

THE AGORA DAYS GUIDE

The Agora was a central space or square in city-states of ancient Greece. The literal meaning of the word is "gathering place" or "assembly." The agora was the center of athletic, artistic, spiritual and political life of the city. Here at Uni we like to think of Agora Days as our market of ideas.

Everything you want
to know about Agora
Days

Agora Days Handbook

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If you have questions that are not answered by this Guide, please contact the Agora Days Coordinator. Currently that person is: Chris Guyotte guyotte@illinois.edu. 217-244-8582.

Purpose

This handbook serves as a guide for Uni faculty, students, and guests as they navigate the Agora Days program. While this document cannot be completely comprehensive, the hope is that it will answer a number of questions. If you find that it does not, please contact the Agora Days Coordinator for a more detailed answer.

Agora Days Defined

Agora Days is a four-day period, usually following President's day, in which the regular curriculum is suspended and classes from a very wide spectrum of topics are offered. Students may explore topics of general interest to them, as well as those for which they have a passion, without the worry of homework, tests or grades.

Scope of Classes

Classes taught during Agora Days generally include topics that are not taught as part of the regular curriculum.

Generally, Agora Days classes fit into the following categories.

- Academic¹
- Cooking
- Athletic
- Games and Gaming (Such as Apples to Apples or World of Warcraft)
- Study Hall (With Administrator Approval)

We try to schedule 125 class throughout Agora Week.

Agora Days classes do not include homework or grading

Material Presentation and Community Standards

Occasionally, a Teacher may want to explore a topic that deals with adult or controversial themes. In this case the Coordinator will require that each student wishing to participate in the class turn in a permission slip signed by a legally responsible parent or guardian.

¹ This designation is widely applied. In order to be included in this category there must be reflection, discussion, and philosophical exploration of the material. For example, a class dealing with a particular computer programming application must include the opportunity to discuss the merits of the application in relationship to a set of guiding principles set out by the Teacher at the beginning of the class.

It is possible that a class might fit into both Academic and another category. In that case the class will be deemed Academic for the purpose of meeting requirements.

Agora Days Personnel

Coordinator – The person who oversees the annual collection and organization and coordination of Agora Days classes. This person will serve as the central point for information collection and dissemination.

- 1) Duties include
 - a) Collecting class submissions
 - b) Organizing the schedule
 - c) Assigning class Sponsors
 - d) Facilitating student registration
 - e) Collecting class fees
 - f) Creating class rosters
 - g) Disseminating Agora Days information
 - h) Collecting and sharing Agora Days feedback

Sponsor – A member of the Uni High Faculty or Staff including All Teaching Associates, the Librarian, Counselors and Administrators. Each person in these categories will Sponsor classes in direct correlation with their teaching load.² Those adults who are teaching a class will be both Sponsor and Teacher.

- 1) Duties include
 - a. Mentoring Class Teachers
 - b. Meeting with Class Teachers to discuss content and content delivery
 - c. Opening classroom for class
 - d. Taking attendance
 - e. Spending entire class period inside classroom
 - f. Notifying the Coordinator that he or she will chaperone a school approved field trip before November 15 of the current school year.³

Teacher – Anyone who is not a member of the Uni High Faculty or Staff who is presenting an Agora Days Class. This person is responsible for working with the Coordinator to secure class supplies and equipment.

This person will submit the class and communicate with the Coordinator. All communication from the Coordinator will be directed to this person. He or she will then share the information with any co-Teachers who are collaborating on class instruction.

- 1) Duties include
 - a. Submitting a detailed class description and plan
 - b. Meeting with Class Sponsor
 - c. Delivering Class Content

² SSO Counselors and the Librarian will be responsible for Sponsoring or teaching at least two classes.

³ Currently the only approved overnight field trip is Sponsored by the Habitat for Humanity Club. Off campus field trips during Agora Days must be approved by the Administration.

Committee – The Agora Days Committee is made up of the Assistant Director for Student Life, the Coordinator, all members of the Student Faculty Advisory Committee and two members of the Student Council. This group will meet after the submission deadline in order to choose the classes that will be included in the Agora Days schedule.

- 1) Duties include
 - a. Choosing Agora Days Classes
 - b. Assisting the Coordinator during one class period daily throughout Agora Week

Proposing an Agora Days Class

Any person may submit an Agora Days Class proposal using the online submission form.

- The Coordinator will publish this link several months prior to the designated Agora Days dates.
- Classes are submitted by one person, with whom the Coordinator will communicate.
- In order to submit the class, the prospective Teacher should have the following information available.
 - Teacher name - Only this name will be used for communication
 - Co-Teacher name
 - Teacher phone
 - Teacher email
 - Teacher affiliation (Drop down menu provided)
 - Class title
 - Class description:
 - Class fee - Only required if the instructor needs consumable class supplies
 - Preferred class Sponsor -Uni faculty member. ⁴
 - Outline days 1 through 4 - More detail is better in this case.
 - - More detail is better in this case.
 - Preferred class location – Generally we would like to keep classes within Uni unless they require facilities that we cannot provide.
 - o E.g. an ice skating class must take place at the ice arena. However, since Uni owns several 3-D printers, any class on 3-D printing will take place at Uni.
 - Additional equipment: Projectors are available in all regular classrooms. Instructors using MAC computers may need to bring a dongle to connect to the projectors as only a limited number are available. All Uni computers are connected to the University network and all enterprise system options are available. However, it is recommended for Teacher generated content, that the Teacher bring their own laptop.
 - Preferred class size: We will not allow any more than this number to register for the class.
 - Times: What times is the instructor available to teach. For Uni Students, Faculty and Staff this is generally all day. For all others we will try to work with your schedule if your class is selected.
 - Additional class factors: What else do we need to know about this class as we put together the schedule? E.g. this class deals with adult themes or language.

⁴ Please ask this person prior to submitting a class proposal.

Agora Days Classes may not include homework or grading.

How Classes are Chosen

The deadline for class submission is approximately two months prior to the designated Agora Days dates. As of this writing that usually means mid-November.

Shortly after the deadline, the Agora Days Committee will retreat for an afternoon in order to choose the classes that will be included in the schedule.

The committee will look at the following criteria:

- Number of class proposals submitted
- Completeness of class proposals
- Class balance
- Projected student interest
- Class equipment needs
- Class logistics
- Class sizes
- Teacher availability
- If the class is a repeated course, feedback from previous students, previous class popularity.
- If the class is a repeated course, feedback specifically about the instructor's ability to share the material in succinct, coherent manner.

Notification

The Coordinator will send out a group message to all class Teachers after the committee has selected all classes. This message should contain the list of all selected classes and the schedule of classes.

Sponsor Responsibilities

Sponsors are Uni faculty members who are in the classroom during the whole period. The Sponsor is responsible for overseeing the safety and discipline of the students and for taking attendance and making sure it is collected or delivered to the office.

- All Uni faculty and staff who have teaching responsibilities may either teach a class or be assigned a Sponsorship.
- Faculty will have the opportunity to sign up for the classes they wish to Sponsor on a first come first served basis. The current method for Faculty sign up is to hang the schedule in the Teachers work room and allow Teachers to sign up for their preferred classes.
- Teachers may also request specific faculty as class Sponsors. The Teacher should contact the proposed Sponsor as soon as they can so that that Sponsor is not double booked.
- Any Uni faculty who have not registered their class preferences before the winter break will be assigned classes by the Assistant Director and the Coordinator.
- **For the safety of our students the Sponsor must sit inside the classroom during the entire class period.**

It is the Sponsor's responsibility to work with the class Teacher to ensure that class topics are appropriate.

- Uni Students who are teaching classes MUST make an appointment with the class Sponsor.
 - If the student Teacher does not meet with the Sponsor prior to student registration the Agora Coordinator may choose to replace the class with another from the approved waiting list.
 - The Sponsor should review the class topics while meeting with the student Teacher and guide him or her in developing content delivery methods for the class.
 - The Sponsor should determine if permission slips are needed for the class. (We try to catch this as early as possible and ask for permission slips far in advance, but we have had instances in which the Coordinator was not completely clear on the subject matter. E.g. The class title was *Netflix and Chill* which the Coordinator had no idea was a euphemistic expression for a sexual encounter.)
- Sponsors of classes in which the Teachers are not Uni Students should make contact with the Teacher at least a month in advance.
 - The Sponsor should welcome the Teacher and introduce him or herself as a resource.
 - U of I Faculty may be excellent professors, but many have little experience with teaching high school students. This may also be true of other members of the greater community. The Sponsor should feel free to offer advice on content delivery methods if comfortable doing so.

The Sponsor is encouraged to fill out the Agora Days survey and make recommendations about the class in future years.

In the event that Sponsor is unable to attend a class on a given day, that Sponsor should

Teacher Responsibilities

Once the class is scheduled the Teacher should:

1. Submit a detailed class supplies list to the Coordinator
2. Set up a meeting⁵ with the class Sponsor at least one month before Agora Days to discuss
 - a. Uni Students who are teaching classes MUST make an appointment with the class Sponsor. If the student Teacher does not meet with the Sponsor prior to student registration the Agora Coordinator may choose to replace the class with another from the approved waiting list.
 - b. Appropriate content
 - c. Content delivery
 - d. Classroom management
 - e. Specific equipment needs
 - f. General class needs
 - g. If planning a cooking class, the teacher must show a detailed clean up plan to the sponsor.
3. During Agora Days, Teachers who are not Uni faculty or students will need to check in and out of the Main Office and wear a guest badge every day.
4. If the teacher of a cooking class is a student, her or she will be required to attend one session of "Clean Up After a Cooking Class" which will be offered three times before Feb 1.

⁵ This is required for Uni students who are Agora Days Teachers. Your class will be cancelled unless this requirement is met. It is strongly suggested for all other Teachers who are not Uni Faculty members.

5. Once Agora Days is over, all participants may be offered the opportunity to answer a survey. This information is used in future years to fine-tune Agora Days programming and to help us evolve as new technologies and methods become available.
6. Teachers presenting classes based on TV and Film must allow for discussion of the film or TV show as part of the class.

Registering for Agora Days Classes

Special circumstances for Attending U of I Classes or The Habitat for Humanity Trip⁶

All Uni Students must register for Agora Days. This includes students participating in the Habitat Field Trip or any other approved field trips during this time and all students taking U of I classes through concurrent enrollment.

- 1) If you plan to attend U of I classes,
 - a) please choose the U of I class option for the Agora Days class times that most closely match the U of I class times. For instance, if your U of I class is scheduled from 1:15 to 2:45 you should choose U of I class for both the 6th and 7th period class times.
 - b) You will need to provide proof of enrollment as soon as you have received confirmation that you are actually in the class.
 - c) If you do not get into the class, you must speak with the Coordinator to register for Agora Days classes during those U of I periods.
- 2) Special instructions for students going on Habitat Trip
 - a) If the student is going to be on the Habitat for Humanity trip, he or she must still register for Agora Days when the rest of the class registers. Simply fill out the identifying information and choose Habitat Trip for every class period.

Registration Requirements

Student Registration will start before the winter break.

Students must register for the following

Minimum of 7 periods including

- Four Academic classes
- No more than two Athletic classes
- No more than one cooking class
- No more than one Gaming class
- One free period
- (Study Hall) with approval only⁷

⁶ Currently the only school approved overnight field trip is sponsored by the Social Studies Dept. Other Field trips overnight are not currently approved.

⁷ Study Halls must be approved by the Assistant Director for Student Life.

Registration Schedule

Once registration students will be allowed to register in this order.

- Agora Days Committee Members
- Seniors
- Juniors
- Sophomores
- Freshmen
- Subfreshmen

If you miss your class registration period, you will be allowed to register as soon as you are able. However, all classes are filled on a first come, first served basis and you may not be able to register for all of your preferred classes.

Registration Changes

Occasionally, the need to change an Agora Days schedule arises. While this is possible, the classes you want may at that point be filled. You should speak with the Coordinator to fix scheduling problems.