

Welcome to the new semester.

TLDR VERSION:

1. Show empathy with teacher and others.
2. Be patient with yourself.
3. Be patient regarding what you are learning. (It might be the first time you are learning this content)
4. Demonstrate kindness to yourself and your classmates, perhaps your teacher, too. We are all stressed out.
5. Adopting an optimistic realist mindset is superior to being excessively positive, excessively negative, or having a warped sense of one's abilities in writing.
6. Consult with me instead of ghosting or giving up.
7. Student A versus Student B: Student A did better because he used all the resources on campus, made sure the teacher know how he learned well, made sure he touched base with the teacher, and asked for help.
8. Top 5 ways to do well in my class.

Many of you might be feeling a sense of anxiety about more than just this class, certainly, given the upheaval of our entire world since March 2020 due to a global pandemic. Alternatively, just because the pandemic is over, just weeks before the semester began, we saw how climate change as well as corporatization of the island led to the disaster in Lahaina, so there will always be some measure of anxiety about the future. Some of you are struggling with just being back in a F2F context, especially if you have social anxiety (like I do).

Others of you might be feeling a strong sense of **imposter syndrome**, often characterized by covert or overt feelings that you might not belong in the class due to level differences, first language insecurities, comprehension issues, technological demands, or other reasons, like needing to prioritize family or work.

Thus, if you are reading this, I need you to do me a favor. Well, several, actually.

FAVOR #1: Empathy with your teacher. I need you to realize that as your teacher, I also have anxiety about a great many things: COVID 19, its impact on my parents who live in a nursing home, teaching this course, teaching this course in an online fashion. Truth be told, I'm not completely sold on the idea that online formats can ever be a good replacement for face-to-face classes ... in terms of all those great things like meeting new people, listening to their opinions in person, simply just getting to know a person as a person, etc. Also, online grading takes longer. I might not be able to, nor expect myself to turn around essays in just 1-2 days, especially with double-digits of students. Also, I also have anxiety issues that I struggle with, too, and that I try to handle with yoga and meditation. Sometimes students think their teachers

know everything or poop out knowledge and that everything comes easy to us...but in my case, I don't know everything and struggle with many different things in my life...still.

FAVOR #2: Patience with yourself. Any online class has a learning curve. In this class, the learning curve is navigating the main website and learning how to use **GoogleClassroom**. Still, GoogleClassroom is something that you can handle if you give it a shot, watch some of the user videos, or, if push comes to shove, show me where your confusion points are on Zoom by sharing your screen. Still, if you decide to drop out due to the technological learning curve, I often ask, "How patient are you being with yourself?"

FAVOR #3: Patience with the learned content. ENG 100 is a very idealistic course. I do not think it's realistic or possible to teach every dimension of writing strong essays in just 6 to 15 weeks--that takes decades. Still, even if you are learning new, seemingly difficult concepts, you have to be patient with those concepts, since my class scaffolds upon those concepts like a ladder. Each smaller concept builds into a concept that we need for each larger essay. If you struggle with those concepts, you really might need to schedule a student -teacher conference with me as much as possible.

FAVOR #4: Kindness to your classmates. Nationally, notice how social media and the news makes it seem like the news discourse shows a land that is economically and politically divided, a land where Democrats and Republicans despise each other. In honesty, however, I do not think national trends or media sensationalism often gets things correct about Hawai'i or the aloha that Hawai'i's people have developed over many millenia. I hope you will do your utmost to accept that your political/religious/personal opinions are your own but still accept that other people's opinions or ways they conduct their lives are equally valid and worth hearing out without vitriol.

LAST FAVOR #5: Consult instead of ghosting. Some students ghost the class when the content gets too difficult, when their interest wanes, or when they do not complete the work, feel ashamed, or fall into any number of potential cycles: gaming as addiction or distraction, social media as addiction or distraction, socializing as distraction, or work/life balance struggles. Some students legitimately just bail when they don't have a good Internet connection, computer, or simply put, when they don't make the time to do the work. Some students do not show up even on DAY ONE.

Therefore, realistically speaking, sometimes the class shrinks but the student who has ghosted often makes no effort to ask for help, pose questions, or dig themselves out of the holes of procrastination or poor time management. Sometimes they think that the teacher is going to judge them if they disclose certain private struggles like family issues, relationship woes, illness, etc. Still,

- A. Check your @hawaii.edu email at least once a week. I often send end-of-week concept reviews to this email.
- B. If you feel like you are about to ghost, have the courage to text me or email me. From my part, it is good to openly discuss how to catch up on assignments or how to apply better study habits than to just ghost and end up with a failing grade.
- C. Use tutor.com or Study Hub for other outside support if you are still feeling the college 'scared to talk to teacher' stress.
- D. Reach out to a counselor if the issues you need to discuss are too private / have little to do with my course, need something that a counselor could better handle. (Since my degree is in Feminist Body Analyses of Shakespeare, and not counseling, I find it much wiser that you consult with my colleagues in counseling on family-relationship-mental health struggles).

Story. I had two students, Student A and Student B. Student A, on his own volition, confessed very early on that he learned in a different method and that he needed more reading support. He did not confess this so that I would perceive him in a context of him needing more pity or empathy, but simply to suggest and express how to craft a better learning plan, particularly reading support plan, for his semester.

Student B came to the class and did very little of the work, but still showed remarkable candor and smiled a lot. Then, in week 14 out of 15, he admitted that he struggled with most of the writing assignments because he really had a difficult time reading assignment sheets.

Student A used all the resources available to him on the campus: mentoring, counseling, scheduling, etc.

Student B just came to campus and ate lunch.

Student A is showing agency, the ability to exercise their own power over their destiny. Rather than feeling badly about their previous learning contexts, student A is showing growth mindset and doing everything in his control to better how he learns.

Student B might not be showing fear at all, since he smiled quite a bit, but not doing the work and then confessing in the last week of school that he was struggling potentially showcases his fear of openly discussing his learning needs with his teacher.

Still, there is also a student C, who ghosted after week 2, and student D, who had to pull two extra shifts, but students like C and D tend to do really poorly in the class particularly if they don't communicate with the instructor.

TOP FIVE HINTS FOR YOU TO DO WELL IN MY CLASS, in the spirit of full disclosure.

1. You should make good use of my revise any major paper 2 times policy. You should not focus on grammar revisions but on content revisions, since if you only fix your grammar, I will only give you a stingy 1-3 points boost. If I ask you to work on paragraphing, then work on paragraphing and your grade will increase.
2. Quite often, students **revise too quickly** without doing any metacognition on what they need to revise or why. Metacognition means thinking about thinking. Some students read my comments and then rapidly fix the grammar as described in HINT #1, but they never really comprehend that their main issue with writing might have nothing to do with grammar. You should take the time to read the comments, read the Strengths and Improvements sections carefully, and then create a gameplan to attack your revision. **If you craft a one page reflection on your essay and how to revise it, you receive extra-credit. Please note. A lot of times students only fixate on the weaknesses of an essay and never take pride in the essay's strengths.**
3. You really might want to get over your fear of college and college teachers as quickly as possible to do well in this class:
 - a. Fear that the teacher knows more than you.
 - b. Fear that the teacher is going to scold you.
 - c. Fear that the teacher is out to get you.
 - d. Fear that the teacher is like an alien being who didn't struggle at all in school.
 - e. Fear of asking for help.

Out of all of these fears, I think "Fear of asking for help" is the biggest obstacle in higher education, since most of us are adults and adults dislike appearing weak or childish in the context of asking 'so-called stupid questions.' And it took me a long time when I was a student to realize that my teachers were just as human and prone to mistakes and shame/fear/fear of failing just as much as I was.

4. This semester is a pivotal time to be really asking yourself A) Who am I? B) Where am I headed? And C) Do I even need college to get there? **COVID 19 makes me think that in some ways, there are many pathways to knowledge, success, money, or different ways we gage 'proficiency.'** Certainly, having the degree helps you to achieve more of those pathways, but sometimes, especially if your priorities are elsewhere, it might be the most important decision of your college career to question if you want to invest 4-7 more years on this life path. In that board game, the Game of Life, not everyone needs to go to college to be 'successful.'
5. Finally, I have to go with my motto on this one. My motto is, "See with tiger eyes, but walk with cow hooves," attributed to Tokugawa Ieyasu. Since I inherently believe that it is actually impossible to learn everything you need to learn about Basic Composition in only twice a week classes, then it stands to reason that your learning should be patient and driven by determination and grit, not expedience and easiness.

I can't stand that marketing slogan, "Get In, Get Out, Get Ahead"; I despise it. It makes students think that their education is a transaction; "If I pay tuition, then the college owes me an "A."

Life is a struggle, but the struggle is worth it. **Nothing in this world that has implicit value comes so easily unless you were born wealthy; therefore, that slogan should be "Get In, Bust Ass to Get Out, Bust Ass to Get Ahead, then Reap the Rewards,"** but anyone who tells you that it's easy to get in, get out, get ahead is probably trying to grift you or runs a **"for profit" college, and most of those colleges have either gone bankrupt or committed fraud against its students.** And sadly, sometimes students think an online education or quick hybrid course is exactly about dumping in sloppy work, cutting and pasting from ChatGPT, receiving back sloppy comments, and getting a degree out of it.

For many classes, maybe that's how it works, but please know, in mine, that's weak sauce.

Mr. K