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Student Satisfaction Survey

Date Received: Thu, 4 Jan 1996

Taken from the MIT Course Evaluation Guide, Fall, 1991

The Best and Worst Comments Received

"This class was a religious experience for me... I had to take it all on faith."

"Text makes a satisfying 'thud' when dropped on the floor."

"The class is worthwhile because I need it for the degree."

"His blackboard technique puts Rembrandt to shame."

"Textbook is confusing... Someone with a knowledge of English should proofread it."

"Have you ever fell asleep in class and awoke in another? That's the way I felt all term."

"In class I learn I can fudge answers and get away with it."

"Keep lecturer or tenure board will be shot."

"The recitation instructor would make a good parking lot attendant. Tries to tell you where to go, but you can never understand him."

"Text is useless. I use it to kill roaches in my room."

"In class the syllabus is more important than you are."

"I am convinced that you can learn by osmosis by just sitting in his class."

"Help! I've fallen asleep and I can't wake up!"

"Problem sets are a decoy to lure you away from potential exam material."

"Recitation was great. It was so confusing that I forgot who I was, where I was, and what I was doing -- it's a great stress reliever."

"He is one of the best teachers I have had... He is well-organized, presents good lectures, and creates interest in the subject. I hope my comments don't hurt his chances of getting tenure."

"I would sit in class and stare out the window at the squirrels. They've got a cool nest in the tree."

"He teaches like Speedy Gonzalez on a caffeine high."

"This course kept me out of trouble from 2-4:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays."

"Most of us spent the 1st 3 weeks terrified of the class. Then solidarity kicked in."

"Bogus number crunching. My HP is exhausted."

"The absolute value of the TA was less than epsilon."

"TA steadily improved throughout the course... I think he started drinking and it really loosened him up."

"Information was presented like a ruptured fire hose -- spraying in all directions -- no way to stop it."

"I never bought the text. My \$60 was better spent on the Led Zeppelin tapes that I used more while doing the problem sets than I would have used the text."

"What's the quality of the text? 'Text is printed on high quality paper.'"

College Application Essay

Date Received: Tue, 31 Jan 1995

This is an actual essay written by a college applicant. The author, Hugh Gallagher, now attends NYU.

3A. ESSAY

In order for the admissions staff of our college to get to know you, the applicant, better, we ask that you answer the following question: are there any significant experiences you have had, or accomplishments you have realized, that have helped to define you as a person?

Answer:

I am a dynamic figure, often seen scaling walls and crushing ice. I have been known to remodel train stations on my lunch breaks, making them more efficient in the area of heat retention. I translate ethnic slurs for Cuban refugees, I write award-winning operas, I manage time efficiently. Occasionally, I tread water for three days in a row.

I woo women with my sensuous and godlike trombone playing, I can pilot bicycles up severe inclines with unflagging speed, and I cook Thirty-Minute Brownies in twenty minutes. I am an expert in stucco, a veteran in love, and an outlaw in Peru. Using only a hoe and a large glass of water, I once single-handedly defended a small village in the Amazon Basin from a horde of ferocious army ants. I play bluegrass cello, I was scouted by the Mets, I am the subject of numerous documentaries. When I'm bored, I build large suspension bridges in my yard. I enjoy urban hang gliding. On Wednesdays, after school, I repair electrical appliances free of charge.

I am an abstract artist, concrete analyst, and a ruthless bookie. Critics worldwide swoon over my original line of corduroy evening wear. I don't perspire. I am a private citizen, yet I receive fan mail. I have been caller number nine and have won the weekend passes. Last summer I toured New Jersey with a traveling centrifugal-force demonstration. I bat .400. My deft floral arrangements have earned my fame in international botany circles. Children trust me.

I can hurl tennis rackets at small moving objects with deadly accuracy. I once read Paradise Lost, Moby Dick, and David Copperfield in one day and still had time to refurbish an entire dining room that evening. I know the exact location of every food item in the supermarket. I have performed several covert operations for the CIA. I sleep once a week: when I do sleep I sleep in a chair. While on vacation in Canada, I successfully negotiated with a group of terrorists who had seized a small bakery. The laws of physics do not apply to me.

I balance, I weave, I dodge, I frolic, and my bills are all paid. And to let off steam, I participate in full-contact origami. Years ago I discovered the meaning of life but forgot to write it down. I have made extraordinary four course meals using only a mouli and a toaster oven.

I breed prize-winning clams. I have won bullfights in San Juan, cliff-diving competitions in Sri Lanka, and spelling bees at the Kremlin. I have played Hamlet, I have performed open-heart surgery, and I have spoken with Elvis.

But I have not yet gone to college.

Strange Student Answers

Date Received: Thu, 29 Feb 1996

Here are some interesting interpretations of nature from test papers and essays submitted to science and health teachers by junior high, high school, and college students around the world. Spelling left as is.

"When you breath, you inspire. When you do not breath, you expire."

"H₂O is hot water, and CO₂ is cold water"

"To collect fumes of sulphur, hold a deacon over a flame in a test tube"

"When you smell an oderless gas, it is probably carbon monoxide"

"Water is composed of two gins, Oxygin and Hydrogin. Oxygin is pure gin. Hydrogin is gin and water."

"Three kinds of blood vessels are arteries, vanes and caterpillars."

"Blood flows down one leg and up the other."

"Respiration is composed of two acts, first inspiration, and then expectoration."

"The moon is a planet just like the earth, only it is even deader."

"Artifical insemination is when the farmer does it to the cow instead of the bull."

"Dew is formed on leaves when the sun shines down on them and makes them perspire."

"A super-saturated solution is one that holds more than it can hold."

"Mushrooms always grow in damp places and so they look like umbrellas."

"The body consists of three parts- the brainium, the borax and the abominable cavity. The brainium contains the brain, the borax contains the heart and lungs, and the abominable cavity contains the bowls, of which there are five - a, e, i, o, and u."

"The pistol of a flower is its only protections agenst insects."

"The alimentary canal is located in the northern part of Indiana."

"The skeleton is what is left after the insides have been taken out and the outsides have been taken off. The purpose of the skeleton is something to hitch meat to."

"A permanent set of teeth consists of eight canines, eight cuspids, two molars, and eight cuspidors."

"The tides are a fight between the Earth and moon. All water tends towards the moon, because there is no water in the moon, and nature abhors a vacuum. I forget where the sun joins in this fight."

"A fossil is an extinct animal. The older it is, the more extinct it is."

"Equator: A managerie lion running around the Earth through Africa."

"Germinate: To become a naturalized German."

"Liter: A nest of young puppies."

"Magnet: Something you find crawling all over a dead cat."

"Momentum: What you give a person when they are going away."

"Planet: A body of Earth surrounded by sky."

"Rhubarb: A kind of celery gone bloodshot."

"Vacuum: A large, empty space where the pope lives."

"Before giving a blood transfusion, find out if the blood is affirmative or negative."

"To remove dust from the eye, pull the eye down over the nose."

"For a nosebleed: Put the nose much lower than the body until the heart stops."

"For fainting: Rub the person's chest or, if a lady, rub her arm above the hand instead. Or put the head between the knees of the nearest medical doctor."

"For dog bite: put the dog away for several days. If he has not recovered, then kill it."

"For asphyxiation: Apply artificial respiration until the patient is dead."

"For head cold: use an agonizer to spray the nose until it drops in your throat."

"To keep milk from turning sour: Keep it in the cow."

College Football: North Vs South

Date Received: Wed, 28 Apr 1999

GETTING TICKETS

Up North... 5 days before the game you can walk into the ticket office on campus and still purchase tickets.

Down South... 5 months before the game you can walk into the ticket office on campus and still be placed on the waiting list for tickets because the all the games have been sold out for months.

FRIDAY CLASSES AFTER A THURSDAY NIGHT GAME

Up North... Students and Teachers are not sure if they are going to the Thursday Night game because they have class on Friday.

Down South... Teachers cancel class on Friday because they are going to the Thursday Night game and they don't want to see the few hungover students that might actually make it to class on Friday.

PARKING

Up North... An hour or two before game time the university opens the campus for game parking.

Down South... On Wednesday and Thursday, the RVs sporting their school flags pull into campus and set up for the weekend festivities. The real faithful sometimes start on Tuesday.

GAME DAY

Up North... a few students have parties in the dorm and watch ESPN on TV.

Down South... every student wakes up has a beer for breakfast and rushes over to where ESPN is broadcasting Game Day "Live" in hopes of getting in the background and waving to the Mom and Dad back home and to the idiots from up North who wonder why game day never broadcasts from their campus.

TAILGATING

Up North... they think a barbecue is putting raw meat on the grill with a few guys standing around drinking a beer with a lime in it, and listening the local radio station with the back of their truck down.

Down South... the match strikes the grill at sunrise and the barbecued smells of ribs and chicken that have been soaking in Pa's secret sauce for days cover the campus, while you and your closest friends renew friendship and reminisce last years victory over an aged bottle of whiskey and several cases of beer.

GETTING TO THE STADIUM

Up North... you have to ask direction, "Where's the stadium?" When you find it you walk right in with no line.

Down South... no directions needed. Just follow the crowd of cheering fans toward the most amazing stadiums build by man, singing their school fight song like it is gospel. As you wait in line to get to the gate you hear the fight songs by both bands battling it out for bragging rights for another 365 days.

CONCESSIONS

Up North... your drinks come in a paper cup filled to the rim with soda.

Down South... your drink comes in a plastic cup sporting the home team's mascot and is only filled 3/4 of the way to ensure enough room for the right mix of whiskey.

WHEN THE NATIONAL ANTHEM IS PLAYED

Up North... stands are less than half full.

Down South... only a few ticket holders are not in the stadium as 100,000+ fans stand and proudly sing along.

WHEN THE PLAYERS TAKE THE FIELD

Up North... the only ones cheering are the student section and the announcer (and the announcer is paid).

Down South... the fans scream and cheer so loud the stadium roars and a tear comes to the announcer's eyes because he's so proud of his team.

THE SMELL IN THE AIR AFTER THE FIRST SCORE

Up North... nothing changes.

Down South... the smell of fireworks with a twist of whiskey.

AFTER THE GAME

Up North... the stadium is empty before the game ends.

Down South... the celebration begins with the bragging rights to going to the victor for another 365 days. Fans from both schools share some home cooked ribs and a fine glass of aged whiskey and plan to start all over for the next home game.

Departmental Hierarchy

Date Received: Thu, 28 Dec 95

Newsgroups: rec.humor.funny

Subject: The College Food Chain

I found this on a wall at Iowa State University.

THE DEAN

Leaps tall buildings in a single bound
Is more powerful than a locomotive
Is faster than a speeding bullet
Walks on water
Gives policy to God

THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

Leaps short buildings in a single bound
Is more powerful than a switch engine
Is just as fast as a speeding bullet
Talks with God

PROFESSOR

Leaps short buildings with a running start and favorable winds
Is almost as powerful a switch engine
Is faster than a speeding BB
Walks on water in an indoor swimming pool
Talks with God if a special request is honored

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Barely clears a quonset hut
Loses tug of war with a locomotive
Can fire a speeding bullet
Swims well
Is occasionally addressed by God

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Date Received: Thu, 4 Jan 1996

Administrative note: Many readers have reported that the recent joke "The College Food Chain" was missing a final entry in its list:

THE DEPARTMENTAL SECRETARY

Picks up tall buildings and walks under them
Knocks locomotives off track when sneezes
Catches speeding bullets in teeth for fun
Parts larges bodies of water
Is God

Makes high marks on the walls when trying to leap tall buildings
Is run over by locomotives
Can sometimes handle a gun without inflicting self-injury
Treads water
Talks to animals

INSTRUCTOR

Climbs walls continually
Rides the rails
Plays russian roulette
Walks on thin ice
Prays a lot

GRADUATE STUDENT

Runs into buildings
Recognizes locomotives two out of three times
Is not issued ammunition
Can stay afloat with a life jacket
Talks to walls

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

Falls over doorstep when trying to enter buildings
Says "Look at the choo-choo"
Wets himself with a water pistol
Plays in mud puddles
Mumbles to himself

Strange Excuses

The following is a partial list of actual written excuses given to teachers in the Albuquerque public school system by parents of students:

Dear School: Please excuse John from being absent on Jan. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and also 33.

Please excuse Dianne from being absent yesterday. She was in bed with gramps.

Please excuse Johnnie for being. It was his father's fault.

Chris will not be in school because he has an acre in his side.

John has been absent because he had two teeth taken off his face.

Excuse Gloria. She has been under the doctor.

Lillie was absent from school yesterday because she had a going over.

My son is under the doctor's care and should not take fizical ed. Please execute him.

Carlos was absent yesterday because he was playing football. He was hit in the growing part.

My daughter was absent yesterday because she was tired. She spent this weekend with the Marines.

Please excuse Joyce from P.E. for a few days. Yesterday she fell off a tree and misplaced her hip.

Please excuse Ray Friday from school. He has very loose vowels.

Maryann was absent Dec. 11-16, because she had a fever, sore throat, headache, and upset stomach. Her sister was also sick, fever and sore throat, her brother had a low-grade fever. There must be the flu going around, her father even got hot last night.

Please excuse Blanche from jim today. She is administrating.

George was absent yesterday because he had a stomach.

Ralph was absent yesterday because he had a sore trout.

Please excuse Sara for being absent. She was sick and I had her shot.

Please excuse Lupe. She is having problems with her ovals.

Please excuse Pedro from being absent yesterday. He had diah (*crossed out*), diahoah (*crossed out*), dyah(*crossed out*) the shits.

THE FINAL EXAM

Before answering each question, provide a topic heading. Observe standard rules of grammar. Answer each question in detail. Time limit is 4 hours. Use additional sheets if necessary.

ART

Repaint the Sistine Chapel, and write an essay on how it affects how the Pope looks in the morning.

ASTRONOMY

Create a second Big Bang. Discuss the effects of inflation on the new universe, and predict its fate based on its mass density.

BIOLOGY

Create life. Estimate the difference in present human culture if your life form had developed 500 million years earlier, paying special attention to its probably effects on the English Parliamentary System. Prove your thesis.

ECONOMICS

Develop a realistic plan for refinancing the national debt. Trace possible effects of your plan in the following areas Cubism, the Domatist controversy, the wave theory of light. Outline a method for preventing these effects. Criticize this method, then point out the deficiencies in your criticism.

EDUCATION

There will be no exam, but you will be sent to Arkansas to teach in an elementary school.

ENGINEERING

The disassembled parts of a high-powered rifle have been placed in a small box on your desk, with an instruction manual printed in Swahili. In ten minutes, a hungry Bengal tiger will be admitted to the room. Take appropriate action and be prepared to justify your decision.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Take a position for or against truth. Prove your position.

EXTRA CREDIT

Define the universe. Give three examples.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Describe in detail. Be objective and specific.

GENETICS

Create life, play God, write a thesis and dissertation on the dangers of playing God. Kill your creature after it mates with your lab partner.

HISTORY

Describe the history of the papacy from its origins to the present day, concentrating especially but not exclusively on its social, political, economic, religious, and philosophical impact on Europe, Asia, America, and Africa. Be brief, concise, and specific.

LITERATURE

Compose an epic poem based on the events of your own life in which you use and footnote allusions from T.S. Eliot, Keats, Chaucer, Dante, Norse mythology and the Marx Brothers. Critique your poem with a full discussion of its metrics.

MATHEMATICS

Prove rigorously that $1+1=2$. Discuss the implications of Godel's Theorem for the result.

MEDICINE

You have been provided with a razor blade, a piece of gauze, and a bottle of Scotch. You are to remove your appendix. Describe the procedure; then do it. Have your work inspected before suturing.

MUSIC

Theory and Musicianship. Write an opera in Italian, translate it to German, perform it in French, and finally, write an essay on why all music publishers should be shot.

MUSIC

Write a piano concerto. Orchestrate and perform it using flute and drum.

PERFORMANCE

Play the entire score of Wagner's Symphony Number 7. By yourself.

PHILOSOPHY

Sketch the development of human thought and estimate its significance. Compare this with the development of another thought.

PHYSICS

Explain the nature of matter. Include in your answer an evaluation of the impact of the development of math on science.

PHYSICS

Derive a consistent theory of quantum gravity. Discuss its implications for the Hawking process, gravity waves, and the fate of the universe.

PHYSICS LAB

Build a machine that can travel back in time. Discuss the effects of the average weak energy condition and the causal ordering postulate on your design. Travel back in time and kill your mother as an infant. Report at length on the results.

POLITICAL SCIENCE

There is a red telephone on your desk; start World War III. Describe the social-political effects, if any.

PSYCHOLOGY

Based on your knowledge of their works, evaluate the emotional stability, degree of adjustment, and repressed frustration of each of the following Alexander of Aphrodisias, Ramses II, Gregory of Nicea, Hammurabi. Support your evaluation with quotations from each man's works, making appropriate references. It is not necessary to translate.

PSYCHOLOGY

Diagnose yourself with a mental deficiency, role play it, acting out all aggression, go on a killing spree across the Mid-West, and finally, write an essay about the dangers of false psychiatrists in your life term in prison. Don't worry, we'll send the degree to your next of kin.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Two thousand riot-crazed people are storming the classroom. You must calm them using any ancient language except Greek.

SOCIOLOGY

Estimate the sociological problems which might accompany the end of the world. Construct an experiment to test your theory.

UNIVERSAL GRADE CHANGE FORM

Date Received: Tue, 18 Feb 1997

_____ University

To: Professor _____ From: _____

I think my grade in your course, _____, should be changed from _____ to _____ for the following reasons:

- _____ 1. The person who copied my paper made a higher grade than I did.
- _____ 2. The person whose paper I copied made a higher grade than I did.
- _____ 3. This course will lower my Grade Point Average and I won't get into

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| ___ Medical School | ___ Graduate School | ___ Dental School |
| ___ My Fraternity/Sorority | ___ The Mickey Mouse Club | ___ Tri-County Tech |

_____ 4. I have to get an A in this course to balance the F in _____.

- _____ 5. I'll lose my scholarship.
- _____ 6. I'm on a varsity sports team and my tutor couldn't find a copy of your exam.
- _____ 7. I didn't come to class and the person whose notes I used did not cover the materials asked for on the exam.
- _____ 8. I studied the basic principles and the exam wanted every little fact.
- _____ 9. I learned all the facts and definitions but your exams asked about general principles.
- _____ 10. You are prejudiced against:
- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| _____ Males | _____ Jews | _____ Blacks |
| _____ Females | _____ Catholics | _____ Whites |
| _____ Chicanos | _____ Protestants | _____ Moslems |
| _____ Minorities | _____ People | _____ Students |
- _____ 11. If I flunk out of school my father will disinherit me or at least cut my allowance.
- _____ 12. I was unable to do well in this course because of the following illness:
- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| _____ mono | _____ broken baby finger | _____ acute alcoholism |
| _____ pregnancy | _____ VD | _____ fatherhood |
- _____ 13. You told us to be creative but you didn't tell us exactly how you wanted that done.
- _____ 14. I was creative and you said I was just shooting the bull.
- _____ 15. I don't have a reason; I just want a higher grade.
- _____ 16. The lectures were:
- | | |
|---|--|
| _____ too detailed to pick out important points | _____ not explained in sufficient detail |
| _____ too boring | _____ all jokes and not enough material |
| _____ all of the above | |
- _____ 17. This course was:
- _____ too early, I was not awake. _____ at lunchtime, I was hungry. _____ too late, I was tired.
- _____ 18. My (dog, cat, gerbil) (ate, wet on, threw up on) my (book, notes, paper) for this course.
- _____ 19. Other _____

Graduate Student Jokes

The Top Ten Lies Told by Graduate Students

(Taken from the Harvard Crimson)

10. It doesn't bother me at all that my college roommate is making \$80,000 a year on Wall Street.
9. I'd be delighted to proofread your book/chapter/article.
8. My work has a lot of practical importance.
7. I would never date an undergraduate.
6. Your latest article was so inspiring.
5. I turned down a lot of great job offers to come here.

4. I just have one more book to read and then I'll start writing.
3. The department is giving me so much support.
2. My job prospects look really good.
1. No really, I'll be out of here in only two more years.

Top Five Lies Told by Teaching Assistants

5. I'm not going to grant any extensions.
4. Call me any time. I'm always available.
3. It doesn't matter what I think; write what you believe.
2. Think of the midterm as a diagnostic tool.
1. My other section is much better prepared than you guys.

You just might be a graduate student if...

- ...you can analyze the significance of appliances you cannot operate.
- ...your office is better decorated than your apartment.
- ...you have ever, as a folklore project, attempted to track the progress of your own joke across the Internet.
- ...you are startled to meet people who neither need nor want to read.
- ...you have ever brought a scholarly article to a bar.
- ...you rate coffee shops by the availability of outlets for your laptop.
- ...everything reminds you of something in your discipline.
- ...you have ever discussed academic matters at a sporting event.
- ...you have ever spent more than \$50 on photocopying while researching a single paper.
- ...there is a microfilm reader in the library that you consider "yours."
- ...you actually have a preference between microfilm and microfiche.
- ...you can tell the time of day by looking at the traffic flow at the library.
- ...you look forward to summers because you're more productive without the distraction of classes.
- ...you regard ibuprofen as a vitamin.
- ...you consider all papers to be works in progress.
- ...professors don't really care when you turn in work anymore.
- ...you find the bibliographies of books more interesting than the actual text.
- ...you have given up trying to keep your books organized and are now just trying to keep them all in the same general area.
- ...you have accepted guilt as an inherent feature of relaxation.
- ...you reflexively start analyzing those Greek letters before you realize that it's a sorority sweatshirt, not an equation.
- ...you find yourself explaining to children that you are in "20th grade".

...you start referring to stories like "Snow White et al."
...you frequently wonder how long you can live on pasta without getting scurvy
...you look forward to taking some time off to do laundry
...you have more photocopy cards than credit cards
...you wonder if APA style allows you to cite talking to yourself as "personal communication"

Mozart not Wanted as a Prof

Date Received: Wed, 7 Dec 1994

It is not generally known that Mozart applied for a job teaching composition at a well-known state university. I am in possession of a copy of the letter from the chairman of the music department to the dean recommending against the appointment:

March 15

Dear Dean X:

I write in response to your suggestion of an appointment to our faculty for a Mr. W.A. Mozart, currently of Vienna, Austria. While the Music Department appreciates your interest, faculty are sensitive about their prerogatives in the selection of new colleagues.

While the list of works and performances that the candidate submitted is undoubtedly a full one, though not always accurate in the view of our musicologists, it reflects activity outside education. Mr. Mozart does not have an earned doctorate; indeed, very little in the way of formal training or teaching experience. There is a good deal of instability too evidenced in the resume. Would he really settle down in a large state university? And while we have no church connections, as chairman I must voice a concern over the incidents with the Archbishop of Salzburg. They hardly confirm his abilities to be a good team man.

I know that the strong supporting letter from Mr. Haydn, himself a successful composer, suggests that some of the candidate's problems are not really to the heart of the matter. But Mr. Haydn is writing from a very special situation. Esterhaza is a well-funded private institution, rather a long way from our university, and better able than we are to accommodate a non-academic like Mr. Haydn. Our concern is not just with the most gifted -- but because state funds are involved, with all who come to us seeking an education in music. I have drawn to your attention many times the budget and space problems in the department.

The musicology faculty did say after the interview that Mr. Mozart seemed to have too little knowledge of music before Bach and Handel. If he were only to teach composition, that might not be a serious impediment, but we expect everyone to be able to assume some of the burden of large undergraduate survey classes in music history.

The applied faculty were impressed by his piano playing, rather old-fashioned though some thought it to be. That he also performed on the violin and viola seemed for us to be stretching versatility dangerously thin.

The composition faculty were in the same way skeptical about his extensive output. They rightly warn us from their own experience that to receive many performances is no guarantee of quality, and the senior professor points out that Mr. Mozart promotes many of these performances himself. He has never won the support of a major foundation. One of my colleagues was present a year or two ago at the premiere of, I believe, a violin sonata, and he discovered afterwards that Mr. Mozart had indeed not fully written out the piano part before he played it. This may be all very well in that world, but it sets a poor example to students in their assignments, and one can only think with trepidation of a concerto performance by our student orchestra with Mr. Mozart. Naturally he proved to be an entertaining man at dinner and spoke amusingly of his travels. It was perhaps

significant that he and our colleagues seemed to have few acquaintances in common. One lady colleague was offended by an anecdote our guest told and left early. We are glad as a faculty to have had the chance to meet the visitor but do not see our way to recommending an appointment, and least of all with tenure. Our first need, as I have emphasized in your office, is for a specialist in music education primary methods.

Please give my regards to Mr. Mozart when you write him. I am sure he will continue to do well in that very different world he has chosen and which suits him better, I believe than higher education.

Yours sincerely,

Y..... Z.....

Chairman, Department of Music

P.S. Some good news. Our senior professor of composition tells me there is now a very good chance that a movement of his concerto will have its premiere next season. You will remember his work was commissioned by a foundation and won first prize nine years ago.

Retrieved from a special wastebasket by Bill Shank, CUNY Grad Scl (ret.)]

What The Professor Really Means

Date Received: 05 Apr 1995

By J. Timothy Petersik, from the Chronicle of Higher Education

| What the prof says | What the prof means |
|--|---|
| You'll be using one of the leading textbooks in the field. | I used it as a grad student. |
| If you follow these few simple rules, you'll do fine in the course. | If you don't need any sleep, you'll do fine in the course. |
| The gist of what the author is saying is what's most important. | I don't understand the details either. |
| Various authorities agree that... | My hunch is that... |
| The answer to your question is beyond the scope of this class. | I don't know. |
| You'll have to see me during my office hours for a thorough answer to your question. | I don't know. |
| In answer to your question, you must recognize that there are several disparate points of view. | I really don't know. |
| Today we are going to discuss a most important topic. | Today we are going to discuss my dissertation. |
| Unfortunately, we haven't the time to consider all of the people who made contributions to this field. | I disagree with what roughly half of the people in this field have said. |
| We can continue this discussion outside of class. | 1. I'm tired of this - let's quit. 2. You're winning the argument - let's quit. |
| Today we'll let a member of the class lead the discussion. It will be a good educational experience. | I stayed out too late last night and didn't have time to prepare a lecture. |
| Any questions? | I'm ready to let you go. |
| The implications of this study are clear. | I don't know what it means either, but there'll be a question about it on the test. |

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| The test will be 50-questions multiple choice. | The test will be 60-questions multiple guess, plus three short-answer questions (1000 words or more) and no one will score above 55%. |
| The test scores were generally good. | Some of you managed a C+. |
| The test scores were a little below my expectations. | Where was the party last night? |
| Some of you could have done better. | Everyone flunked. |
| Before we begin the lecture for today, are there any questions about previous material? | Has anyone opened the book yet? |
| According to my sources... | According to the guy who taught this class last year... |
| It's been very rewarding to teach this class. | I hope they find someone else to teach it next year. |

Dumb Analogies

Date Received: Mon, 13 May 1996 (with additions May 9, 2003)

These are the winners of the "worst analogies ever written in a high school essay" contest in the Washington Post Style Invitational.

"Oh, Jason, take me!"; she panted, her breasts heaving like a Uni student on \$1-a-beer night.

Bob was as perplexed as a hacker who means to access T:\flw.quid55328.com\aaakk/ch@ung but gets T:\flw.quidaakk/ch@ung by mistake. (Ken Krattenmaker, Landover Hills)

Even in his last years, Grandad had a mind like a steel trap, only one that had been left out so long, it had rusted shut.

From the attic came an unearthly howl. The whole scene had an eerie, surreal quality, like when you're on vacation in another city and "Jeopardy" comes on at 7 p.m. instead of 7:30. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

He spoke with the wisdom that can only come from experience, like a guy who went blind because he looked at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it and now goes around the country speaking at high schools about the dangers of looking at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it. (Joseph Romm, Washington)

He was as lame as a duck. Not the metaphorical lame duck, either, but a real duck that was actually lame. Maybe from stepping on a land mine or something.

He was as tall as a six-foot-three-inch tree. (Jack Bross, Chevy Chase)

He was deeply in love. When she spoke, he thought he heard bells, as if she were a garbage truck backing up.

Her date was pleasant enough, but she knew that if her life was a movie this guy would be buried in the credits as something like "Second Tall Man." (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Her eyes were like two brown circles with big black dots in the center. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Her face was a perfect oval, like a circle that had its two sides gently compressed by a Thigh Master.

Her hair glistened in the rain like nose hair after a sneeze. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Her vocabulary was as bad as, like, whatever. (Unknown)

His thoughts tumbled in his head, making and breaking alliances like underpants in a dryer without Cling Free. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

It hurt the way your tongue hurts after you accidentally staple it to the wall.

John and Mary had never met. They were like two hummingbirds who had also never met. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Long separated by cruel fate, the star-crossed lovers raced across the grassy field toward each other like two freight trains, one having left Cleveland at 6:36 p.m. traveling at 55 mph, the other from Topeka at 4:19 p.m. at a speed of 35 mph. (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

McBride fell 12 stories, hitting the pavement like a Hefty Bag filled with vegetable soup. (Paul Sabourin, Silver Spring)

She caught your eye like one of those pointy hook latches that used to dangle from screen doors and would fly up whenever you banged the door open again. (Rich Murphy, Fairfax Station)

She grew on him like she was a colony of E.coli and he was room-temperature prime English beef.

She had a deep, throaty, genuine laugh, like that sound a dog makes just before it throws up.

She was as easy as the TV Guide crossword.

The ballerina rose gracefully en pointe and extended one slender leg behind her, like a dog at a fire hydrant.

The hailstones leaped from the pavement, just like maggots when you fry them in hot grease. (Gary F. Hevel, Silver Spring)

The little boat gently drifted across the pond exactly the way a bowling ball wouldn't. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

The plan was simple, like my brother-in-law Phil. But unlike Phil, this plan just might work.

The politician was gone but unnoticed, like the period after the Dr. on a Dr Pepper can. (Wayne Goode, Madison, Ala.)

The red brick wall was the color of a brick-red Crayola crayon.

The revelation that his marriage of 30 years had disintegrated because of his wife's infidelity came as a rude shock, like a surcharge at a formerly surcharge-free ATM.

The thunder was ominous-sounding, much like the sound of a thin sheet of metal being shaken backstage during the storm scene in a play. (Barbara Fetherolf, Alexandria)

The young fighter had a hungry look, the kind you get from not eating for a while.

They lived in a typical suburban neighborhood with picket fences that resembled Nancy Kerrigan's teeth. (Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)

Things Not To Do Or Say At Or For Your Thesis Defense

Date Received: Tue, 1 Feb 94

Written by Master Peter Dutton. Contributions by Jim Lalopoulos, Alison Berube, and Jeff Cohen, Patricia Whitson, Chris Bovitz and a few others.

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Mime | Hide | Rimshot | Explode |
| Implode | Tap Dance | Firewalk | Mosh Pit |
| Food Fight | Vaudeville | Puppet Show | Group Prayer |
| Fashion Show | Halftime Show | Black Tie Only | Three-Ring Defense |
| Shadow Puppets | Instant Replay | Offer a Toast | Incite a Revolt |
| Defence by Proxy | Laugh Maniacally | Two-Drink Minimum | Interpretive Dance |
| "Tag – You're it!" | Have a Sing-Along | Use a TelePromTer | Bring Your Pet Boa |

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| Tell Ghost Stories | Talk in Klingonese | "Everybody Rhumba!" | Stand on the Table |
| Imitate Groucho Marx | Do a "show and tell" | Invite the homeless | Spontaneously combust |
| Hand out 3-D glasses | Play Thesis Mad Libs | Do a soft-shoe routine | Hold a Tupperware party |
| Claim political asylum | "Take my wife - please!" | Door prizes and a raffle | Release a flock of doves |
| Talk with your mouth full | Start speaking in tongues | Pass the collection basket | Dress in top hat and tails |

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| Advertise it as "pot luck" | Dress in a Wild West style | Whine piteously, beg, cry... |
| Stage your own death/suicide | Call your advisor "sweetie" | Live radio and TV coverage |
| "I'm rubber, you're glue..." | Pass out souvenir matchbooks | Lead the spectators in a Wave |
| "OK - which one of you farted?" | "By the power of Greyskull..." | Charge a cover and check for ID |
| "Anybody else as drunk as I am?" | Charge 25 cents a cup for coffee | Minstrel show (blackface, etc) |
| "I'd like to thank the Academy..." | "Duck, duck, duck, duck... GOOSE!" | Show slides of your last vacation |
| Provide party favors. Noisy ones. | Go into labor (especially for men) | Preface with the story of your life |

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| Have a make-your-own-sundae table | Suddenly develop the China Syndrome |
| "And now, a word from our sponsor..." | Musical accompaniment provided by... |
| Flex and show off those massive pecs | Have everyone pose for a group photo |
| Do your entire defense operatically | "I don't know - I didn't write this." |
| Have cheerleaders. ("Gimme an 'A'!!") | Wear a trench coat. And nothing else. |
| Suddenly develop Tourette's Syndrome | Use a Super Soaker to point at people. |
| Table dance (you or an exotic dancer). | Answer every question with a question. |
| Mention your professor as "my helper". | Previews, cartoons, and the Jimmy Fund. |
| Make committee members wear silly hats. | Flash "APPLAUSE" and "LAUGHTER" signs. |
| "Yo, a smooth shout out to my homies..." | "Professor Robinson, will you marry me?" |
| Rearrange the chairs into a peace symbol. | "I say Hallelujah, brothers and sisters!" |
| Traffic reports every 10 minutes on the 1's. | Moon everyone in the room after you are done. |
| Animal sacrifice to the god of the Underworld. | Present your entire talk in iambic pentameter. |
| "And now a reading from the Book of Mormon..." | Hire the Goodyear Blimp to circle the building. |
| Go dressed in scuba gear. Use the oxygen tank. | Surreptitiously fill the room with laughing gas. |
| Frequently ask if anyone has to go to the potty. | Use a Greek Chorus to highlight important points. |
| Start giving your presentation 15 minutes early. | Swoop in with a cape and tights, Superman style. |
| Swing in through the window, yelling a la Tarzan. | Smoke machines, dramatic lighting, pyrotechnics... |
| Leave Jehovah's Witness pamphlets scattered about. | Sell those big foam "We're number #1 (sic)" hands. |
| Dress like your favorite character from "Star Trek". | Talk in Canadianese - add "eh" after every sentence. |
| "There will be a short quiz after my presentation..." | Secede from the US. Give yourself political asylum. |
| "I could answer that, but then I'd have to kill you". | Give your entire speech in a "Marvin Martian" accent. |

"Please phrase your question in the form of an answer...".

Sell T-shirts to recoup the cost of copying, binding, etc.

"I'm sorry, I can't hear you - there's a banana in my ear!".

Hang a sign that says "Thank you for not asking questions".

Try to use normal printed paper on the overhead projector.

Detonate a small nuclear device in the room. Or threaten to.

Bring Howard Cosell out of retirement to do color commentary.

Use any past or present Saturday Night Live catchphrase. Not.

Before your defense, build trapdoors underneath all the seats.

Use the words "marginalized", "empowerment", and "patriarchy".

Refer to yourself in the third person, like Julius Caesar did.

Have a bikini-clad model be in charge of changing the overheads.

The Emperor's New Slides ("only fools can't see the writing...")

Hang a pinata over the table and have a strolling mariachi band.

"The responsorial psalm can be found on page 124 of the thesis..."

Bring a microphone. Point it at the questioner, talk-show style.

Roll credits at the end. Include a "key grip", and a "best boy".

"And it would have worked if it weren't for those meddling kids..."

Switch halfway through your talk to Pig Latin. Or Finnish Pig Latin.

Have someone wheel in a big cake with you in it. Jump out and begin.

"You call THAT a question? How the hell did they make you a professor?"

"Charge the mound" when a professor beans you with a high fast question.

Challenge a professor to a duel. Slapping him with a glove is optional.

Mention that you have to hurry because TV show xxx is on in 15 minutes.

Make each professor remove an item of clothing for each question he asks.

Simulate your experiment with a virtual reality system for the spectators.

"OK, everybody - heads down on the desk until you show me you can behave."

"Well, I saw it on the Internet, so I figured it might be a good idea..."

Refuse to answer questions unless they phrase the question as a limerick.

Hang a disco ball in the center of the room. John Travolta pose optional.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, please rise for the singing of our National Anthem..."

"Laugh, will you? Well, they laughed at Galileo, they laughed at Einstein..."

Wear a swimsuit from the opposite sex: man - wear a bikini, woman - wear trunks.

"In protest of our government's systematic and brutal oppression of minorities..."

Hold a pre-defense pep rally, complete with cheerleaders, pep band, and a bonfire.

Wear clown makeup, a clown wig, clown shoes, and a clown nose. And nothing else.

"I'm sorry Professor Smith, I didn't say 'SIMON SAYS any questions?'. You're out."

Ask imaginary helpers to change transparencies; fly off the handle when they don't.

Have bodyguards outside the room to "discourage" certain professors from sitting in.

Say that you'd like to thank a few people. Pull out the White Pages. Start reading.

Perform your defense as a Greek tragedy, and kill yourself offstage when you're done.

"This defense has been sponsored by the fine people at (your favorite corporation)..."

"Which reminds me of a story - A Black guy, a Chinese guy, and a Jew walked into a bar..."

When a professor asks you a question, argue with your imaginary twin over the final answer.

Throw a masquerade defense, complete with bobbing for apples and pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey.

"You think this defense was bad? Let me read this list to show you what I COULD have done..."

Have bodyguards on your sides as you talk. The bigger, the better. Have a questioner thrown out "as an example."

Introduce the "Eyewitness Thesis Team". Near the end of your talk, cut to Jim with sports and Alison with the weather.

Invite your parents. Especially if they are fond of fawning over you. ("We always knew he was such an intelligent child".)

Have everyone bring wine glasses. When they clink the glasses with a spoon, you have to kiss your thesis. Or your advisor.

Rent a billboard on the highway proclaiming "Thanks for passing me Professors X, Y, and Z" - BEFORE your defense happens.

Put your overheads on a film strip. Designate a professor to be in charge of turning the strip when the tape recording beeps.

Half way through, break down. Go to your professor, curl up on his or her lap and call him or her "Mommy". Suck your thumb.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, as I dim the lights, please hold hands and concentrate so that we may channel the spirit of Lord Kelvin..."

Same as #88, but instead of a tape recorder, go around the room making a different person read the pre-written text for each picture.

Videotape it ahead of time, and get someone set it up to show. Come in the back and sit there. When your tape is done, ask for questions.

Circulate a vicious rumor that the Dead will be opening, making sure that it gets on the radio stations, and escape during all the commotion.

Play thesis drinking games. Drink for each overhead. Drink for each question. Chug for each awkward pause. This goes for the audience as well.

Have every person pick a CB handle. Enforce their usage. Talk in CB lingo. End every statement with "good buddy." End every question with "over."

Post signs: "Due to a computer error at the Registrar's Office, the original room is not available, and the defense has been relocated to (Made-up non-existent room number)"

Get a friend to ask the first question. Draw a blank-loaded gun and "shoot" him. Have him make a great scene of dying (fake blood helps). Turn to the stunned audience and ask "any other wise-ass remarks?"

Lock the department head and his secretary out of the defense room. And the coffee lounge, the department office, the copy room, and the mail room. Heck, lock them out of the building. And refuse to sell them stamps.

Date Received: Fri, 20 Aug 1993.

Include either (or both) of the following quotes (I may have some words wrong) on the first overhead slide:

"If a man does not keep step with his companions, perhaps he hears a different drummer." *Henry David Thoreau*

"Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds." *Albert Einstein*