associate professor of physics at Siena College, writes about his longstanding policy:

"Many years ago, I came across articles about people's ability to focus during lectures, and the consensus seemed to be that people can really focus for 20-30 minutes before their attention starts to wander. Since I started as an assistant professor, in 2012, I've made a 'deal' with the students (codified in the syllabus): They don't engage with their phones during class, and I will do my best not to lecture for more than 20-30 minutes, at which point everyone gets a phone break! The break will be for 3-6 minutes, depending on the length of the class, and they can of course use the break for something other than their phone. The point is, for 3-6 minutes, they're allowed to not listen to me and do what they want. ...

"Sometimes I go a bit longer than 30 minutes, and they might get a bit antsy, but over all I've had really good responses from students. They're rarely on their phones, and if one of them is sneaking regular peeks, I feel less guilty about asking them to put it away because we have this explicit agreement. 'Just 5 more minutes, and we can all look at our phones, Student A,' I say with a smile."

Integrated Into Class

Jane Nesmith, an assistant professor of rhetoric at Coe College, describes a new strategy she tried last semester:

“Early in the class session, I’d ask students to get out their phones and use them for something specific: Look something up, do a Poll Everywhere, access the course-management system. After we discussed whatever it was I had them do, I’d then say, ‘OK, now put your phone away and [let’s talk about the reading for the day, etc.].’

“Active use of phones followed by everyone putting phones away together seemed to work better than a general policy about ‘no phones.’ I couldn’t always figure out a way to add a phone-based activity to each class, but I think if I were more intentional about it, I could!”

Jennifer Patrice Sims, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Alabama at Huntsville, also incorporates phones into her teaching. She writes:

“I have students take and send me pictures of in-class group work (e.g., when ‘Intro to Sociology’ students draw a comic to illustrate the concept of socialization), and then, with their permission, I post it on my department’s social media. I have ‘Research Methods’ students use the calculators on their phone for in-class statistical calculations. In classes like ‘Sociology of Race or Sexuality,’ I set discussion prompts that have students look up trending topics on social media and analyze them via the theories or topics we are covering that day. In classes in which I do not post lectures, students also use phones to take pictures of my lecture slides so they can refer back to them while studying or give them to a classmate who is out sick. I have a student in one class who uses a type-to-speak feature on her phone some days instead of talking (I don’t know why, but I’m sure she has her reasons, and they are none of my business). Finally, since the 1990s’ high art form of writing and passing notes in class is dead, I tell students to text each other to talk in class to keep the noise level down.

“In short, for better or worse, smartphones are an integral part of life now. Olympians had them out, taking pictures and posting videos on social media during ceremonies. QR codes have us constantly taking out our phones to engage in everyday activities; e.g., I have to scan a QR code to sign myself into Faculty Senate meetings and to sign my daughter into dance practice and to see the menu at many restaurants. Amber, weather, Covid exposure, and other alerts keep us reaching for our phones for important information.

“Rather than try to resist a cultural shift that has already occurred — that is, rather than try to run my 2022 classroom as if it were still 2002 — I lean into the way culture is now.”

One Study on Cell Use

Melissa Huey, an assistant professor of psychology at the New York Institute of Technology, decided to dig into the debate by conducting a quasi-experimental study of students, primarily sophomores and juniors, in behavioral-science classes at NYIT.

Over a period of six weeks, during the spring semester of 2020, before the pandemic hit, she randomly assigned different class sections to one of two groups. Students in the experimental sections placed their phones on the front desk as they walked into the classroom. Students in the control group were given no restrictions.

After the experiment ended, she surveyed students about their comprehension of the course and their well-being. Those who put their phones away reported higher levels of comprehension, lower levels of anxiety, and more mindfulness compared with the control group.

The results did not surprise her. “Within my classroom, I find that the smartphone is often a distraction for students, taking away from the classroom experience and retention of information,” she writes. One theory, she notes, is that the stream of alerts we receive on our phones fosters anxiety and distraction. Another is that students experience a fear of missing out if they can see what their friends are doing while they’re in class.

“Students are inundated with technology all day every day,” she writes, “so let’s make the classroom experience a place to retain new information, exchange ideas, and most important, learn at the moment.”

Based on those results, she says, she no longer allows phones in class.

Beth McMurtrie is a senior writer for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, where she writes about the future of learning and technology’s influence on teaching. In addition to her reported stories, she helps write the weekly Teaching newsletter about what works in and around the classroom.

