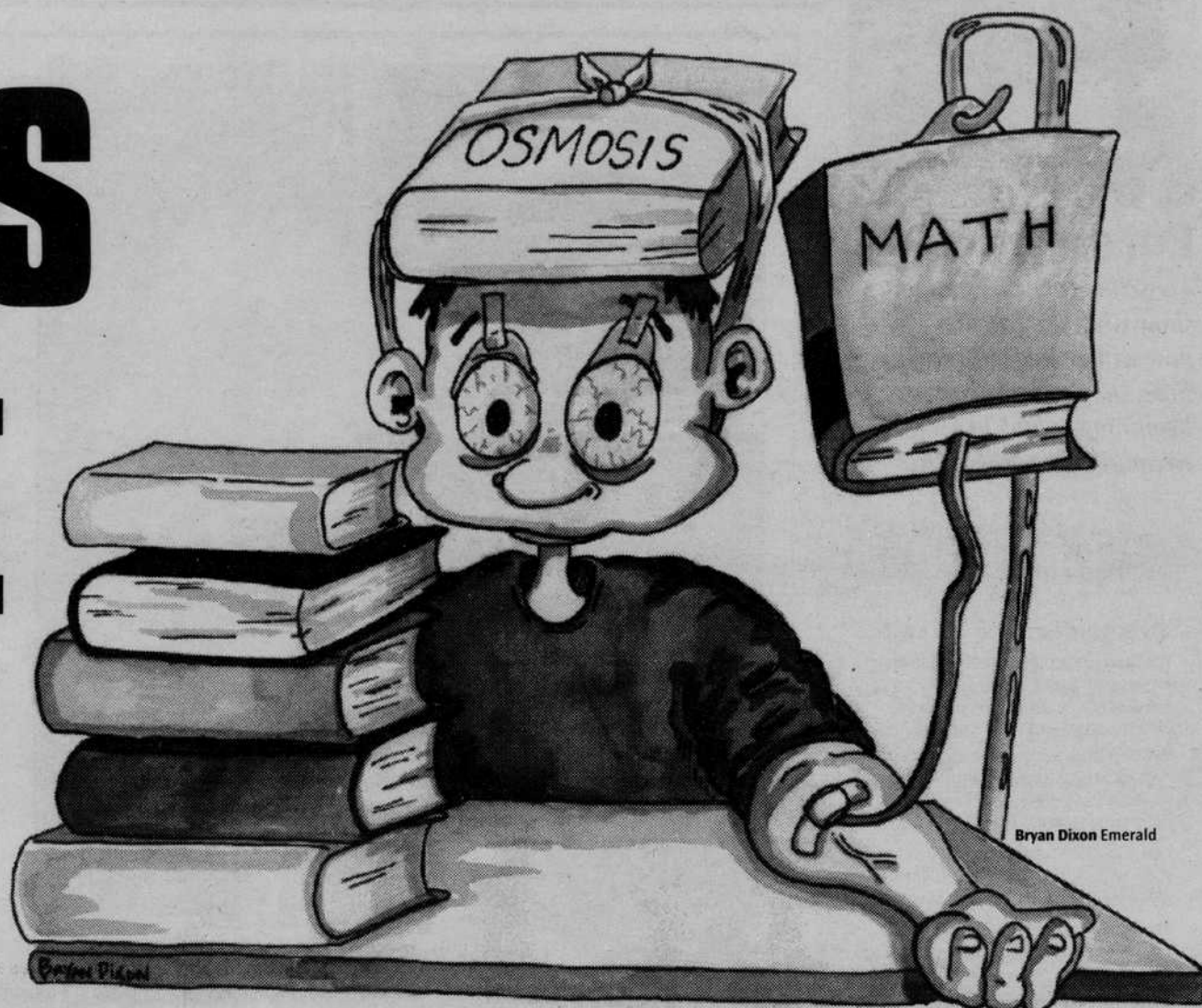


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Perspectives

Oregon Daily
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Tests *are a* pest



Fred M.
 Collier

I was talking with a friend just before midterms last fall, and she mentioned she was worried about the test coming up in our class. I wanted to be sympathetic, but because I have good test-taking skills, I puffed my chest out a little and said, "I'm not worried about it. I know I'll do well."

She kind of glanced at me out of the corner of her eye. "How do you know that?" "Easy," I answered. "It's because I have good test-taking skills."

After more than 230 college level credits, I should have acquired some good skills in taking tests. And taking tests is a skill. Most exams measure students' knowledge of how to take a test as much or more than their knowledge of the material being tested. The best example I can remember is a test I had in junior college that covered two books, one of which I hadn't read. I asked a friend what that one was about. After a description of the plot that lasted less than a minute, I took the test and did better on the questions that covered the book I hadn't read than the one I had.

Fortunately, test-taking skills can

be learned.

So what are these skills? How can you maximize your chances of success if you don't have good command of the class material?

The first thing to focus on is preventing or reducing stress. This sounds easy, but it probably isn't. My wife always tells me to get plenty of sleep, and I believe her because she's a better student than I am. I like to skim the material in the books, just getting the general concepts and ignoring the details. And I get plenty of sleep rather than spend all night cramming and going to class with a head full of cobwebs and disjointed facts. If worrying about the test keeps my wife awake she blanks her mind and concentrates on her breathing, but I don't have the discipline to do that so I picture the worst thing that can happen. Even if I totally bomb the test I can put it into perspective by comparing it with real disasters, such as getting hit by a bus as I cross the street on my way to class.

I like to review my notes for a few minutes before the exam, unless the stress in the classroom is so thick I feel like I can cut the air with a knife.

At these times it's better to do anything to relieve stress than to do more studying. I do a crossword puzzle, breathe deeply and slowly, chew gum, read a novel — anything to get my mind off the material and relax.

If, when I finally get the test, I read the first question and my mind goes totally blank, I don't panic. I go straight to the next question, and the next, until I reach a question I can answer. This helps in several ways. First, at least I get some of the answers right. Second, I won't leave any blanks for questions I know. Third, success builds confidence, while failure ruins it and increases stress. Last, sometimes the answer to three is written in question 47. I like to take advantage of it. I've had tests where I didn't answer a single question until halfway through the second page, but I still had time to go back after I'd warmed up and got enough of the tough questions right to do well.

After I've gone through the entire test and answered all the questions I know, I go back to those left blank. (If it's a scantron, I make sure I fill in the right questions. I've gotten mixed up

by skipping questions but not bubbles). I just start over and do the same thing again, going through the test from front to back and filling in more spaces until all the questions are answered. I even answer the questions that I have no clue about. If it's so far above my head I can't even guess, I try to be creative. Sometimes you can get partial credit for totally off the wall answers that at least show you tried. Sometimes you can't. But you certainly won't get the credit if you don't try.

And when I'm done, I turn it in knowing that I gave it my best shot.

That's what I did with my midterm. I eagerly waited for it to get graded so that I could see how well I did. It was a tough test. I figured I might have gotten as bad as an 89 percent or so. Imagine my surprise when I finally held it in my hand, turned to the grade. . .

66!

Oh well. Some tests are like that.

Fred M. Collier is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. He can be reached via e-mail at fmcollier@aol.com

Freedom under fire as legislators look to reverse Roe vs. Wade

The Roe vs. Wade 27th anniversary was Jan. 22 — the date Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun ruled to recognize a woman's right to choose whether or not to continue an unplanned pregnancy or a pregnancy with dangerous complications or health defects. This landmark decision establishing the right to obtain a safe and legal abortion in this country also recognizes that women should always have control over their own bodies and consciences.

If this law — which is in compliance with this country's found-

ing principles of freedom and liberty — is overturned in the upcoming years, as current legislation implies, the guiding principle of freedom will be grossly violated.

The Pro-Choice Coalition of Oregon has reported that Oregon's 1999 legislative session was the largest anti-choice session since the Roe decision in 1973! Never before have we seen so many attacks on every aspect of a woman's right to choose, such as the Parental Notification Bill and a host of other bills aimed at making abortion more difficult or more dangerous to obtain. These

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threats to reproductive freedom are at the federal level as well and will continue throughout the 2000 legislative session. The results of the presidential election this year may take away the right to choose indefinitely.

Gov. John Kitzhaber and pro-choice legislators (of both major parties) are the reason these many anti-choice bills are not taking ef-

fect as we speak. Now as active constituents you have the power to elect representatives who will continue to protect our freedom to make our own choices about parenthood.

We, as the co-directors of Students for Choice, recognize that the decision of abortion is an extremely personal and emotional issue. Each woman's choice should be respected as her individual decision about her life and body. Although there are great divides about this personal decision, and the life of a fetus, we believe that once the respect for a woman's choice about pregnancy

is recognized by everyone, this universal respect will create more peaceful human relations. Finally, we want to stress the importance of educating yourself about these issues and find out which representatives and future candidates will uphold the freedoms for every human to decide.

Corina Alexander and Brenna Patterson are the co-directors for University of Oregon Students for Choice. They can be reached via e-mail at s4choice@gladstone.uoregon.edu. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of all Students for Choice members. And these views do not necessarily reflect the views of the Emerald.