

A Student's Wish List for Coming Semesters

by Daria Russell

I wish that we would start in class with the basics. "What are we learning, and why are we bothering?" The forest almost always gets lost for the trees!

I wish that students would stop trying to memorize enough to get by without learning anything. I wish that in each class, somebody would be asked, "Okay, in your own words, what are we learning and why?" In other words, let's cut the detail and summarize in one sentence what we're learning, and its application to our real lives, be it the business, intellectual, or spiritual aspects.

I wish that teachers would always say why they got into their field, their positive vision. That's what inspiration is, the spark that gets us going. We're all driven by something, and what better than to share it?

I wish that half of each class would be devoted to discussion. Interesting lectures are great, but why lecture on what is in the book? It takes participation for people to learn. I don't think deadbeat students who sit there like zombies should get away with it. How does anyone expect to learn if they don't put anything of themselves into classes? Many people think that the purpose of speaking in class is to "show off your knowledge." That is way off. The purpose is to reveal what you **don't** know; to raise questions you've formed; to voice opinions for honing and correction.

Most people feel uncomfortable or unworthy to speak in class; but they should speak anyway. The best way to learn is to make a mistake or take a risk. That sears the experience into you! People remember **experiences**, and you can't have an experience without participating.

I wish students would realize that you don't learn just by reading and listening to lectures. You have to fight for knowledge, and make it your own. People have very different ways of perceiving things: some are practical and concrete, others enjoy theory; some people relate to people and feelings, others to aesthetics and images. Some people say you can't separate thinking from writing. To understand something, I know that I have to outline it, and organize and prioritize it in my own way. I try to reduce it to a few points, and look at those from different angles, and see where they fit in with other fields. Or write briefly on "what I find important about this."

I wish that material was presented in the most concrete, relevant form possible, especially science. Why not learn chemistry by taking apart car batteries or studying house wiring? Why not study something we'd like to know?

Many people are not able to compartmentalize their cerebellums from the rest of their lives anyway. I wish we would connect everything--this subject, other subjects, our experiences, our aspirations. What are the origins of things in history, the motivations of

people in the present, and where ought we all be going in the future? Are we in school to learn one specialized area, like a trade school, or to gain some wisdom? I wish we'd face the fact that we will remember practically zilch from every class. The important thing is not only the "facts," but that our imaginations be piqued by dreams, our minds opened by other views, and our beings touched by others' experiences. That will make our lives a perpetual learning experience.

Reprinted by permission from *The Daily Aztec*, May 2, 1986. Daria Russell is an SDSU senior, majoring in Economics.