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GEA Workshop

Thriving in Graduate School

Thriving and prospering in grad school is the aim, not “surviving.”

1. Choose **courses** wisely. See if you can get them to count in different ways. Think outside the box. Requirements need creative refocusing.
2. Seek **interdisciplinary** coursework. Avoid "English provincialism." Learn methods widely and wisely.
3. Develop a system of **note taking**. Be consistent. You will remember a tenth of what you hear and even less of what you read. Keep notes well and always. Skim, Read, Study, Research. But keep notes.
4. Keep a "**look up**" page of titles you encounter in each notebook. And then, look up the work. Read whole texts, not excerpts and snippets. Resist being satisfied with others' predigested takes on material. Make your own.
5. In each class you take, **think and ask widely and broadly**. Be mindful. What's the goal? How does professor present material? What perspectives? How pedagogically? What does the presentation offer? What does the material offer? What trends is it introducing you to? What new ways of asking or treating materials? What constitutes "material" in that specific class? Primary texts, empirical sources? Theory? Secondary criticism? What things are absent from that particular class? What are the sources? What are the main disciplinary vistas that class offers? Or, how does that subfield imagine the discipline? What are the main journals in that field? What are its main debates? What is the main footprint of that field on the discipline?
6. **Writing papers**: start early. Get them done. Not every paper is publishable. But every paper ought to be polished. And that takes time and attention and MINDFULNESS. It takes some passion. Don't be afraid to develop it. And to show it.
7. **Teaching**: is the 4th priority in your life as a doctoral student. The first three are courses, reading, writing. Don't go to sleep with teaching and wake up with it on your mind.
8. **Balance**: school with life. Get an education outside the classroom. Attend seminars, talks, lectures. Ask questions. See how others are asking questions. Go the gym. Socialize with your peers. Listen in on other people's conversations.
9. Your **profs**: are you advocates, your ambassadors, your mentors. Seek them out. Develop those relationships. Be courteous. Develop basic professional etiquette (emails without “pleases” and “thank yous” tend to get less attention than those with).
10. **Apply** for fellowships, conferences, workshops, publications». It's OK to get rejected at first. Try again. Aim high.