

Drumroll Please

Written by Jes-c Brandt

Notes from the classroom

I know as well as anyone that the first few days of a new school year are all about smoothing things out, getting the hang of a new routine. Personally, I'm often found searching for a new classroom at the last minute or printing a syllabus I forgot was required. Luckily, most professors are rather forgiving those first couple of days.

That being said, you would think in turn we students would cut the professors a little slack. Nope. We have a limited amount of time to get out of a class before we're stuck there for the long haul, so during those first few days we're as judgmental as they come.

Something amazing happens, however, when your schedule is set and you're not worrying about judging professors: you realize how absurd the classroom can be.

While students are adjusting to a new class, so are the professors. The usually calm, cool and collected intellects can be remarkably taken by surprise with the arrival of new students.

The greatest lesson plan can fall flat depending on the make-up of the class. A class full of talkers won't let the professor get a word in edgewise. The silent bunch responds to nothing, ending the class 20 minutes ahead of schedule.

In my most recent new semester, I was delighted by the number of excellent quotes coming from the classroom during that first week. From the mouths of men and women used to having everything totally under control come words no one could have predicted.

Take my calculus instructor, for example. When addressing a room full of anxious freshmen, she told us that you give a function a number and it "barfs" out an answer to you. Based on the chuckles, she judged the class to be appreciative of her approach to calculus and continued to describe terms as "nasty" and "funky" and recommended we look up delta epsilon proofs on You Tube.

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A particular professor of Shakespeare, on the other hand, continues to provide laughs simply by his technological challenges. One day he opened class with a seemingly profound statement that many problems can happen with technology. Students were poised, pencils in hand, to take notes about his perspective on modern society, when he moaned that he was afraid everything would be going wrong today. Defying his expectations, the projector worked, and he let out an enthusiastic “Yay!”

It always seems that students learn much about their professors’ personal lives by taking their classes.

In my psychology of food and eating disorders class, we learned straight away not to get in the professor’s way if he’s headed to lunch. “If I miss a meal, I turn into the Antichrist.”

Another psychology professor is constantly offering parenting advice via anecdotes about his twins. Apparently children will repeat anything, so it’s a good idea to watch what you say in their presence.

One film professor greeted new students by letting them know that she’s had people just foaming at the mouth in class. Later, in response to hearing only a handful of people have seen any Charlie Chaplin movies, she said in a frightening deadpan monotone, “I see your education has failed you.”

Whether they’re learning popular new concepts, such as the “fist bump,” or testing the waters to see whether their Lord of the Rings references will be well received, professors are often interesting people to observe.

I leave you today with some nuggets of knowledge I’ve gleaned from my college education, taken right from the mouths of my professors.

“There’s a special kind of legal argument called a lie.”

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“It’s considered to be quite rude to scope people out in the men’s room.”

“When we divide by zero, things blow up, and we have problems.”

Remember these lessons, and you’ll be set for life.