

Academic Policies and Guidelines -- B. Gerstman

Commitment: Learning requires self-responsibility and a significant investment of your time. Consider “The Law of the Farm” (Covey, 1994):

One of the best ways to understand how extrinsic realities govern is to consider the Law of the Farm. In agriculture, we can easily see and agree that natural laws and principles govern the work and determine the harvest. But in social and corporate cultures, we somehow think we can dismiss natural processes, cheat the system, and still win the day. And there's a great deal of evidence that seems to support that belief.

For example, did you ever "cram" in school -- goof off during the semester, then spend all night before the big test trying to cram a semester's worth of learning into your head?

Stephen: I'm ashamed to admit it, but I crammed my way through undergraduate school, thinking I was really clever. I learned to psych out the system, to figure out what the teacher wanted. "How does she grade? Mostly on lectures? Great! I don't have to worry about reading the textbook. What about this other class? We have to read the book? Okay, where are the Cliff Notes so I can get a quick summary instead? I wanted the grade, but I didn't want it to crimp my lifestyle. . . . Then I got into graduate work, a different league altogether. I spent my first three months trying to cram to make up for four years of undergraduate cramming, and I wound up in the hospital with ulcerated colitis. I was trying to force the natural processes, and I found out that, long term, you simply can't do it. I spent years trying to compensate for the foolishness of getting myself into a value system that was not tied to principles at all."

Can you imagine "cramming" on the farm? Can you imagine forgetting to plant in the spring, flaking out all summer, and hitting it hard in the fall--ripping the soil up, throwing in the seeds, watering, cultivating--and expecting to get a bountiful harvest overnight?

Cramming doesn't work in a natural system. That's the fundamental difference between a social and natural system. A social system is based on values; a natural system is based on principles. In the short term, cramming may appear to work in a social system. You can go for the "quick fixes" and techniques with apparent success. But in the long run they just don't work.

Ask questions: To clear up confusion, ask questions as soon as you can verbalize or write them down them in concise terms. Questions via electronic discussion boards and email are encouraged.

Exams and assignments: Late assignments will *not* be accepted. Quizzes and exams must be taken at their regularly scheduled times. Make-up exams will be considered only with exceptional circumstances.

Ethics: Fairness is important. Coloration is not allowed unless expressed explicitly in the assignment. As a general rule, you may collaborate on odd-numbered exercises but not on even-numbered exercises. SJSU policies regarding academic integrity will be enforced.