WHAT THEY MIGHT HAVE SAID

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Most college and university teachers are aware that student class attendance is a growing problem. Some students start their weekends on Thursday night making Friday class attendance considerably less than Monday and Wednesday in M, W, F classes. Instructors have tried various methods to encourage better class attendance. At Indiana State University, some faculty give quizzes on Friday, while others award bonus points for attendance, and others subtract points from the student’s total points depending on the number of absences. The University requires student attendance records at three, seven and ten weeks into the semester to notify by letter the “guilty” of their excessive absences. My approach is to provide in the course syllabus a table relating participation in class activities, which relates directly to attendance, to final grades. Recently I have added another reminder of the value of attending class, which I present at the first class session.

CLASS ATTENDANCE

Aristotle said, “He who does not attend class, dost not attend graduation (1).” A relatively low percentage of freshmen finish their senior year. Certainly class attendance plays an important role in this. Newton said, “All objects fall down when dropped (3).” Dropping out of class also drops one’s grades. Skipping class usually results in lower tests scores, and low test scores often result in students dropping a class. Fahrenheit is quoted as saying, “An empty chair is colder than an occupied chair (2).” By leaving a chair empty, everyone in the room needs to put out more heat energy in order to compensate for the missing body heat of the empty chair.


The amusing or interesting fact is that if the instructor does not smile while presenting this material, some students will go to the library to find the journals, but other, and usually a larger number, will go to the WEB. The responses will vary from amusement to irritation at the time they wasted on this worthless project, but it does get their attention. A bonus to this endeavor is the presentation of one way to refer to and list citations.