

MISSING IN ACTION

In the middle of spring semester, fewer students seem to be showing up for lectures

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Battalion
It's springtime, and along with the change in weather, Aggies may start to see a change in class attendance. Look around a class of 200 and see how many seats are filled. Either everybody is sick, or those who aren't going to class know it everything already and don't need to hear lecture. Right?

Dr. William J. Leonhirth, visiting assistant professor in the journalism department, said he sees a pattern in student attendance. "As the weather gets warmer, attendance tends to drag," Leonhirth said.

Leonhirth said a lack of motivation also plays a part in the numbers. "As the semester drags on, some students get disengaged and stop coming," he said.

Leonhirth said he has never considered rewarding students who do attend his classes because it is his responsibility to be there. While he does not deduct points for not attending, Leonhirth said students will suffer by not getting information that could help them.

Dr. Claude Gibson, associate professor and director of undergraduates in the English department, said professors should do their part to maintain high attendance by making lectures interesting. "If I want my students to attend, then it is up to me to make lectures engaging," Gibson said.

Gibson said because students and professors come from different generations, professors need to know the knowledge they learn in different ways and adapt students' learning styles to keep them engaged in their classes.

"Young people change, and the best professors change with them," Gibson said.

Gibson said students also benefit from attending his lectures because a percentage of his test questions are taken from the lecture. He said students who buy their notes from a note-taking service instead of attending class miss out on the interaction taking place during lecture.

"A person at lecture heard everything; a person just reading notes doesn't," Gibson said.

Some professors follow strict attendance policies. Evan Palomeque, assistant lecturer in the Spanish department, said students in his Spanish 101 and 102



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

classes are only allowed to have four unexcused absences before losing points. Palomeque said lectures in language classes are especially important to students.

"The student gets exposure to the language they can't get from a book," Palomeque said.

"The main thing they can get from lecture is the language, hearing it, comprehension, and just being able to practice."

The University only excuses absences that fall under certain conditions in its attendance policies. A death in the family, a University-approved activity or an illness would be excused.

If a student is sick, they must provide written documentation from a physician saying the student is too ill to attend classes.

University Student Rules states professors do not have to make accommodations for students who do not have an excuse.

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence," states rule 7.6 of TAMU Student Rules.

Michael McElroy, a senior journalism major, said he learned the hard way about the consequences of not attending classes.

"If you don't go to lectures you won't pass," McElroy said.

"I don't think you have to take a lot of notes, but if you read (assignments) and pay attention during lecture you have a better chance of doing well."

Vanessa Spencer, a freshman physics major, said because most of her classes are small math classes and some professors take points off for missing class, she makes it a point not to skip.

"In a lot of my classes, attendance counts, and we have to sign in," Spencer said.

Spencer also has an additional reason for going to class. "I'm paying to be there, so I might as well be," she said.

Gibson said there are numerous distinguished professors on campus, and students should take advantage of learning from them. He suggests doing a little research about a professor before registering for a class.

"Who wants to graduate from A&M and never have learned from a distinguished professor?" Gibson said. "I would have rather been in [Albert Einstein's] classroom than any other teacher's."

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