

Foothill College Classes with Jeff Anderson Attendance FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

How are in-class meetings scheduled?

This class is organized as a synchronous, in-person class.

The word *synchronous* is an adjective used to describe classes in which all participants are expected to attend class sessions at the same time. This includes you, the instructor, and all other students enrolled in the class. These in-class meeting times are [firm time commitments](#) and are usually scheduled to occur on the same days and times each week.

The phrase *in-person* is a [compound adjective](#) that indicates class meetings happen face-to-face so that your physical body is in the same room at the same time as the bodies of other participants in the class. In other words, the experience is not [virtual](#). To participate in an in-person class, you travel to a pre-determined location on campus, usually a classroom, at the scheduled class times and you participate in-person.

Our class is synchronous and in-person meaning that we meet in-person at the scheduled times in the scheduled location. To best engage with this class, please do everything you can to attend these in-person meetings.

What does Jeff (your instructor) expect from you in terms of attendance?

To earn your trust and participation, I treat in-class meeting times as sacred. I believe that every student I work with is a genius and that, when we share time together, we create experiences that none of us can manifest on our own. At this point in my career, I have spent thousands of hours planning and preparing for each in-class meeting. My intention is to make every in-class experience highly engaging, valuable, and full of joy. I can't do that without your help and the first thing I need from you is to be physically present at the scheduled times.

I am fully invested in your education and honor our shared time together. I will do everything I can to make our shared class time rich and meaningful. I hope I can earn your trust and earn the gift of spending time with you every day. As you think about what I expect of you, I ask you a few questions:

- What do I have to do as your instructor so that you feel excited to come to class?
- What do you have to do as a learner in this class to feel excited to come to class?
- How can we, as a community of learners, create an environment in which you want to be in class?
- What expectations do you have for yourself, in terms of attendance?
- What might prevent you from coming to class?
- How many days do you want to be in class?
- What special circumstances do you have that might cause you to miss class?
- How many absences are too many for you?
- How do you feel about texting your learning partners and your learning group to let them know if you miss class?

I want to make this class so special that you feel a warmth in your heart when you think of our class. I hope you will join me in this quest. I believe that the most precious gift you give our class is your presence. I hope you share that gift with our community as frequently as you can.

When you enroll in this class, you are implicitly agreeing to show up in-person and participate in class at specific, pre-defined meeting times each week, as described above. If you are not able or willing to commit to regularly in-class attendance, please drop this class and look for a different option. All the work I've done to prepare for our time together is built on the expectation that you are physically and mentally present for our in-class meetings.

How do we hold each other accountable to attend class?

One of the ways I earn my paycheck as your teacher is to help you stay accountable to your own education. In the learning family we create in this class, we hold each other accountable to maintain our commitment to regular in-class participation. Below are some of the ways we will do this:

- I help you create a *learning partnership* with one or two other students so that each learning partnership includes a total of two or three people. Together, we develop an expectation that members of these partnerships become mutually responsible for supporting each other's learning. If one person in the partnership is absent, the other partner is the primary point of contact. Partners help each other meet their learning needs and act as an intermediary between an absent member and the instructor.
- I help you create a *learning group* with three or four other students. In other words, each learning group is made up of two learning partnerships and includes a total of four or five people. Just as we do with our learning partnerships, we develop the expectation that each member of the learning group is mutually responsible for supporting learning in their group. If an entire partnership is absent from a learning group, the other members of that group are the primary point of contact. Group members help each other meet their learning needs and act as intermediaries between any absent partnerships and the instructor when needed.
- I help you create your *campus-wide learning team* that includes a bunch of people from across campus. From within our class, that team includes me, you, your learning partner(s), your learning group, your special projects committee members, and all other members of our learning family (all other learning groups). Together we build the expectation that we are mutually responsible for each other's learning.
- I take attendance during each in-class meeting. If I notice you are missing class and haven't heard from you, I will cry and cancel the [mariachi band](#) I had scheduled for your arrival on those days. In this case, I'll also schedule an appointment with my therapist. This, I hope, will help me process the grief I feel when students miss class without keeping me informed of their situation and their plans for return to class. Then, I'll ask someone in your learning group (either your learning partner or another member of your group) to reach out to you and check in.

To learn more about the learning partnerships, groups, and teams, please read our Team-Based Learning FAQs. This class is structured under the assumption that you will be present for almost all in-class meetings. Please give your very best effort to make this a reality during our time together. Of course, I recognize that emergencies and unplanned circumstances come up in life. You may need to miss a few in-class meetings. When this happens, please stay in frequent contact with your learning partner(s) and your learning group. Use your communication with these people to keep me informed about your situation.

What expectations does Jeff have for his own attendance?

I have two answers for this question. First, I'll share with you my own attitude and experience from my 10 years of life as a college student. Next, I'll discuss the way I think about my own attendance in this class as your teacher. Let's start with my work in college. I went to [UCSB](#) from fall quarter 2003 – spring quarter 2007 where I earned my [BS](#) in Mathematics. Then, from 2007 – 2008, I took a year off to live in Japan, work as an English teacher with the [JET Program](#), and to learn to speak Japanese (it's been a dream of mine since I was a boy to be fluent in 7 languages). From fall quarter 2008 – summer quarter 2013, I earned my [MA](#) and [PhD](#) in Mathematics at [UC Davis](#).

In those 10 years, I was absent from exactly two classes. Not two days of class. Two classes. Those classes were on very special occasions in my life including:

- The morning after my 21st birthday¹: I had a huge [hangover](#) that morning, though I did attend class later that day.
- The afternoon of my father's retirement: his work organized an event to celebrate his 40 years of service and I wanted to be part of that celebration. I attended class that morning and then drove 5 hours home from Santa Barbara to participate in this evening event.

¹ In California, the legal drinking age is 21.

Other than those two situations, I did not miss a single class in my 10 years of higher education. Moreover, I was usually one of the first students to arrive in class and one of the last to leave.

Some of my classmates in college used to make fun of the fact that I refused to miss class. They would say things like “you take your work as a student too seriously” or “you need to be more relaxed about your learning.” I saw many of these same students miss class without much thought. I remember these people pressuring me to miss class on Fridays to get an early start to the weekend or for some social event, like a concert or festival. I always found it strange that these people felt the need to tell me what I should do even though I never returned the favor. Regardless of this type of peer pressure and negative messaging, I tried to stay true to what I believed was right for me.

Let me be clear: I did attend parties, enjoy festivals, and socialize outside of school. I believed then, as I do now, that these types of events and celebrations are important. During my years in college, I made ample time to enjoy my youth, go to parties, celebrate, date, have relationships, exercise, stay physically active, travel, spend time with friends and family, and live a life that made me happy. I also worked part-time to help pay the bills and found ways to contribute to my family’s financial responsibilities. However, I did all of this by balancing my time commitments and carefully planning my schedule.

As a student, I believed that in-class meetings were very special events. In-class meetings were one of the few times during each day when I was in the room with my professors and with other peers who were trying to earn their education. I always imagined that each in-class meeting represented a connection between the lives of hundreds of people. I used to think about how each in-class meeting required millions of dollars of economic activity that included the salary of the teacher, the work students and their families, the work of construction workers who build the buildings, janitors who cleaned the classrooms, and lots of taxpayer money to fund the school (the schools I went to were subsidized by tax payers). In-class meetings were where the magic of education was supposed to happen. And I wanted to get my hands on as much of that magic as I could.

As I attended classes, I worked hard to make explicit connections between what we did during class and my vision for my life. My primary focus in college was to make the most out of my education. While a major part of this was the work I did inside the classes, I also had a strong desire to learn to be financially independent from my parents and translate my college degree into my dream career working to make progress on problems that I care deeply about. Finally, college was a large expense for me and my family. We did everything we could as a family to help me earn my degrees and to avoid debt. I earned scholarships and worked part-time to help afford rent. My parents worked for many years to save for my college degree and sacrificed a lot to invest in my education. Every day I was in school, I remembered that I was very privileged to have the chance to earn my education and that this blessing was built on the hopes, dreams, hard work, and sacrifice of many generations of people in my family. When I thought about this reality, I felt a strong sense of pride in myself and a commitment to my education.

One way I earned the sacrifices my family made was to attend classes. I can’t say that I enjoyed every in-class experience, nor do I claim that all of my teachers were good at their jobs. I had many horrible teachers and sat through many lectures feeling overwhelmed and confused. But I made a commitment to myself and to my family to do everything in my power to earn the privilege of my college education. Attending class was low hanging fruit in my journey to earn my degrees and build a career that I love. I felt strongly that one of the best things I could do for myself and my family was to pick every piece of fruit that I could get my hands on. Thus, I made an unwavering commitment to attend class and there was almost nothing that was more important to me.

As a teacher I cultivate this same approach. Outside of an unplanned emergency, I plan to be in-class, ready to serve you during all regularly scheduled in-class meetings. I plan to show up at least 10 minutes early to every class. Whenever possible, I schedule my office hours immediately after class so that I am available for students who want to chat. I have sophisticated systems to be able to meet with my students one-on-one and I make a strong commitment to being available to serve you. There may be a few days during the quarter where I have a time conflict, like a previously scheduled professional conference or a nonnegotiable family commitment, like a wedding or funeral. Assuming I have advanced knowledge of such events, I will communicate which days I will not be present far in advance and work through the details of this with you.