

EDUC-X150: Becoming the Best Student

Fall 2021, 1st 8 Weeks
Section 10646

Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:15 p.m. - 4:30pm

Place: Lindley Hall (LH), Room 135

Instructor: Aaron Murphy, M.Mus (aarmurph@iu.edu)

Extra help: Appointments welcomed - due to my tight schedule, meetings will likely be virtual. We can chat about any needs you may have - it's all welcome!

What is this class about?

Welcome to X150! You are invited to participate in a process of self-transformation. If you'd like to join us, we'll help you teach yourself how to:

- **Apply** the science of powerful learning to all of your classes and other important things worth knowing.
- **Set your own course** for acquiring new skills in any context.
- **Learn more** quickly, deeply, and durably.
- **Tackle** the most daunting learning situations with confidence and facility.
- **Transform** your experience of learning and change the way it actually *feels* - to recapture (or find in it for the first time) fascination, magic, mystery, joy, and possibility.

How will this help me *right now*?

If you embrace the opportunities we've created for you, you will be able to use this course to significantly improve your grades, learning, and overall educational experience as a college student! Specifically, you will learn how to:

- Motivate yourself, develop new habits, and change what isn't working.
- Organize your time, beat procrastination, and set strategic goals.
- Use the relationship between thinking, feeling, and doing to improve your learning and your life.
- Get more out of your studying, note-taking, and reading for classes.
- Take your education to the next level by making connections between learning in the college context and in life.

What will I need for class?

1. You will not be asked to purchase a text for this course. Everything we read, watch, or listen to will be available through Canvas.

2. Please bring the following every day:

- A daily planner – either in hard copy or an app. You choose!
- Something to take notes on and something to write with.
- A folder where you can stow my helpful handouts.

***Note: IU is following recommended public health guidance in response to the pandemic. In recognition of all IU community members owe to each other, we expect every member of the IU community will adhere to all current policies and practices. For current information on that guidance see <https://covid.iu.edu>**

If I get a good grade, that means I'm learning, right?

Research shows [good grades and powerful learning do not necessarily go together!](#) This means it may be possible to earn good grades in a class by simply following instructions and formulas without really understanding how they work or why they matter. But if nothing about your thinking changed or really improved, despite receiving a good grade, can we really call that “learning”?

Conversely, you can learn an enormous amount from an assignment on which you received a lower grade. Growth happens through reflection on what needs improvement, part of developing a “[growth mindset](#).” We’ll be talking a lot about that!

So your grades really have nothing to say about your “intelligence” (whatever that means – something we’ll also be discussing), your potential, or your limits. They are simply a snapshot of where you are at a particular moment in time with respect to some set of ideas, skills, and problems. Our job is to help you figure out where you are. Yours is to make sure the work you do in this class and all others leads to real learning!

Accordingly, to encourage our focus on learning rather than grades, assignments are graded as either:

- *Pass (full credit)*
- *Not Yet (can be redone for full credit)*
- *Not Submitted (0 points)*

Here's the breakdown for this class:

100 points

Assignment	Points	%
Class engagement (2 pts./day * 16 days)	32	32%
Learning opportunities (7 @ 4 pts. each)	28	28%
Individual conference	10	10%
Final project: "Making a change"	30	30%

Why should I come to class every day?

You are a valued member of our classroom community! Our class meetings are a chance for you to be heard and to exchange ideas with others. As research indicates, [one of the best ways to learn is together, with others, through face-to-face interaction](#). So when you're not there, not only do you miss out on all of this, but so do your classmates!

Also, research finds that [class attendance is the single best predictor of both class grades and overall GPA](#). So daily attendance in all of your classes is one of the most important decisions you can make about your academic success!

What if I miss class?

Sometimes life happens (you get sick, an emergency situation comes up, etc.) and you may have to miss a class. We're here for you! Here's what I would do in that situation:

- **Always reach out** to me!
 - Ahead of time, if possible, but at least within 24 hours (good general rule of thumb for all classes, not just this one).
- **Let me know** what's going on
 - We'll talk about making arrangements for alternative modes of engagement to keep your learning going and make up **Class engagement** points for that day. My focus will not be on judging *why* you missed, but rather how best to help you and move forward.
 - *If you have a positive COVID-19 test, have COVID-like symptoms, or have been instructed to quarantine you should not attend class. Contact me ASAP so we can determine a path to continue your progress in the class during these absences. If you or a close contact are experiencing symptoms and you're not sure what they mean or what you should do, [start here](#).*
- **You may miss 1 class** without having to worry about any lost points, etc.
 - This course is only 8 weeks and there are many important topics to delve into. I would save this for when you need it!
- **If you miss more than 1 class and don't contact me early**

- o I will worry about you and we'll have missed our chance to come up with an alternative mode of engagement that will help you and that makes sense with what we're learning at that time. Your grade for **Class engagement** will drop 2 points for that day (this can add up quickly)!
- **What it means to "be in class"**
 - o To encourage you to be fully present and get the most out of our time together (more on that below), if you come to class significantly late, without what you need for the day, and/or without fully engaging in what we are doing, you have chosen to absent yourself.
- **If you are celebrating a religious holiday**
 - o I enthusiastically embrace making arrangements for that! **Students missing class for a religious observance can find the officially approved accommodation form by going to the [webpage for religious accommodations](#). The form must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the anticipated absence.**

How can I get the most out of my class time?

We've already seen how important class attendance is for your learning and your grades. But, besides simply being there physically, *how* you choose to interact with the class makes a big difference in what you – and your peers – get out of it! To help you develop these skills that will lead to success in all your classes, you will have the opportunity every day to earn a **Class engagement** grade (**32 pts., 2 pts./day * 16 days**). Here's what will help:

Throw yourself into it for the time we are together. That doesn't mean you have to suddenly become an extrovert! There are many ways to engage, including listening carefully, fully participating in activities, joining discussions, asking thoughtful questions, and sharing examples and experiences. This will help you both make the class relevant to your life and will say to your instructor and your peers "I respect you and value you and your time."

This will also be an opportunity to practice focus and concentration by leaving smartphones, tablets, and laptops aside unless I request that we use them. [Research shows that dividing your attention between the class and an electronic device has a significant and negative impact on exam performance and, in particular, long-term recall.](#) This means that the idea that you can "multitask," at least with any activity related to new learning, is a myth. Additionally, in thinking about our classroom as a community, it is important to consider this: [It turns out that the use of electronic devices in class can also negatively impact the learning of those around you.](#)

[One more thing, while we're on the subject - when it comes to taking notes, studies show our brains may remember more and process the material more deeply if we handwrite it!](#)

How can I get the most out of the work I submit?

You might think of assignments for this class like workouts for a sport or practice on a musical instrument – homework is an important part of your training.

If you think of this as “busywork” – like just another item on your to-do list – it may not be much more than that for you. How can you make it mean more than this?

By making a commitment to treating each assignment as an opportunity to grow, develop new skills and abilities, and take you somewhere you haven’t been! One way to do this is to give them the space for substantive “thinking time” so that it’s not just about the “doing” part of what is asked. Just like with class time, what you get out of them lies in the *way* you navigate them.

This is why we call them **Learning opportunities (7 @ 4 pts. each)**. Each one will be different – some will ask you to respond to something we’ve read, watched, or listened to in order to grow and expand your mind, others might ask you to immediately apply what we’re learning to your other classes and student life in some way. We’ll talk about guidelines for each one along the way. Regardless, my commitment to you is that I will strive to make our work real, relevant, and applicable to existing work for all of your other classes and, more broadly, your whole life as a curious learner!

What if I turn my work in late?

It is important to complete all work on time because we’ll build upon it in the class in which it is due. This will help us drive our collective thinking and activity forward. If you haven’t done it, you’ll be missing out on all of that! It’s also important for me, in modeling the kinds of habits I am asking of you, to collect all work at the same time so I can be timely with my feedback. Work is expected on time.

But here’s the most important thing to remember: Communication is key! If something has happened that may interfere with your ability to meet a deadline, it is important to communicate with me at least 24 hours before the missed deadline when possible. Work that is submitted after the deadline will not be counted without proper forewarning or communication with me. Keep in mind, it is better to submit a version of the assignment and receive a *Not Yet* grade than it is to completely miss an assignment!

How will you get to know me?

Your **Individual conference (10 pts.)** gives me a chance to start to get to know you as an individual person and as a learner, and to talk privately about your particular needs and goals for this class. These meetings will be ~10-15 min. and we’ll do them outside of class during the first few weeks of the term.

What is all of this leading up to?

The **Final project**, called “**Making a change**” (30 pts.) gives you a chance to demonstrate that you have learned something of personal value to you in this course.

One of the most meaningful ways we can talk about what learning actually means is as *change*. And perhaps one of the most significant changes one could experience is going from a moment where you could not do something to one where you could.

What would it feel like if you could do something that seems impossible to you? Or really grasp something that you have always struggled with in the past? Or start down a path exploring something you find both exciting and daunting? Here’s your chance to think big and be bold!

Your choice might come from any one of the following areas for growth:

- A particularly challenging class
- Your overall college experience
- Outside of the classroom – learning to expand your mind or abilities as a human or otherwise improve your life – and perhaps the lives of those around you

There are 4 parts to this project:

1. Come up with an idea (4 pts.) – due in Week 2

- Propose what you want to work on, why you chose that, and how it is an example of significant change for you.
- How will you know you’ve achieved this, or at least made important progress? Spell out your SMART goals.

2. Three progress reports (6 pts. = 2 pts. each * 3) - due in Weeks 3, 4, and 5

- Three times throughout the semester you will fill out a progress report form to honestly assess your progress, contemplate what changes may need to happen, and plan the next week’s actions. These will be open discussions so that we can support one another and give feedback. Our best help in achieving a new goal is assessment and support.

3. The Change Process (10 pts.) – due in Week 6

- Describe how you broke your goal down into smaller, more manageable tasks. Document your change process with some evidence – videos, screen shots, charts, documents, whatever else might make sense, depending upon your particular choice. I’ll let you know what else you might need to really push forward to your goal and what further evidence you might need to collect to really demonstrate this.

4. Sharing Your Change (10 pts.) – due in Week 8

- On our final day of class, we'll each share our projects, supporting evidence, and celebrate what we've accomplished!
- The way you share this is up to you – it need not be a formal presentation, and I encourage you to be creative and explore a fun, engaging way to communicate what you've learned!

What's the plan?

Subject to change, with sufficient notice, based on student interests and needs. Canvas is always the most up-to-date place to find your homework and our class plans.

Week 1. Allons-y!

Date	Class Topic & Activities	Due
8/23	Goal: Build a community/About the class	N/A
8/25	Goal: Being present for your own "becoming"	LO1: "This Is Water" , Academic Autobiography, <i>Zen and the Art...</i> ICs: Select an Individual Conference time

Week 2. Growing Pains

Date	Class Topic & Activities	Due
8/30	Goal: Goal setting and Self-understanding	LO2: SMART Goals
9/1	Goal: What does it mean to be intelligent?	MaC 1: Coming up with an idea

Week 3. Getting sh... stuff done

Date	Class Topic & Activities	Due
9/6	<i>No class - Labor Day</i>	N/A
9/8	Goal: Tackling procrastination (or "GGG, GAG!"), Time management	LO3: 168 Hours MaC 2: Progress Report 1

Week 4. Jazzercise for your Memory

Date	Class Topic & Activities	Due
9/13	Goal: Experience learning as more than remembering	LO4: "The Marvel Symphonic Universe"

9/15	Goal: Experience learning as a series of connections, and my favorite class activity!	MaC 3: Progress Report 2
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Week 5. Osmosis isn't your friend

Date	Class Topic & Activities	Due
9/20	Goal: Experience learning as making meaning, Confirmation bias	L05: Critical Objectivity
9/22	Goal: Rethinking reading, Judging a book by its cover...?	MaC 4: Progress Report 3

Week 6. Live in 3, 2, 1...

Date	Class Topic & Activities	Due
9/27	Goal: Making and defending arguments, essay questions on tests	L06: "Back Porch Bickerin"
9/29	Goal: Test taking as performance, how to deal with those "deer in headlights" moments	MaC 5: The Change Process

Week 7. An oil change for the brain

Date	Class Topic & Activities	Due
10/4	Goal: Course evaluations, "You good?"	L07: Stress Management
10/6	Goal: Out of darkness and into joy	

Week 8. The home stretch

Date	Class Topic & Activities	Due
10/11	Goal: Taking stock, MaC Round Table	Work on your project
10/13	<i>Last class (also my birthday)!</i> Goal: Go out with a call to action! 1. Sharing our Make a Change stories	MaC 6: Sharing your MaC

What's the best way to keep on top of things and seek help when I need it?

This goes for EDUC-X150 and all of your classes...

- Check your IU e-mail and Canvas daily for important announcements. In Canvas, it might be best to set your Notifications to “Notify immediately” for everything if you can keep all of that organized on the receiving end.
- Talk to me or email me at any point about your ideas, questions, things you’re really excited about, or concerns that arise!
- When communicating by e-mail, it’s a good idea to observe [professional e-mail etiquette](#). After sending, I would allow at least up to 24 hours for a response (though, in this class, I will try and respond sooner when I can – typically during the “business hours” of 9-5).

And here’s more...

You are not just a brain on a stick! You are a whole person. As we will discuss, managing your overall well-being is a critical part of making sure that, when you are trying to learn, you aren’t “swimming upriver.” This includes (among other things) attending to your:

- Social connections
- Stress level & mental health
- Nutrition, exercise, & sleep

Here’s a brief list of where to go for what kind of help on our campus. I will put more details about these services on Canvas. My door is always open, too, for us to talk privately in more detail about any situation you want to share and what services might be most useful!

- [Overview](#) of all services
- [Academic skills](#) you can apply to all your classes
- [Tutoring](#) for a difficult course
- [Math](#) – videos, support classes, other
- [Writing](#) – papers, speeches, etc.
- Understanding [academic integrity](#) & [avoiding plagiarism](#) (here’s a [self-test!](#))
- [Disability](#) accommodations
- [CAPS](#) & the [CHG](#) for stress, counseling, support groups
- [Career](#) exploration
- [Food](#) & [Finances](#)
- [Tech issues](#) & [free software](#) for students
- [Sexual assault, harassment, & relationship violence](#)
- [Anything else](#) – including academic or administrative problems, financial difficulties
- Make friends, find support, and get involved at the [Culture Centers!](#):
 - [African American Arts Institute](#)
 - [Asian Culture Center](#)
 - [First Nations Educational and Cultural Center](#)
 - [LGBTQ+ Culture Center](#)
 - [La Casa/Latino Cultural Center](#)

- o [Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center](#)
- Join a [student organization and volunteer](#)

Biased-based incidents

- Bias-based incident reports can be made by students, faculty and staff. Any act of discrimination or harassment based on race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability can be reported through any of the options: 1) email biasincident@indiana.edu or incident@indiana.edu; 2) call the Dean of Students Office at (812) 855-8188; or 3) use the [IU mobile app](#). Reports can be made anonymously.

Sexual misconduct

- As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to create a positive learning environment for all students. IU policy prohibits sexual misconduct in any form, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, sexual exploitation, and dating and domestic violence. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or know someone who has, the University can help. If you are seeking help and would like to speak to someone confidentially, you can make an appointment with the IU Sexual Assault Crisis Services at (812) 855-5711, or contact a Confidential Victim Advocate at (812) 856-2469 or cva@indiana.edu.
- It is also important that you know that University policy requires me to share certain information brought to my attention about potential sexual misconduct, with the campus Deputy Sexual Misconduct & Title IX Coordinator or the University Sexual Misconduct & Title IX Coordinator. In that event, those individuals will work to ensure that appropriate measures are taken and resources are made available. Protecting student privacy is of utmost concern, and information will only be shared with those that need to know to ensure the University can respond and assist. I encourage you to visit <http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/index.html> to learn more.