

Roadmap: Transition to College

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Welcome

- This is my second Roadmap Course
 - It's a great way to get to know my advisees, and have them get to know me
- One of the purposes of the Roadmap program is to ease the transition to college
 - So I'll take a few minutes to discuss some of the habits you'll want to cultivate in order to succeed in college
 - My experience is that many students never see this list
 - And have difficulties as a result

Stress Management

- Exercise — don't stop exercising because you are stressed
- Exercising is one of the best stress relievers
- Eat right
 - Your body needs fuel (but beware freshman 15)
- Get enough sleep
 - No such thing as “catching up” on sleep
 - An “all nighter” is almost NEVER worth it (think “diminishing returns”)

Stress Management

- No matter how busy you may be, be sure to take a little time each day just for yourself
- Need to wind down
- Need to clear your head
- Need to just plain get out of the strong current for a bit

Stress Management

- No matter how relaxed your peers may seem, almost everyone experiences stress at times during college
- If nothing else is working, and you need to talk to someone: CAPS!
- There is no shame in seeking help, even if you think what you are experiencing is “no big deal”
- And the CAPS folks really know what they are doing

Two Teaching Philosophies

- The job of a professor is to force you to learn the material. Or else!
 - A perfectly valid philosophy (and one that seems necessary for many students), but not my philosophy
- The job of a professor is to provide you with the opportunity to learn the material (and to assist you in your efforts to do so)
 - My philosophy (as mentioned above, not good for every student)
 - But then no philosophy will work for every student

Read!

- The authors of (good) materials have spent a great amount of time and invested a great deal of thought into exactly how to present the material
 - Lectures, no matter how carefully crafted, are rarely this well thought out
 - More important: when reading you digest the material *at your own pace!*
 - No lecture pace is perfect for everyone
- Most important: Reading is how you will spend the rest of your life learning!
 - Because your professors won't be there to lecture you on the new stuff you need to know

Read! (Again)

- If I spend hours preparing a lab or other assignment description, I expect that it will be read carefully and in its entirety before you begin asking me questions about it
 - ▶ Because I don't spend that kind of time writing up an assignment because I have nothing better to do
 - ▶ And because the material I included there is what, in my expert opinion, is necessary for you to know to complete the assignment
 - ▶ And because it often includes information about where and how to submit the assignment, as well as what exactly I expect in the submission
 - Basically, things I don't want to have to repeat 20 times

During Lecture

- There is nothing wrong with taking notes the whole time...
- BUT: If you have read the material beforehand, and have downloaded (and perhaps printed out) the lecture slides, then you can spend the lecture actually **LISTENING** to what is being said, instead of worrying about getting it all down on paper.
- For me, the latter works much better.
- Because what a professor chooses to say in lecture is a reflection of what she/he thinks is important

During Lecture

- ASK QUESTIONS!!!
- You might think professors do not like questions — nothing could be further from the truth
 - We would much rather answer a question asked in class than answer that same question 20 times in office hours
 - We have lots to do, so efficiency is a good thing
- Speaking of which, what is it, exactly, that professors do?
- We've been students, so we have some idea of what it's like. But you've never been professors, so...

Course Management Method I: Pay as You Go

- Do any assigned reading before lecture
 - This way, you can ask the prof questions about material you find difficult during the lecture
- Budget a given amount of time so that you are spending significant time on every course at least every other day
- See the professor about topics you are having trouble with
- When final exam rolls around, brief review of all covered topics
 - Which, presumably, you mastered during the semester

Course Management Method II: Putting out Fires

- Don't do any of the reading
 - Or at least only do reading you are forced to do
 - And then only on the night before exams
- When material in lecture is confusing, don't ask questions
 - This way, you can remain confused
- Cram material when exam times roll around
- Never, under any circumstances, try to see prof during office hours or make an appointment for other times
- When final exam rolls around, try to learn all the material you never learned during semester

Assignments

- Start them when they are assigned!!!!
 - ▶ This way, if you run into difficulty, you can ask the prof for help early, which gives you time to actually complete the assignment
- We're nice, but not that nice
 - ▶ If a prof gives you three weeks to complete an assignment, it does not mean that she's giving you two and a half weeks off — it means she expects it to take you three weeks to complete it!
 - ▶ And if you drop by her office two days before it's due, asking questions that should have been asked a day or two after it was assigned, you won't generally enjoy the response

Assignments: Most Important!

- Turn them in!
 - ▶ And on time!
- The easiest way to fail any course is to fail to hand in assignments
 - ▶ No professor likes to fail a student who has made an earnest effort (always in class, participated, turned in assignments, visited prof to discuss issues)
 - ▶ But we have no trouble failing a student who has not handed in the assignments, rarely made it to class, never visited the prof, etc.
 - As mentioned, if it looks to me like you don't care, then why should I?

Meeting with your Professor

- Do it! If you are having trouble in a course, but have not dropped by to discuss this, I'll assume that you don't care (in which case, I don't care)
- When you make an appointment with your professor, be sure to show up
 - ▶ Our time is valuable. We are happy to share it with you. Not showing for an appointment is disrespectful and deprives others of the opportunity to visit with us during that time
- Your responsibility: Have put in an earnest effort!
 - ▶ Sometimes material requires several careful rounds of reading. Reading once and throwing in the towel is a no-no

Finally: You are an Adult!

- And thus your actions have consequences
- Be at class on time
 - Arriving late to class is an indication (whether intentional or not) that you do not regard the event as important enough to warrant prompt arrival
- Don't sleep through your exams
 - When you graduate and are working, failure to show (or being late) for an important presentation/event is often grounds for firing (regardless of the reason)
- Your failure to adequately prepare, or to manage your time wisely, does not constitute a crisis on my part

OK, that was all so, well, not fun

- So let's talk about some nice things about college...

Find your purpose

- Yes, it can get you a better job, but that's really secondary (though you might not realize it right now)
- You can take classes in just about anything that interests you
 - And you should — this is perhaps that best opportunity you'll have to explore the world of ideas. Do it!
- Always be looking to find your passion!
 - Papa Szajda's wisdom: Find a job that is so satisfying that you would do it for free!
 - You'll get up and go to work most days of your life. If you hate your work, no amount of money will make it worthwhile. (And choosing a major because of job prospects can be dicey — what will be in demand in four years?)

Find Yourself

- You will learn a great deal about yourself
 - ▶ How you react under pressure
 - Word of advice: exercise, especially when you are stressed. The worst thing you can do when stressed is to stop exercising!
 - ▶ What talents set you apart
 - ▶ What are your capabilities

Find Yourself

- Prof S Rule: Don't let your classes get in the way of your education!
 - ▶ What you learn in classes is only a part of the benefit of your education — exploring ideas, interacting with professors and colleagues, and learning how to function on your own in society are an important part of the process!
 - ▶ Mom and Dad aren't here to tell you to get off your video game, do your homework, wash your clothes, eat decent food, get enough sleep, etc. It's all on you now! (Welcome to adulthood!)

Keep an Open Mind

- Ideology: the set of *ideas* and *beliefs* of a group or political party
 - Note the word “fact” is not included here
- Ideologue: an often blindly partisan advocate or adherent of a particular ideology
 - Don't be one!
- Opinions about religion, politics, etc., regardless of what they are, should be *well-considered* and should be *yours*
 - With this in mind, approach your courses with an open (and critical/skeptical) mind!

Finally

- Don't sweat the small stuff!
 - And it's almost all small stuff!
- While you should seek your passion here, you may not find it
 - That's OK. Most people don't realize what it is they really want to do until they are older. It's not a crime.
 - And don't be fooled into thinking your classmates who seem to have it all together know exactly what they want. They may think they do. The odds are very good that they don't.