

Dropping Classes for Cause or for Slacking; When I attempted to drop an elective course, the professor said: "No, you must finish the course, everything in life is not interesting or relevant."

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FULL TEXT

It may be a sign of the times that Prof. Daniel F. Chambliss allows students to drop his sociology course midterm with little discussion ("Go Ahead, Drop My Course," op-ed, Feb. 3). From personal experience, I would be concerned that this shows lack of regard for the undergraduate's future development.

One of my most formative moments happened precisely when I attempted to drop an elective course, coincidentally sociology, and the professor asked why. I gave all the usual excuses—irrelevant, not my priority, boring—and he said: "No, you must finish the course, everything in life is not interesting or relevant."

I did complete the course, and earned an A in the bargain. But more important, I learned some pretty good life lessons as well, which have stood me in good stead throughout my life. We may even say that such lessons are particularly desirable today to counteract the "safe spaces" and cancel culture emerging on college campuses across the country.

Jonathan Fox
Northfield, N.J.

While I agree that it is not immoral if students choose not to work hard in school, it is immoral if instructors don't point out the opportunity cost of slacking, so that students can choose wisely. The opportunity cost is zero if you are in your dorm developing the next-generation app (and you can drop as many classes you like). However, the opportunity cost could be considerable in lost future earnings if you are selecting leisure over work (and enrolling in the "easy-A" classes). Many students discover this hard truth when employers come knocking, but for many it is already too late.

Prof. Subimal Chatterjee
SUNY, Binghamton, N.Y.

When my son was a junior in a small college, he was planning to major in sociology. Halfway through the year, the head of the sociology department called him in and said, "David, look around at the other students who are majoring in sociology. Are you as interested in sociology as they are? David answered honestly, "Well, no, I guess not really." "No, of course not," answered the professor. "You are interested in sports. You should major in physical education and be a coach."

David changed his major and has been a high-school teacher and basketball coach for over 30 years. During that time, he has had a positive impact on the lives of hundreds of students and players, many of whom still keep in contact with him years later.

This wise, perceptive and caring professor changed the life of one student, who later on helped shape the lives of many others.

Bud Carrier
Charlotte, N.C.

DETAILS

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