PERSONAL DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM

A SPECTRUM OF INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES
Instructor Concerns

Students will be distracted in class if they have laptops, tablets, and/or phones available during lecture

- Students may ignore lecture/instructional content
- Students may distract other students
- Students may distract/disrupt the instructor
- Students may take pictures of slides and distribute after class
- Students may cheat during in-class quizzes or activities
Uses for personal devices in classroom

• Check definitions of vocabulary (e.g., for non-native speakers)
• Participate in active learning exercises (many examples)
• Check blood sugar
• Image search for visual learners
Spectrum of Instructional Approaches

Ban  Limit  Embrace  Laissez-faire
Students are directed when and how they may or may not use their device in class.

Students may not use their device in class.

Students use their device as a designed part of the lesson.

Students may use their device at will.
Ban – no personal devices in class

Strategies to implement

• Create syllabus statement and offer announcements throughout the term, explaining your reasons
• Define terms of ban – Some or all devices? Does it include phones? Tablets? Phones? Smart watches? Calculators?
• If available, have TA’s or learning assistants monitor classroom and report use
• Try low/no-tech polling options (show of hands; colored cards; plickers)
• Teach effective note-taking techniques
• Make enforcement clear, consistent and fair
Consequences of Banning Devices

- Steep spend of your ‘relationship capital’ with students
- Difficult to enforce consistently; exceptions may be required for legitimate use
- Potentially calls out students who use devices for disability accommodations
- Reduces options for active learning
- Time and effort needed to monitor use
- Difficult to address ‘sneaking’
- Reduces options to engage students who don't participate in discussions (e.g., shyness, language barrier, etc.)
+ Reduces distraction/disruption to other students
Limit – Permit in classroom with restrictions.

Not employed for active learning/classroom experience

Strategies to implement

• As with plane travel, theaters, meetings and performances, establish classroom expectations: silence device; disable notifications; no texting

• Syllabus statement and announcements throughout the term, explaining your reasons

• Teach/model effective uses of technology in professional contexts
  • Describe pitfalls of distraction
  • Describe benefits of responsible use

• Teach effective note-taking techniques

• Top Hat – instructor can block slides from displaying on students’ devices
Consequences of Limiting Devices

- May need to provide instructions on disabling notifications, volume, etc.
- Difficult to monitor ‘sneaking’
- Students may cheat during in-class quizzes or activities
+ Reduces need for 'sneaking'
+ Increases options for active learning
Embrace – incorporate personal devices in classroom

Strategies to implement

• Create syllabus statement and announcement early in the term, explaining your reasons
• Employ in active learning
• Request laptop users to sit at the back of the class to reduce distractions to other students
• Teach effective note-taking techniques
• Set ground rules, e.g., no devices for first 10 minutes of class, or during small group discussion
Consequences of Embracing Devices

+ Many options for active learning
+ Allows opportunity to share/model appropriate use of technology in professional context
+ Reduces need to monitor classroom use
+ Can be used to take attendance
- Students may cheat during in-class quizzes or activities
Laissez-faire – take no action to encourage/discourage use of personal devices

Strategies to implement

• Do nothing
Consequences of Laissez-faire

- Missed opportunity to model/instruct on appropriate use of technology in professional context
- Students may cheat during in-class quizzes or activities
+/- Impact on active learning may vary
Active learning Strategies

• Fact-check in lecture
• Examine source validity
• Discussion prompt
• Creative or personal expression
• Peer instruction