

# ELA2890: Strategies for Academic Achievement

Spring 2016 - Tues & Thurs 3:30-4:45, New Cab 364

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## What We'll Be Learning

The goal of this course is to change how you approach learning. Many students do well in high school, but have trouble in college. One reason this may happen is that many students for whom high school is “easy” have never had to learn how to study or how to prepare for class. Other students find that they need help managing the competing demands of college life. This course is not a magical cure for your academic ails—it will require work and focus. However, the thought and time you put into your work for this course should help prepare you to do well in your other pursuits. This course will help you be more able to identify and pursue your goals by giving you the opportunity to learn about: 1) tools for learning and planning, 2) the research that explains why and how these tools can be effective, 3) strategies for analyzing texts, ideas, and data, and 4) adjusting your approach to learning, challenges, success, and failure.

Topics will include effective goal-setting, time management and prioritization, reading for learning, project management, critical thinking strategies, and how, generally, to better approach learning. In short, this class will be about learning how to learn.

To facilitate practice and familiarity with the tools discussed in this class, we will sometimes read journal articles or books chapters not directly related to study skills. These readings will be centered around the topic of “How Creativity Happens,” which has been chosen for its currency and because it is also—like study skills—a way of thinking and approaching problems, and can be thought of as a process or set of tools.

## How We'll Be Learning

### Books

**Required.** Please obtain these two books, either from the bookstore or online sources.

Dweck, Carol S. (2006.) *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.  
ISBN: 9780345472328.

Sellers, De, Carol W. Dochen, and Russ Hodges. (2015.) *Academic Transformation: The Road to College Success*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Boston, MA: Pearson. ISBN: 9780321885722. \*Note: You do NOT need the access code for the publisher's online materials. You only need the book.

**Optional Purchase**→ (We're only using 3 chapters of Make it Stick, below, so buy if you like, but I'll make pdfs available.)

Brown, Peter C., Henry L. Roediger III, and Mark A. McDaniel. (2014.) *Make it Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. ISBN: 9780674729018. (Only available in hardcover.)

**Collab:** A number of additional readings will also be made available only on Collab.

## How We'll Be Learning, continued

### Assignments

The skills we will learn about in this class require thought and practice if they are to be effective. To facilitate that, our general pattern will be as follows: **1)** Before class, you will complete a reading assignment closely related to what will be discussed or practiced in class, **2)** During class, I will lecture briefly to clarify or provide additional, related information and then you will work during class on an activity designed to help you think through key concepts and put them into practice, **3)** You will complete a project (usually outside of class, labeled Products 1, 2, and 3 in the grading section) that will bring a group of concepts together and help you to put them into practice for yourself. Your first major assignment (Product 1) will ask you to think about your priorities and to plan your time to align with those priorities. For the next project (Product 2), you will develop a careful plan of action for each of your classes this semester. For the last project (Product 3), you will work with a group to carry out a brief research project and present upon it. There will also be a midterm exam, so that we can put what we learn about exam preparation into practice, and an end-of-term assignment will require you to plan for the future.

### Responsibilities for Our Class

This class is a bit different from others in that it is specifically designed to help you be successful in your other classes and beyond. Thus, you should be especially attentive to practicing good habits of scholarship for this course, so that you can carry those skills with you into other courses and contexts.

**What You Can Expect of Me.** I will come to class ready to present material a way that I think is likely to help you learn it and put it to use. I will maintain regular office hours and will be available after class or by appointment. I will do my best to answer emails within 24 hours, except on weekends and holidays. I encourage you to speak with me if you are having trouble with assignments or have an ongoing issue that may affect your ability to be successful in this course and others.

**Preparation.** This means that you should come to class on time, with all assigned reading completed, and prepared with any questions you may have about that reading or other assignments.

**Communication.** If at any time during this course, you have questions about assignments or expectations, or if you have concerns about your ability to do well in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. This way, we can work together to keep you on track and make any arrangements necessary to help you succeed in this class and beyond.

**Punctuality.** If you need more time to complete an assignment, speak with me about it before the assignment is due. Be on time for class. This is part of being prepared to learn. Excessive tardiness will impact your final grade.

**Participation.** This class will be better if everyone participates. For you as an individual, active participation in any class leads to more learning, as it helps you to pay attention and makes it easier for you to ask for clarification when needed. Therefore, 10% of your final grade will depend upon your in-class participation.

**Attendance and Impact Upon Grade.** This class is designed to help you rethink your approach to your courses and workload, and attendance is an important part of this mindset. I encourage you to attend all class meetings of all of your courses. For this course, attendance is required and will be taken daily. As we all occasionally fall ill or have emergencies, you may miss class three times with no penalty. If you are absent more than three times, your grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter for each additional absence (B+ to B, for example). *Exceptions to absence policy:* If you have a severe illness, family emergency, hospitalization, or some other issue that requires extensive time away from class, notify me as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements. If you are an in-season student athlete or a member of a university-recognized student organization with events that require you to miss class, you are allowed the number of absences required to fulfill those obligations. Please do not be absent for additional class meetings.

## How Learning Will Be Assessed

Many assignments for the class will not be characterized by correct and incorrect answers. Such assignments will be graded in terms of the time, thought, and effort that you put into the task. For example, “yes” or “no” answers and slapped-together work indicate lack of care and effort, while insightful, well-considered responses indicate meaningful engagement with the task. That kind of engagement will serve you best, and will thus be encouraged by higher grades.

Course grades will be calculated according to the following formula:

- Participation 10%
  - In-Class Midterm Exam 10%
  - Pre-Class Online Reading Quizzes: 20% (counts the average of your highest 15 quiz grades)
  - Product #1: Planning for Your Priorities 15%
  - Product #2: Your Personal Study Strategy 15%
  - Product #3: The Group Research Project 20%
  - End of Term Assignment 10%
- (Excessive absences will impact your grade negatively. Please see “Responsibilities” section above for details.)

Letter grades will be assigned according to the following distribution:

A+ : 99-100%	A : 94-98.99%	A- : 90-93.99%
B+ : 87-89.99%	B : 83-86.99%	B- : 80-82.99%
C+ : 77-79.99%	C: 73-76.99%	C- : 70-72.99%
D+ : 67-69.99%	D : 63-69.99%	D- : 60-62.99%

Late work: Work turned in after the due date will be accepted up to 2 weeks late with a 30% penalty. Very late work will not be accepted.

## Resources (see Collab site’s e-syllabus for more)

**Disability Accommodations.** All students with special needs requiring accommodations should present the appropriate paperwork from the Student Disability Access Center (SDAC). It is the student’s responsibility to present this paperwork in a timely fashion and follow up with the instructor about the accommodations being offered. Accommodations for test-taking (e.g., extended time) should be arranged at least 3 days before an exam. The SDAC is located in the Department of Student Health and can be contacted at 434-243-5180.

**Counseling and Psychological Services.** If you are experiencing emotional or psychological distress, I encourage you to seek professional care through UVA's Counseling and Psychological Services. Care is confidential and is available to all students. Here is a link to their website and here is another that will take you to their list of online resources.

**Bias and Power-Based Violence Reporting and Related Resources.** I encourage all students to take a pro-active role in building a supportive and safe community for learning and growth here are the University of Virginia. The University's Not on Our Grounds program offers a number of events and a wealth of information related to sexual violence prevention and survivor support. I encourage you to utilize their resources and attend their events. If you or someone you know experiences an incident of bias or power-based violence, please consider reporting it through the Just Report It portal, and seek support through resources described at that site.

**Course Schedule**

Below are the topics and readings for each day. Assignments are listed by the day they are due (not the day they'll be assigned). It is possible that the schedule will need to change as the semester goes on. I don't anticipate major changes, and any that are necessary will be announced as far in advance as possible.

\*\*Dates marked with asterisks are most susceptible to change as they are dependent upon guest speakers.

Each day of the semester, and each topic that we will cover, relates to one of three areas representing our goals in this course. These are:

- 1) Self-Management
- 2) Study Skills
- 3) Analytical Skills

If you're curious about how I see the semester fitting together, see the number in the column called "Objective", which corresponds to 1, 2, and 3 above. Some overlap areas, so I've marked it with the one I see as fitting most closely.

Week	Date	Topic for Class	Reading due before class	Objective	Reading Quiz?	Assignments due
1	THUR 1/21	What and how will we be learning in this course?	none		No	
2	TUES 1/26	Who are you as a student?	Ch. 1, "The Road to Autonomous Learning" in <i>Academic Transformation</i>	1	Yes	
	THUR 1/28	What are the benefits of thinking about thinking?	Ch. 10, "Managing Stress and Anxiety" in <i>Academic Transformation</i>	1	Yes	
3	TUES 2/2	How do you approach challenges, successes, and failures?	Chs. 1 & 2, "The Mindsets" and "Inside the Mindsets" in <i>Mindset</i>	1	Yes	
	THUR 2/4	How can you change your approach to challenges, successes, and failures?	Chs. 7 & 8, "Parents, Teachers, and Coaches..." and "Changing Mindsets" in <i>Mindset</i>	1	Yes	
4	TUES 2/9	How can you make an effective plan to work toward a goal?	Ch. 7, "Establishing Direction in Your Life" in <i>Academic Transformation</i> Optional: Appendix on p. 221 may be helpful in thinking through Product 1	1	Yes	
	THUR 2/11	What are some key considerations and useful tools for managing your time?	Ch. 9, "Making Effective Choices" in <i>Academic Transformation</i>	1	Yes	
5	TUES 2/16	What does it mean to plan for your priorities?	On Collab: "Habit 3: Put First Things First" from Covey's <i>7 Habits of Highly Effective People</i>	1	Yes	
	THUR 2/18	How can you take class notes that will help you learn?	Ch. 3, "Learning in Class" in <i>Academic Transformation</i>	2	Yes	

Week	Date	Topic for Class	Reading due before class	Objective	Reading Quiz?	Assignments due
6	TUES 2/23	How can you take notes from reading to help yourself learn?	Ch. 4, "Learning Outside Class" in <i>Academic Transformation</i>	2	Yes	Due on Collab by 11:55pm: Product 1
	THUR 2/25	Introduction to memory and paying attention	Ch. 5, "The Brain, the Mind, and Academics" in <i>Academic Transformation</i>	2	Yes	
7	TUES 3/1	What does effective studying look like?	Chs. 1 & 2, "Learning is Misunderstood" and "To Learn, Retrieve" in <i>Make it Stick</i>	2	Yes	
	THUR 3/3	What are the best ways to prepare for exams, and what strategies can help during exams?	Ch. 3, "Mix Up Your Practice" in <i>Make it Stick</i> and Ch. 6, "Preparing for Performance" in <i>Academic Transformation</i>	2	Yes	
Week of 3/6: Spring Break, No classes						
8	TUES 3/15	Midterm Review and Check-In	No new reading	2	No	
	THUR 3/17	<b>In-Class Midterm</b> ←		2	No	
9	TUES 3/22	This is all lovely, but how can I get myself to actually do some of the things we've talked about?	On Collab: Chs. 2 & 3, "The Craving Brain" and "The Golden Rule of Habit Change" from <i>The Power of Habit</i>	1	Yes	Due on Collab by 11:55pm: Product 2
	THUR 3/24	Nobody said it'd be easy.	Ch. 8, "Willpower" in <i>Academic Transformation</i> and Ch. 3, "The Truth About Ability and Accomplishment" in <i>Mindset</i>	1	Yes	
10	TUES 3/29	Visit from the Career Center- Tour of services and resume workshop	No reading, but make a myUCC account and peruse site before our visit	1	No	Bring a draft of your resume to class.
	THUR 3/31	Visit from the Career Center- Using LinkedIn for Good.	Ch. 12, "Individuality" in <i>Academic Transformation</i>	1	Yes	
11	TUES 4/5	How do you analyze an argument?	On Collab: "Elements of Reasoning" from <i>Learning to Think Things Through</i>	3	Yes	
	THUR 4/7	How do you evaluate an argument?	On Collab: "Standards of Critical Thinking" from <i>Learning to Think Things Through</i>	3	Yes	

Week	Date	Topic for Class	Reading due before class	Objective	Reading Quiz?	Assignments due
12	TUES 4/12	Critical consumption of research reportage	On Collab: selections from <i>Stat-Spotting</i> by J. Best.	3	Yes	
	THUR 4/14	Library Introduction and Research Day	On Collab: "Finding Useful Sources" from <i>Student's Guide to Writing College Papers</i>	3	Yes	
13	TUES 4/19	Presentation How-To and In-Class Project Work Day	On Collab: Ch. 4 "Writing the Spoken Word" from <i>Tongue-Tied America</i> and review pp. 73-74 (Group Projects) in <i>Academic Transformation</i>	3	Yes	
	THUR 4/21	In-Class Project Work Day	None	3	No	
14	TUES 4/26	Presentation Peer Critique	None	3	No	
	THUR 4/28	Presentations	None	3	No	
15	TUES 5/3	Presentations	None	3	No	Due on Collab by 11:55pm: Product 3
End of the semester assignment due date: MON 5/9 , Final Assignment is due on Collab at 11:55pm						