December 11, 2023

Gentlemen.

Welcome to the CW Academy Advanced Class. You have been assign to our class for the January-February 2024 semester. There are two co-advisors for this class – Joe Attili, AA2IL and Jim Mueller, N7AUE. We will begin meeting regularly as a group beginning on Monday, January 8. The schedule will be Mondays and Thursdays at 6 PM PST (02:00 UTC the next day) for the ensuing eight weeks. **We will kick things off with an informal "meet and greet" session on Thursday January 4, 2024 at 6PM PST (02:00 UTC Friday Jan. 5)** to introduce our selves, test the video conference connection and work out any bugs with the audio.

For those of you who have taken other CWA classes, welcome back. For those who are new, welcome aboard and let us quickly explain how CW Academy works. The most important part for your success is daily practice. Try to devote one or two short sessions of 15-20 minutes each day rather than cram everything into a 5-hour marathon once a week. In addition, you will want to spend as much time as you can on the air rag chewing and/or participating in the various practice "contests" – SST, MST and CWT – as well as actual contests and POTA/SOTA activities. As the students entering this class will have a variety of abilities and experience, please do not compare yourself to others in the class but rather **measure your progress against yourself**. Most importantly, make sure that you are always having fun and this doesn't become burdensome – ham radio is our hobby!

Here is the equipment you are going to need:

  • A computer and a broadband Internet connection,
  • Headphones/ear buds that plug into the computer's headphone jack,
  • A webcam (camera/microphone) – most modern computers have these built in but, if not, you can buy a perfectly good one for about $20 or less
  • Keyer paddles – new paddles have become ridiculously priced so borrow or buy a used one if you can. Unfortunately, even good operators can not reliably send much above about 20-wpm with a straight key.
  • A radio with a built-in keyer and sidetone. Most (all?) modern rigs have this but if you need a separate unit, MFJ makes an inexpensive EconoKeyer if you can't borrow one or find a used one.

We will be using Jitsi for our class meetings. Jitsi is a web-based application similar to Zoom. While very good for normal conversational meetings, these video conferencing applications have some quirks when dealing with CW which can make copying more difficult than on-the-air. We have used Jitsi in the previous classes and found that, compared to Zoom, it handled the audio quite well but the video was inconsistent. To be considerate to your fellow classmates, it is important that you

  • **use headphones/ear buds and**
  • **mute yourself if you are not actively sending.**

We will send out a link for the video conference prior to the Jan. 4 meeting.

Please download the latest "Practice Instructions and Homework Assignments" from the CWops website under the CW Academy → Student Resources → Advanced tab:

https://cwops.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Practice-Instructions-and-Homework-Assignments-Advanced-rev-1.8.pdf

There, you will also find a link to the audio practice files referenced in this document. **Please complete the first assignment (Session 1 → Day 1) prior to our first formal meeting on Jan. 8.** Typically, we'll start each class meeting with a short discussion of questions/thoughts on the homework and what on-the-air activities you've been up to. We will also periodically present something relevant to CW and/or contesting that you hopefully will find helpful. You all are encouraged to do likewise. The remainder of each class meeting will be devoted to exercises to improve your **head copy and sending skills.** If you need to miss a few classes, no problem, just keep practicing! Also, if you need a "private lesson" to help work out an issue, just ask and we'll set something up.

The advanced class makes heavy use of two excellent practice tools, Morse Runner and RufzXP. If you are not familiar with these programs, you can find written instructions and videos on how to use them under Student Tutorials heading.

These are windows programs that can also be made to run under linux or Mac OS; we can help you with that if you are using linux.

Although this may all sound very regimented, we actually have a lot of leeway in what we cover in the class meetings and we need your input on what you would like to emphasize. This could include:

- Contesting
- Rag chewing
- Sending
- Head copy / memory retention
- Something else?

So, if we haven't scared you away, **please e-mail both of us a.s.a.p. to let me know 1) you are willing and able to make the time commitment to practice and 2) confirm that you will be participating in the class.** In your e-mail, please also include an idea of what you'd like to get out of the class. If your circumstances have changed and you wish to opt out for this term, no problem. You are always welcome sign up again for a future class. We just need to know that there is a vacancy so it can be filled by another student.

We're looking forward to meeting and working with all of you and to helping you achieve your CW goals.

Vy 73,
Joe Attili – AA2IL
Jim Mueller - N7AUE