Video Conferencing Guidelines

While some of the information below applies specifically to our virtual class, most of it is relevant to any remote interviews or video conference calls you will attend.

Technology

Equipment – In order to meaningfully participate in class, you'll need a microphone (internal computer microphones are fine) as well as a webcam. We also recommend using headphones to ensure that you can hear your instructor and classmates clearly. Please be sure to test your devices to ensure they're in good working order before the first day of class. Also, you'll want to join your BlueJeans sessions using a PC or laptop rather than a smartphone or tablet. Some functions (e.g., screen sharing) will be extremely difficult to manage if you're using a smart device instead of a PC or laptop.

Bluejeans Platform - We strongly advise that you download the BlueJeans application before the first class. While it is possible to run BlueJeans in your browser, functionality in the application is generally far better. Once you've downloaded the application, it will automatically start anytime you enter a BlueJeans meeting.

Connectivity – We recommend that you test your setup before class to confirm that you have a strong internet connection, and that your video and audio equipment is working properly. Do a run-through with a friend, family member, classmate or colleague.

Environment

Workspace – Choose a quiet location where you can talk freely and fully engage with your instructor and classmates. Make your location as quiet as possible and be aware of ambient noise, such as air conditioners, neighborhood construction, echoes, etc., that could be a problem.

Background – Be mindful of what is behind you. Look at the background critically – is it orderly? Are there any distractions? Note that BlueJeans offers background blur as well as virtual background functions. Students are welcome to make use of either function—just make sure any virtual background is professional and free of distractions.

Camera angle – Keep the camera lens around eye level and arm's-length away from you. If using a laptop or iPad, placing it on a box or stack of books can help you adjust it to the right height, so that you don't appear to be looming over the audience. It's best to frame yourself in the center of the screen.

Lighting – Experiment to get the right lighting. Keep lighting in front of you – slightly above your eyes is best (both low lighting and overhead lighting can cast unattractive shadows). Avoid lights in the camera's sightlines (including windows with strong sunlight). Be careful to avoid backlighting, which can put you in silhouette.

Sound - Mute any phones or computer pop-ups such as chat screens, email notifications or task reminders. Avoid any activities that could make noise (i.e., clicking pens). If you are taking notes, be mindful that typing on your keyboard makes a distracting noise (and can signal you are not fully engaged).

Delivery

Eye contact – It feels intuitive when videoconferencing to look into the eyes of the speaker on the screen, or at your own picture insert. Instead, look at the **camera lens**. This will make your audience feel as if you are giving them eye contact. With shorter presentations, if you need notes, you can tape them to the monitor in the vicinity of the camera lens to enhance the sense of visual engagement (Post-It notes may be helpful for this.) Remember to only *glance* at notes, however – your audience can easily tell when you're reading text from your screen, and patently reading in a situation where spontaneity is expected can backfire.

Posture and body language – Sit up straight and lean slightly forward to appear engaged. Avoid swivel chairs to preclude unintentional movement. Put both feet on the floor and avoid slouching against the seat-back or hunching over the keyboard. Give your full attention to those speaking, nodding and using facial expressions to acknowledge you are listening. Remember, everyone can see you.

Attire – Wear clothing that contrasts with the background (e.g., avoid a light shirt against a light wall) to avoid disappearing into the background. Solid colors are best; busy prints can be distracting on camera, and some (such as pinstripes) can produce the moiré effect, which makes the fabric look like it is vibrating. Avoid visually distracting or noisy accessories (e.g., bangle bracelets). In a video conference, the frame is tightly cropped, and the sound is sensitive; audio and visuals are more pronounced in this focused format.

Etiquette

Here are a few things to keep in mind during a synchronous online class in BlueJeans:

- Arrive a few minutes early to allow time to troubleshoot any tech issues for class begins.
- Keep your video enabled throughout class.
- Mute your microphone whenever you're not speaking.
- Use chat for classroom discussion only; avoid private conversations.
- Be fully present for the entire class.