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Biology students can't get on the same page



Respect my authority

Shadra Beesley
Staff Writer

It all started when a simple trip to the bookstore went awry. I found myself choosing from five different biology textbooks, and I knew this was not a good sign of what was to come.

In the past, textbooks were magical volumes of answers that supplied all necessary information. The Clackamas Science Department has changed

all of that. In Biology 102, Format A, textbooks are a source of frustration, anxiety and chaos.

How could a textbook cause so much grief? Let's start at the beginning.

For years, biology classes have been offered in the traditional lecture/lab format.

At Clackamas, these classes are now offered in what is referred to as "Format A: an interactive group approach." In Format A, students spend class time working in groups, then go directly to the lab. There is no lecture, no note-taking, no overhead projector.

There is a teacher present to help find answers and dole out ridiculous amounts of homework, but students are generally on their own.

In traditional courses, one textbook is required, and every student in the class owns this same textbook. Usually, this standard textbook directly correlates to the curriculum. For Format A, I was required to pick from five text-

books. The excuse for this unfortunate idea is that students can choose the book that best fits their learning style.

The result of this unfortunate idea is students spending \$60 - \$120 on a book that presents inadequate information in an order bearing no resemblance to the way they are actually studying it. Another result is a classroom full of confused peers citing different sources of information.

Using a myriad of different textbooks directly conflicts with the group-learning concept. Students are constantly working together and are not provided with the benefit of being able to use simple chapter and page numbers to reference each other's information. Some textbooks contain conflicting information, and they all use different terminology.

Homework is another never-ending battle on the Format A frontier. In order to compensate for the lack of lecture and note-taking sessions, the course provides a truckload of various as-

signments. Collaborative activities, "Learning to Think" questions, concept maps, journals, lab write-ups, group-work anthologies and lengthy objectives are just a few of the regularly scheduled afflictions. Two to five assignments are due every class period. The textbook catastrophe contributes to the anxiety created by this mountain of busy-work, causing me to spend most of my homework time searching for information.

Group learning is an innovative, fun way to study science. However, this method could be much more effective with a few simple changes. One textbook should be required, and the information presented in class should be based on that textbook. Also, the necessary homework needs to be weeded out from the redundant busywork. Ironing out these kinks could turn Format A into an efficient, valuable program.

To reach Shadra Beesley e-mail shadrab@hotmail.com or drop by B-104.

My favorite product: nothing



Be Human

Jesse Gurzynski
Staff Writer

Advertising is extremely offensive to me, and I think any truly self-respecting person will agree.

Advertising has invaded just about every imaginable space in our daily lives to the extent that even someone like myself, who

does my best to avoid commercial messages, is inundated with them everywhere they go. Outside the confines of my little room where I sleep, advertisements are nearly everywhere and in innumerable forms: emblems on cars, logos on clothes, storefront signs, onward up to billboards.

I realize I have here indicated things that people don't normally regard as advertising, but is the three-letter name on a ballpoint pen or the blue oval on the back of a car really necessary? Furthermore, they have succeeded in their intended effect, as you certainly recall the brands I have just alluded to.

I find it very offensive that advertisers manipulate our emotions so as to sell us crap like extra pairs of shoes, herbal pills, specialized-purpose cleaning agents, or various knick knacks that we don't need. Advertisers

know damn well what they are doing, and they are quite skillful at it. Isn't it kind of sick that we have developed emotional attachments to *products* and *brands*? And yet people still deny they are being brain-washed.

Brand-building has little if anything to do with producing a quality product. It's about selling an image. In her interview for Stay Free magazine, Inger Stole, assistant professor, Department of Advertising at the University of Illinois, put it well: "Really, just the idea that advertisers would have to state basic, hard facts would defeat all kinds of advertising. If you look at ten different soaps, they're all pretty much the same, so people would go for the lowest price." Honest facts don't work in advertising.

If someone really needs something, or even really wants some-

thing, they will find it on their own. Of course, monetary profit would not be so great for the giant corporations if people bought just what they needed or really wanted. It is far better to tell them what they want. So now we've been told what we want and then told it's not just a want but a need. So to fulfill this great need for worthless junk, we sacrifice all our lives to perform endless hours of useless labor to earn petty amounts of symbolic wealth with which to acquire all this worthless junk.

And when it's all said and done at the end, we have nothing to show for our lives. Just a worthless pile of junk to be hauled off to a landfill, and a feeling of emptiness.

To reach Jesse Gurzynski e-mail heterodox@onebox.com or drop by B-104.

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Bring it on!

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words or stop by B-104 with it saved
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