

Reflect I

Due Tuesday, October 6

The goal of a college course is always *learning*. Homework, exams, and everything else in the syllabus are just vehicles (and motivation) to help learning happen. So my main goal for each exam is to help you learn where you currently stand in the course, and to set yourself up for success going forward. The exam itself is only the middle of that process:

- *Before the exam* you studied, and (if you are on the Hold Me Accountable scale) wrote a study guide for yourself, reviewing the first three chapters of the notes and the population models from Chapter 4.
- *During the exam* both you and I learned what you know so far, and got a gauge of what needs to happen next.
- *After the exam* is when you actually learn from it, and that is what this assignment is for.

This opportunity to reflect is useful enough that it is worth points on the *Hold Me Accountable* scale.

The assignment

Write a reflection on the first part of the semester, addressed to yourself, focusing on your study techniques, your exam performance, and your recommendations to your future self. Work through the prompts below, in whatever order makes sense to you, and write in full paragraphs with complete sentences. This should be a finished piece of writing, two, three, or more pages. A rough draft, a single page, or bullet points will receive no credit.

There are no wrong answers, but only submissions showing real work at introspection will receive credit. This is an opportunity to figure out what works best *for you*, and it only works if you are honest with yourself.

How did the exam go?

While it is still fresh in your mind, think about the exam itself. How did you do compared to how you expected to do (after studying, but before the exam)? After getting feedback, how did the exam go relative to how you felt after taking it? Did you do better or worse than you felt you had (after leaving the exam, but before getting feedback)?

If you did well, what were the big contributions to that success? If you had hoped to do better, what were some factors that may have affected your performance? These include your comfort with the material, but also things like not sleeping enough the night before, or time pressure during the exam.

Now look at the graded exam and sort out where the points went. Which topics were weak? What kind of errors cost you: calculus slips like a lost sign or a missing constant, not knowing a definition or the hypotheses of a theorem, misreading what the problem asked, or running out of time? This diagnosis is what your plan at the end should rest on.

How did you prepare for it?

How did you go about preparing for this exam? Did you redo problems from the problem sets, re-read the notes, or work through the problems at the end of each chapter? Did you study with friends, or alone? How did you use your study guide?

Of the things you did, what felt like it had the most payoff? Did any of your studying feel unproductive, as in, you put a lot of time into a particular concept or strategy but in the end still struggled with it?

Class time and resources

How is the class going for you this term, more generally? Do you find yourself attending class every time, missing a class here or there, or struggling to attend regularly? How does your attendance in this class compare with your other classes?

Think about the same questions for office hours. It is good to pause after an exam and remind yourself of the resources there are for getting help, and to reflect on whether you have been using them to your advantage. Is there anything you would change about the class to help you learn better? Would weekly quizzes in class motivate you, or just stress you out?

Your ordinary week

This is a four credit course, and the university expects students to spend *eight hours outside of class time* each week working on it. Discuss where your study habits sit with respect to this expectation: how many hours do you actually spend in a typical week? Does that amount match the class's relative difficulty for you? (If you spend a lot of time on it because it is one of your hardest classes, or little time because it is easy, that matches. If you spend little time on it but it is one of your harder classes, that does not.)

When reviewing a new concept, do you spend time reading the chapter or the notes that accompanies lecture, experimenting with the interactive figures, both, or neither?

Do you do practice problems beyond the homework? The notes have a list of problems at the end of each chapter. If so, how many do you do in a typical week, and how do you decide which

topics you need more problems on? Are there enough problems there for practice, or would you prefer more?

Be honest with yourself, and think about the process by which you do the written homework. These assignments are here to help you master the material through practice: are you using them effectively to prepare yourself for the exam setting, where you have to show your skills independently? Are you relying too much on online resources, online aids, or friends?

Recommendations for your future self

If you could help your past self set up a strategy for the first third of this class, one that leverages your strengths and efficiently identifies your points of struggle, what would it be? What parts of your current strategy will you keep, and what will you change?

Be realistic. Don't just say "I would study X more hours" if adding X hours to your current plan leaves you with an unsustainable workload across your classes. Take what you have learned about yourself in the questions above, and build a plan you will actually follow. The next reflection will begin by asking how it went.