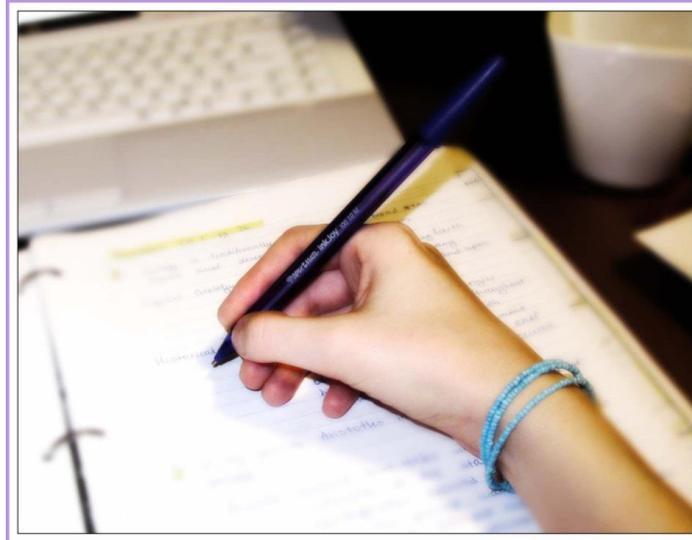


Dear Professors, Please Be Better!

March 8, 2013



I have been going to college for a few years now and have had some great professors and some awful ones. To the amazing professors I just want to say – Please keep up the good work! And to the horrible ones – Please see some tips below, because you are hurting your students in more ways than one.

A great professor/educator can often make all the difference in a student's life. I have recently spoken to my younger brother about him hating history and anything related to it. As it turns out, I was lucky to have great history teachers in school and enlightening professors later in college, he, on the other hand, was very unlucky with the history teachers he had encountered, which is just sad. As a result, my brother knows very little of any history and any new facts I mention to him come as a shock and wonder at the same time. Therefore, I can't help but think – what would have happened with his interest in education if he did have some inspiring teachers when he was younger?

So, dear professors, please consider some of my suggestions for your future courses, because for some of us, you can still make all the difference between failure and success.

Tip 1: Give more than 2 exams.

Most students probably love the idea of only 2 exams, however, not having a point of reference of how this particular instructor structures his/her tests before a midterm is a huge disadvantage. Midterm is way too valuable to do poorly on as it contains a large chunk of your final grade. For example, I just took a midterm exam in this exact scenario and even though I had a study guide, it barely covered any of the material from the 7 chapters we had to study for the exam. I would much rather prefer if an earlier test was given just so I would have a reference point as to how my professor executes his exams. Since that didn't happen, I only learned at the time of the test that he likes to pull questions from between the lines, minor

details that any normal student facing a 7 chapter study marathon would over look. Instead I focused on major definitions and concepts while I studied, but in reality if I just read all 7 chapters cover to cover I would have been better off. This is something I would have been prepared for if we had an earlier test. So, dear professors, please consider working in an extra quiz or a test before the midterm exam.

Tip 2: Avoid participation as a large portion of the final grade.

This one is a huge issue for me, as I absolutely hate talking in class. I often find myself biting my lip not to yell out the correct answer to a simple question that some other student has been trying to shell out for 10 minutes. First of all, I was taught to raise my hand before I speak, so yelling anything out I consider to be inappropriate and disrespectful. Secondly, from what I have seen, the majority of the students do NOT like to talk in class, not because they are unprepared, but simply because they are uncomfortable or just too shy. For example, I am mostly prepared for all my classes and have plenty to say, however, unless the class is ran as a question-raise-hand-answer scenario I will not even bother because the shout-out-any-words-that-come-to-mind-from-your-seat scenario just overwhelms me. Just because five students in a 30 person class believe



that everyone needs to know their opinion and continue to talk through the whole class to each other and over the professor, this doesn't qualify them for a higher grade. So, dear professors, please understand, just because a student doesn't talk in class it does not mean he or she is unprepared, most likely he or she is just uncomfortable in the class environment that you created and considers interjecting his or her opinion to be disrespectful or rude. So please consider creating a friendly classroom atmosphere for all types of students or providing options for presentations or extra credit, where we, the shy kids, can make up the participation points.

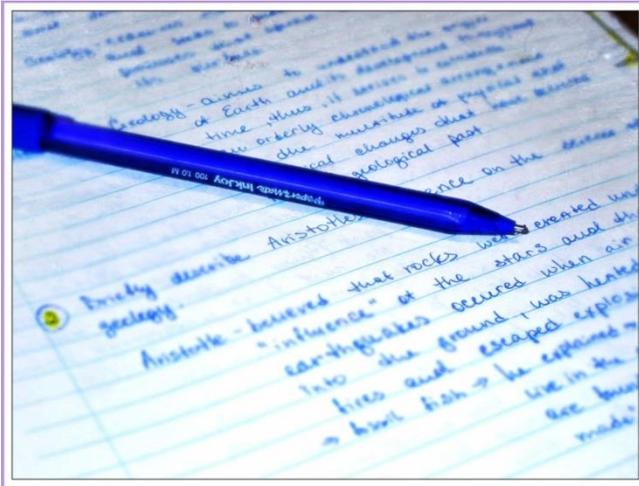
Tip 3: Be prepared for class!

I cannot stress this enough – if you expect your students to be prepared and even go as far as taking away our valuable points if we are not, then how dare you come unprepared to class?? I have seen this more times than I thought was possible. For example, last semester I had a horrible grammar professor (perhaps you can tell by my grammar?), every time this lady opened her textbook to go over our homework assignments I swear it was the first time she was looking at it. Not only was she guessing half the answers in the book, she was also wrong the other half of the time and when she didn't know the answer (yes, really) she would ask the class for the answer! Needless to say we didn't learn any grammar there, which is something I was actually looking forward to. Anyway, please, dear professors, be prepared for class, because if you are not then you are just wasting our time. I pay for college out of pocket, so I

really hate throwing my money away on an education that I am not getting. I'm pretty sure I am not alone in this.

Tip 4. Edit essays and let us re-write if necessary.

Even in the English major, where writing is supposed to be extremely important, for some reason professors do not like to correct the mistakes, edit or comment on the essays in any way. How are we supposed to learn if no one tells us what we, the future experts of the English language, are doing wrong? I understand that 40+ essays to read is a lot of time and effort on your part, but you chose to be an English professor, no? I understand if Biology or Geography professors skim over the research papers, because it is not their job to correct grammar and punctuation. English professors, on the other hand, please give us a chance to learn from our mistakes. For example, mark up anything that you liked or didn't like in a student's paper, but give him/her a chance to correct those mistakes and to resubmit the corrected paper for a higher grade. So far, I have learned the most from those professors who really take the time to read their student's work, who comment on everything they like and don't like, who mark errors in sentence structure and grammar, because for next time I will at least know what I did wrong or what I can do better. If I get my essay back the



same way I handed it in, the only difference being a grade of "A" at the end – does it mean that EVERYTHING was perfect? I doubt it, so please point out the errors to us so we can learn and be better.

Tip 5. Hush the rude students, don't ignore them.

Every single class has this one (at least) person that just won't stop talking. Why is it so difficult to ask a student to stop talking in class during a lecture or kick out a student who is definitely being disrespectful to you? For example, I currently have a professor with a slight stutter and the other day he had a problem getting through some word because people kept talking over him. As he struggled to finish the word and to gain his composure, a girl behind me (loudly) chocked: "Would you spit it out already?!" Everyone heard her, the professor heard her because he turned his head at her, but said nothing and continued the class. I am not sure that ignoring such disrespect teaches anyone anything good. Therefore, dear professors, please stand up for your selves as you would do for us.

Since I plan to be a professor myself someday, I take my own advice seriously and plan to implement these and other techniques in my own classroom sometime in the future. What are some of you pet peeves regarding your teachers or professors? What advice would you give them if they asked you how they can do better? Please share in the comments below.