

# Torts

University of Oklahoma College of Law

Fall 2020

Course/section no.: 5144-601

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## SYLLABUS ADDENDUM NO. 1

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This addendum is hereby made part of the Syllabus for Torts with Prof. Eric E. Johnson in Fall 2020 and amends and modifies it as provided. Where the terms of the original Syllabus and this Addendum No. 1 conflict, the terms of this addendum control.

### X1. HAZARDOUS ATTENTION-CRITICAL ACTIVITY DURING CLASS TIME:

(a) **During class, no student may drive a motor vehicle, operate a bicycle or scooter, operate heavy machinery, or undertake any other task where distractions could lead to personal injury, loss of life, damage to property, or other loss. This includes harms to the student and to third persons.** Such conduct and activity is herein referred to as "Hazardous Attention-Critical Activity." Hazardous Attention-Critical Activity during class is prohibited.

(b) During class, students are expected to be able to devote their full attention to class. Part of the instructional method for this class involves cold-calling on students, directing students to interact with one another, directing students to look at things, directing students to type words into their digital device, and so on. It is not acceptable for students to put themselves in situations where meeting these and other expectations of class could be a distraction that creates real-world hazards.

(c) It is acceptable for students to be seated in a car or other motor vehicle during class. It may indeed be that a car is a good quiet place to go to be able to concentrate on class, but **do not sit in the driver's seat.**

(d) If a student chooses to drive or engage in any other Hazardous Attention-Critical Activity during class notwithstanding its prohibition, the student must communicate this to me before class and must get a confirmation from me that I've received and understood the communication. That way, I can avoid calling on the student. In such a case: (1) the student must refrain from participation in class, (2) the affected class will be counted as a full absence, and (3) the conduct will be considered a violation of in-class conduct rules and may affect the class-participation grading component.

(e) From the day of announcement of this policy onward, if any student drives or engages in any other Hazardous Attention-Critical Activity without having first notified me and gotten my confirmation of understanding the same, the student's conduct will be construed as serious academic misconduct. Consequences may and presumably will include a failing grade and/or involuntary withdrawal, and a disciplinary referral to the administration. (See Syllabus §§ 6-1, 6-6 in this regard.) In addition, expect that I will report known hazardous behavior to law enforcement.

## **X2. EFFECT OF HAVING VIDEO OFF ON ATTENDANCE:**

(a) As the original syllabus provides, you are required to keep your video on. (See Syllabus §8-1(a).) Previously, I had mentioned verbally that occasional and momentary turning your video off is not problematic; however, given concerns about the possibility of students engaging in Hazardous Attention-Critical Activity, my practice going forward must be to treat video-off situations as absences from class.

(b) **Beginning September 17, 2020, having your video off during class time will cause you to be counted as absent.** If your video is off, I may worry that you could be engaged in Hazardous Attention-Critical Activity, and thus, I may be inhibited from calling on you. In that case, it becomes unfair to count you as in attendance. I'll likely take screenshots of Zoom at various times to make a record.

(c) Even if you are not engaged in Hazardous Attention-Critical Activity, you still must have your video on. Students have contacted me about their desire to keep their video off during class so they could go about non-driving errands or other activities during class. Multi-tasking may seem like a good way to make more time in the day, but I will not compromise class-time expectations to accommodate it. The idea of our current online format, which has been compelled by the circumstances of the pandemic, is to replicate as closely as possible an in-person class experience. Following through on that means conducting class with the expectation that students give it the same focus that would be compelled by sharing a physical classroom.

(d) For the ramifications of attendance on grading and involuntary withdrawal, see Syllabus §9.

(e) If you experience connectivity problems that cause your video to drop out, please work to rectify those problems. If extenuating circumstances prevent you from rectifying those problems, and if you wish to inform me about those extenuating circumstances for grading purposes, address that in an end-of-semester mitigation statement (see Syllabus §9-6).

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