

# **“Registration Frustration”**

*by Professor Joe Martin*

School is in, so let the torture begin! I apologize for that, but as a professor, it's my job to scare students.

Without trying to make you more stressed than you probably are, you should know that your first semester in college (if you're a freshman) is the most important of your academic career.

Most of your friends will probably tell you otherwise, because the first semester in college is usually the most exciting as well. But note in the prior paragraph that I said the first semester is the most important of your "academic" career.

You have plenty of time to enjoy yourself after this first semester, but I would suggest that you get down to business by doing the following (as it pertains to balancing your class schedule):

1. Try to take between 12 - 15 semester credit hours (that's four to five classes). Since my college was on the semester-hour system, I don't know the quarter equivalent in hours (but don't take more than five courses).
2. If possible, register early, so you can schedule all of your classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays or either on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (my personal preference because the classes are shorter). If all T & R or M, W, & F courses are not possible, try to limit the extra day in between to one class only. For example, take four classes on T & R and one on M, W, & F (or vice versa).
3. Schedule your classes as early in the day as possible (preferably ending by 1 p.m.). This will give you more time to study and/or work part-time, if necessary.
4. Take early morning (i.e., 8 a.m.) courses if available. Your friends will tell you not to take 8 a.m. (or earlier) courses. But in your first year in college, I would recommend you do it, because you're still accustomed to waking up early. You have plenty of time to get lazy, just don't start now. In addition, these courses are also less crowded (because most students won't sign up for them). Here's a guaranteed rule for college success: observe what most students are doing on campus, and do the total opposite. Most students don't even know why they do what they do, they're just following the crowd anyway.
5. Go ahead and knock out your English 101 and College Algebra courses (unless you were in advance math when you graduated from high school -- otherwise take a math course that's appropriate to your skill level). This gives you approximately 6 - 9 hours left to work with (you're half way home).
6. Take two of your General Education (core requirement) courses that you will find most interesting, considering your personality type and special interests. Note: avoid any courses that will require you do a lot of outside writing.

General-Ed courses are usually boring (yes, I'm admitting it -- but I was a student once), but pick two courses that you can easily stay motivated in.

Now this should give you 12 semester credit hours. You could stop here and you'd be done for your first term. However, if you would like to add an additional course to equal 15 credits, continue to Step #7.

7. Select one tough (or boring) General Education course that doesn't require a lot of outside writing assignments.

The reason I keep mentioning the writing thing is because you don't know how much writing will be required in your English 101 class. Trust me, you'll find out on the first day of class.

Back to Step #7. Take a tough or boring General-Ed requirement course now, so you'll have one less to take in the future. So, why not take all of your tough or boring courses all in one term? Because that would be academic suicide. School is already boring enough without sending yourself on a kamikaze mission. As with anything in college, moderation is good. One tough/boring course should suffice for now.

The reason why this first semester is so important to your academic career is because it can set the tone for the rest of your four years (or so) in college. Any student will tell you that it's easier to maintain a high GPA than it is to raise a low one.

Here is an outline of my first semester college schedule back in 19%\$:

- English 101
- College Algebra
- World Civilization (boring)
- BASIC Programming (elective - my interest)
- Humanities - Art (my interest)

Come out of the blocks riding the wave, instead of fighting it. My first semester in college (out of pure desperation), I earned a 4.0 GPA using the same formula I just shared with you (I graduated with a "C" average in high school). After 3 1/2 years in college (I graduated early), I ended up graduating with a 3.8 GPA in public relations.

Ironically, I never received a 4.0 in any other semester after that first semester (I can't explain it). But I tell you, it was much easier keeping it (my GPA) than trying to build it.

I hope this information helps, and I hope you go on to enjoy your college years without having to worry about your grades. Keep in touch and let me know how it's going. Take care and God bless.

Living Purposefully -- Prof. Joe Martin

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