CSC 295.02 2013S *Learning from Alumni*

Class 01: Getting Started

Held: Monday, 21 January 2013

Summary: In today's class, we explore the purpose and processes of the course. We also introduce the Color Q approach to assessing personality.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.

Notes:

- I expect to have a shorter class today than normal.
- Please purchase (individually or with a group) a copy of *Career Match*.
- Jeff Dickey-Chaisins '81 recommends the following books for those thinking about careers. I'll try to pick out selections and make them available before the next class (but probably not before Friday). a. *What Should I Do with My Life* by Po Bronson. A great series of stories about people who have done unusual things that they didn't expect to do. b. *The Pathfinder* by Nicholas Lore. A workbook that makes you figure out what you do well or not, what you like to do, and where you might end up. c. *Career Renegade* by Jonathan Fields. A modern take on "do what you love, the money will follow.".

Overview:

- Background: The course web. Why do we have this course? How are we structuring the course?
- What do you want out of the course?
- General expectations
- Hosting visitors
- Volunteers!
- An introduction to the Color Q Personality Assessment
- Time to take Color Q
- Discussion of Color Q results
- Using Color Q

General Course Information

Detour: The course web

Yes, I know it makes no sense to start with a detour. Tough.

- I put as much as I can online.
- Those of you who have taken one of my classes before know the general structure.
- Note that some of the stuff is just thrown together. (No surprise.)

Background: Why do we have this course?

- I thought we'd start the course by talking a bit about why we have this course.
- The primary reason: We want to give you more opportunities to think about your life after Grinnell.
  - Our focus will be on your career(s) after Grinnell, but we may also cover some other life issues.
- I was reflecting on a variety of issues:
  - I feel limited in my knowledge when helping students think about careers (few of you plan to become faculty at small liberal arts colleges)
  - I hear from you that the CDO has traditionally been fairly limited in how much discipline-specific help it can give (although that's been getting much better)
  - Students don't seem to listen to the few things I do know about job hunting (work on extra-curricular projects throughout your career)
  - Each time we have alums visit, I hear from current students how useful it has been to talk to them.
  - At the same time, I hear from our alums that they are not connected enough to Grinnell.
- Doug Caulkin's *Learning from Alumni* seemed to provide a good model for handling many of these issues. That is,
  - I hear from students that the course is useful for career planning (and perhaps for life planning)
  - I hear from the alums who participate that being in the course gives them more of a connection to campus
- At the same time, I think it's useful to hear the details of how people *in your discipline* have approached careers. (They'll also know more about important things like salaries and how Grinnell grads are perceived in the CS workplace.)
- The opportunity arose to teach this course. (Basically - I'm on leave and wanted to do this.)
- And so here we are.
- I don't everything about the Caulkins course, but I'm confident that this course will differ in some ways from that course. (Not least is that I have a smaller budget, so many of the alums will visit via Skype.)

Background: The structure of the course

- Most class sessions will involve a visit (physical or virtual) from an alum who works in a job related to computing.
  - Not all alums have undergraduate CS degrees. (Some are old enough that we didn't have a CS degree; others moved from something else into a CS-related field.)
  - I don't plan to invite CS majors who went into other fields. But if that's something you'd find useful to hear about, I can consider it.
- The alum may ask you to read things in advance.
- The alum will give a short (5-10 minute) biographical history of how they ended up where they are.
- The alum will give a moderate-length (say, 40 minutes) talk on a relevant subject.
- We'll use the remainder of class time for questions and answers.
- I will do my best to videotape classes for future reference.

Your turn: What do you want out of the course?

- You've now heard about what I'm planning. But I'm adaptable. I'd like to hear your perspective.
- Why are you in this course?
- What other things would you like us to try to do in the course?

General expectations

- I have three (more or less) primary expectations for each member of this class.
- First, you must attend every class session. (You can miss one if necessary. Beyond that, and it's dicey.)
- Second, you must serve as a host for some of our visitors. We'll return to the details of hosting in a bit. Hosting a visitor will give you the opportunity to get to know the alum in more depth. As importantly, it will give you practice in some important activities (talking to people you don't know, arranging details, summarizing information, etc.).
- Finally, at the end of the semester you will write a *short* summary of what you got from the class.

Hosting visitors

- Each member of the class will be responsible for hosting one or more of the visitors for the class.
  - As a class, we'll decide whether we'll have individual hosts or whether students can collaborate in hosting a visitor.
- What do you do as host? Here's a preliminary list that we can work on.
- Contact the alum about two weeks in advance of this visit for preparatory work.
  - Provide information about the class and expectations.
  - Tell the alum about yourself.
  - Help the alum take the Color-Q personality inventory (see below).
  - Learn enough about the alum to introduce him/her to the class.
  - Negotiate a topic with the alum.
  - Obtain a list of recommended readings.
- Distribute appropriate information to the class in advance of the visit.
  - Any recommended readings or other exercises.
  - A short biography.
  - A description of the talk. (The description will also be posted in the department.)
- Make sure that the classroom is set for the visitor
  - Skype for remote visitors; A/V setup for in-person visitors
- Introduce the visitor and moderate discussions.
- Note that I'll set up an information sheet for you to distribute to the alum.

Signup for hosting visitors

- We'll spend a few minutes signing up for hosting visitors. You can choose based on the visitor or the date (or both). My goal is to get most of the weeks before break covered now.

The Color Q Personality Assessment

An introduction to Color Q

- When I was putting this course together, I asked Doug Caulkins (who teaches the traditional version of the course) what was important to do in the course. He told me that he considers Color Q an essential part of the course.
- So, what is Color Q? It's a personality inventory - a way of helping yourself identify key personality characteristics.
- Meyers-Briggs is a more famous inventory. Color Q is simpler and faster (and cheaper).
- After doing the inventory, we'll disucss how you can use the inventory (or other personality inventories).

Time to take Color Q

- I'll give you about ten minutes to take the Color Q inventory so that we can discuss it.

Discussion of Color Q results

- So, what's the distribution in this class?
- Did you find the assessment accurate (at least in some sense)?
- What other things did you observe?

Using Color Q

- So, why is color Q useful? (More generally, why is any personality inventory useful?)
- Experience suggests that you'll be much happier in your job if you choose a job that matches your personality type. (Not a surprise, but you can more consciously think about characteristics of the job.)
- For this course, you may find it particularly useful to hear the perspectives of people with similar colors to you.
- More importantly, you will interact much better with others if you take the time to understand different personality types and learn how to approach people with those types.
    - Note that I do not follow this advice very well. But you'll find it particularly useful as you deal with others.
- While the book presents suggestions for identifying the personality types of others, it can be difficult. For example, I'm a Blue/Gold introvert. While many people will notice my blue characteristics, I lack some key gold characteristics (particularly "a clean desk") and most people seem to think of me as extroverted.

What next?

- Please take the time to read your section in *Career Match*.
- Please take the time to read the general sections in *Career Match*.
- At the end of the semester, we'll return to the inventory to reflect on why it is useful (or why it may not be useful).

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