

Fall 2021 ECE460N COVID19 Policies

Tentative and frequently changing

This document summarizes my best understanding of current COVID19 policies. I keep getting official and unofficial emails about these policies and I hope I am summarizing them here clearly and accurately. The official information is at <https://protect.utexas.edu/> (and specifically <https://protect.utexas.edu/academics/>) plus some of my own policies.

Pre-class survey results

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Q38jQVzDEAyHXN8DhCU9uzATI1knlsFkm6-KiXermWA/viewanalytics>

Main takeaways:

- Most of you really want to be in class
- There are mixed feelings about delaying class start
- Many of you are really worried

Recordings, Zoom, and In-Person Classes

- **Going hybrid! Everyone is welcome as long as you wear a good mask.**
- For better or worse, we'll start the semester online only and slowly transition to in-person by 9/20/2021. Lecture on Thursday 8/26/2021 will definitely be online only. It looks like we might be getting over the worst hump of Delta, but we'll monitor and see. This is a tough decision because I so badly miss being in the classroom, just like many (likely all) of you do too. Watch for announcements about trying to slowly return to class. My plan right now is to start by asking a few of you to come to class and see how lecture + Zoom goes and then expand access to all. To be honest, I'm really worried about one of you unknowingly being positive and then passing it through me to my too-young-to-be-vaccinated kids.
- I will use Zoom to record and stream the lectures live, but I am not yet sure how effective I will be in fielding online questions vs. in-class questions. I will do my best, but that's a major concern for me. ~~I have not yet decided whether class will be streamed live via Zoom or only recorded and posted later.~~
- All lectures will be recorded and at least one recitation per week in ECE460N will be recorded and posted within a day of class. Watch for announcements on Piazza about whether each lecture and recitation will be available in person.
- Office hours will most likely be Zoom only for the time being.
- ~~Nominally, each student should have the opportunity for at least one in-person lecture per week. Ideally, we would all be in-class in-person every lecture, but it is not clear that it is safe at this time. A few options are currently being considered. One is to reduce class density by splitting it up into cohorts (one cohort will attend on Tuesdays and the other on Thursdays. Another possibility under consideration is to delay in-person instruction for a few weeks.~~

Masks and Vaccines

- We are not allowed to ask about vaccination status, but **I beg you to get vaccinated** if you haven't already done so. **Vaccines protect others who cannot get vaccinated, including my young children. It is not really a matter of personal choice but one of decency and civility.** The vaccines are [safe and effective](#) and are now widely available with appointments or for walk-ins at both [UT Health](#) and [Austin in general](#).

- ~~It is my understanding that as of 8/17/2021, masks will be required anywhere indoors at UT because we are part of Travis County. I've received conflicting information about this.~~ Seems like somehow masks will not be mandatory. I have no idea what could possibly justify this given the Travis County order, but ... I've also now seen large groups of unmasked students on campus. I hope that all of you will wear a mask when indoors in public.
- Again, for the safety of you and all around you, I beg you to wear a mask covering your nose and mouth. I would prefer not to wear a mask so that you can better understand me in class, but I will only feel safe doing so if all students in class are masked up -- sorry. **Worse, even if I do wear a mask but some of you don't, it will likely be very distracting to me and negatively impact the lectures.**

Testing, Isolation, and Contact Tracing

- We are required to maintain a seating chart for each class. This will be used for contact tracing and, as I understand it, to inform anyone of exposure as necessary, though likely not effectively. Seating will be collected via electronic survey in each lecture and recitation using rough room location. **Most likely the contact tracing will be insufficient and come too late. Let instructors know if you test positive -- the university won't allow us to share this information in a useful way (complain to your Chair, Dean, and Provost if this bothers you), but at least we'll try.**
- Please refer to this [chart](#) for information about isolation and testing positive.
- Please consider getting tested frequently as part of UT's [proactive community testing program](#).