

DO YOU FIND YOUR COURSES INTERESTING?

What makes some students more successful than others? Scholastic aptitude is only one of several factors which include personal goals, ability to set priorities and organize time, capacity to handle stress, life-style and so on. Two of the most crucial factors are the connected ones of **MOTIVATION** to learn and the **ATTITUDE** that you have towards your courses.

Again, all kinds of factors influence your motivation and attitude, but one thing that makes it hard for many students to feel positive about their work is that they find their courses **BORING!** A study at a large Ontario college found that large numbers of students suffer prolonged periods of almost unmitigated boredom in many of their courses. Since a university education is supposed to be a liberating, broadening and exciting experience, this is a sad situation. Successful students, however, tend to have a high degree of interest in their courses and enthusiasm for what they are doing **RIGHT NOW** - rather than for what they will be able to do when they graduate.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

You may think that if you are bored by a course there's nothing to be done about it, because that's just the way that things are. Or, you may feel like blaming your professor or the general system for making you take that course. However, there are things that can be done.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

The first thing to recognize is the fact that the focus is on you. You are responsible for developing your own interest in the subject. Before, teachers in high school usually thought that developing students' interest in their subjects was a major part of their jobs. College teachers do not see this as a heavy responsibility for themselves or, at the very least, do not carry this responsibility to such a great extent. If you **WANT** to learn physics or history they are ready to teach you. Take it or leave it. You are a free agent - you decided to come to college and take this course or follow this program. You must consciously accept the responsibility for developing **YOUR OWN INTEREST** in what you are doing, not just the responsibility for performing the various tasks imposed upon you.

PUTTING IN THE HOURS

There is a natural tendency to spend less and less time on the subjects which do not interest you (or those that you find difficult) in favour of spending more and more time on the things which **DO** interest you. Decide that **NOW** is the time to put in more hours on that course which least interests you. Give it a chance. To make sure that you do this you will need to schedule some of your time specifically for this purpose.

IDENTIFY POINTS OF INTEREST

With a little ingenuity and persistence you should be able to identify what the potential points of interest are in the subject you are studying. Ask yourself some of the following questions:

- How is it that thousands of people have devoted their lives to the study of this subject, and continue to write books and articles each year on it?
- Why does the government pay people to research and teach this subject?
- How would life (intellectual or otherwise) be different if this subject had never been investigated?
- How does this subject relate to your major subject (or to the one that you find the most interesting?) Do the two subjects represent two different perceptions about what is interesting about being human?

Now that you have perhaps established the broad reasons for the existence of this subject as a part of a college education, start thinking about what it can do for you as an individual with your own needs. Again, you might want to answer some of these questions:

- What kinds of things would knowledge of this subject enable you to understand or do? How would this bring you nearer to your personal objectives in life (however hazy they are)? How would it make you a more educated or accomplished person (in your own sense of what those terms mean)?
- Why has a body of highly-educated people decided that in order to be properly educated in the field you have chosen you need to study this subject in some detail? Was this decision completely arbitrary?
- Would an understanding of this subject conceivably change the course of your life or the kind of person you become in any way at all?
- What parts of your abilities are being taxed by this course? Will it be useful to you to have those abilities more fully developed?