

# **Student Guide to the Interactive Television Classroom**

## **Welcome to the electronic classroom.**

Courses delivered via media technologies are becoming more common in the University system. Interactive Television makes it possible to link two (or more) electronic classrooms that may be hundreds of miles apart and create one classroom environment. When you walk into the class, you will see cameras, television monitors and microphones. All this technology is remote controlled and allows everyone in one location to see and hear everyone in the other location (or locations.)

## **Why interactive television?**

Use of this system for conferences and meetings saves both travel time and expense. For classes, the system makes it possible for students on other campuses to take courses not available on their home campuses. There are a few small ways in which interactive television classes are different from the classroom situations to which we are most accustomed. This booklet will give you a handful of guidelines that will make your electronic classroom experience more productive and pleasurable.

## **BE ON TIME**

The system that controls the routing of signals between campuses and classrooms is computer controlled. A class will start and end on time. If the class doesn't end on time there is a good chance that the connection will be broken anyway since the computer is pre-programmed. We recommend that you arrive a little early for your class. If the technical setup which precedes the class is trouble free, then you may have time before class to talk with the instructor or students at the distant sites.

## **SIT NEAR MICROPHONES**

The microphones in front of you are designed to be voice activated. They switch on when someone talks, but they can also be activated by random noise. The rustling of papers, zipping bags and whispering are examples of sounds that may switch on and be "picked up" by the microphones. Be mindful of not making unnecessary noise, and of course don't set books, papers, or other articles over the microphones. When speaking in class, face forward and talk normally. It is not necessary to lean forward but avoid leaning back or slouching away from the microphones. The audio system in the classroom is not a public address system, so to make yourself heard by the other people in the room with you, project yourself, as you would in a normal classroom. If you are in a room in which the microphones are not attached to the tables, do not move microphones by picking them up or turning them around. Sliding one closer to you along the table is okay.

## **PUSH-TO-TALK MICS**

If you have push-to-talk microphones, you need to press and hold the button the entire time you're talking. Speak directly into the microphone.

## **BE ASSERTIVE**

We recommend that your instructor establish some type of protocol that allows you to interrupt and get his or her attention. Feel free to interrupt the instructor if you can't hear or see what is happening. If more than two sites are connected the instructor may not be able to see you to know that you have a question or are confused. When you do ask a question or interrupt the instructor it is best to state your name and your site location. For instance, "Dr. Johnson, this is Jane Doe in Duluth and I have a question." Also you need to let the instructor know if she or he is talking too fast or if the type on the supporting graphics is too small or hard to see. Sometimes the instructor may control the camera switching from the front of the room. But some classrooms may have an operator assigned to manage the cameras, so if there is a problem with sound or picture, tell the operator about it. It may be something easy to fix if the right person is made aware of the problem.

## **PARTICIPATE**

The University distance learning system is called interactive because you are expected to participate in the experience. In order to make your participation easier you should know that there is a delay between the time you ask or answer a question and the time that the next

person will speak. This delay is a characteristic of the interactive system, the time it takes to code and compress video information and send it back and forth between sites. We usually expect a delay of three to five seconds, so don't worry if the response is a little slower than you expect. (The reason for the delay could also be deep thought.)

## **SERVING AS ASSISTANT**

As in a conventional classroom, you may be asked to help the instructor by collecting assignments at your site or handing out materials. Your help will be appreciated.

## **CLASSROOM VIDEOTAPING**

Some of the classrooms within the University system have videotaping capability. It is University policy that both you and the instructor must consent to being videotaped.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Since more than one site may be connected for a given course, label all your work with your site, course title and your name, so that you will get credit for your work and will get your work back.

## **INSTRUCTOR CONTACT**

Remember that you will not be able to stay after class to confer with the instructor. If your question has to do with individual grading decisions, approval for a topic for your paper, or other individual matters, you should contact your instructor outside of class time. Usually the hours and method of communication with the instructor are published in the course syllabus. Your instructor may ask how things are going in relation to your general distance learning experience or specifically regarding a certain issue or problem. Don't be shy! Providing feedback and input will improve your experience and make the path for future students easier.