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Career Exploration/Planning

POFT 1310-006

Raymond Gerson

Case Study Paper

Walking into Professor Gerson's classroom on the first day of school this semester, I, along with every other student, exchanged perplexed glances loosely based on not knowing what to expect. I know this much – my advisor had strongly suggested taking this course, based on my uncertainty and inability to transfer to a four-year university, let alone declare a major. I expected this Career and Exploration course to consist of three things: Busy work, busy work and more busy work. I can honestly say that I have absolutely no recollection of staring at a grueling task (i.e., vocabulary sheets, map coloring – which I believe are huge mistakes made by our school boards) that wasn't *directly* associated with the course curriculum in a realistic and applicable manner. Essentially, the course focuses primarily on self-reflection which is unlike any class I have ever taken. Knowing the self and what drives it may be the most crucial knowledge a young, ambitious American can actually utilize and apply to their lives.

The puzzled faces I encountered on that first day of class are forever branded into my mind. The changes which I saw these students go through over the course of the semester are forever branded into my soul. I can remember certain people having absolutely no idea what they wanted to do with their lives become bright-eyed and ready to take on new challenges. At the beginning some of my classmates were shy of public speaking and others clueless about their skills. Now, as I look back, I see real change in my peers. I see that a certain young man has taken what he thought were silly dreams and molded them into a realistic and potentially profitable entrepreneurial challenge. I see a middle-aged woman who spent her life as a mechanic and is now considering getting her RN. I see a woman my age, steering away from her family's tradition of becoming nurses to follow her dream as a teacher. Watching these students, of varied ages and creeds, transform their self-awareness from non-existent to completely alert had a great impact on me, as well.

This course was immensely personal for me. The self-awareness I gained from this course dramatically impacted not only my conscience but also my self-image. It changed the way I see myself. I remember coming home from class one day, dumping papers all over the coffee table and ranting and raving to my roommate about everything from the envelope exercise (and how eerily close to home it was!) to the Four Stories and then to the Dream School Exercise. Every assignment seemed to have so much purpose to me. I remember thinking each one changed me a little, help me grew. Taking the Discover Program assessment played a large role in the positive outcome this course had on me. Career Planning and Exploration isn't as flowery as I'm making it seem. There was an aspect to the course I didn't expect – actual planning! We did an entire summary, more or less, rewiring our minds to adapt to a future life. A new life. We covered everything from ideal places to live, budgeting, and salary negotiation to breaking down a typical day in the field of our choice. Personally, the most inspiring aspect of the course were the questions proposed to us about what *we* could do for the world. This is a concept I had never thought to associate with choosing a career path. It's actually quite relative. Professor Gerson proposed epic questions, asking us how we're going to serve the world, what our mission is and furthermore, how we intend to do it all. We were also given a packet to create, plan and assess crucial goals in and continuing throughout our lives. These goals covered every base imaginable – physical, spiritual, familial and financial – for example. The course was centered on the age-old, impossible-to-answer question: Who am I? By that, I mean we delved into ourselves. We, as a class, a team almost – we found what we wanted to know in ourselves.

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, this course is designed to slightly *ease* information about students out of them so that their interests and skills might be realized. A well-spent portion of our semester was spent on finding out exactly what our valuable skills are. By doing so, we were

able to properly narrow the list of potential jobs choices to only those we could absolutely excel in. Everyone possesses skills, abilities and interests – we are all blessed with unique combinations of them. So, why not find out what they are? Why not pinpoint and then utilize them to make the world a better place? Unfortunately, this class also helped me realize how much time I wasted taking useless classes in random strings, never knowing what I could be put on this Earth for. I know now that it is to teach others the gift of the written word, to write so that others may also become self-aware and to use my ability to speak in some way.

The self-knowledge I've gained from this course is far more valuable than the mundane memorize-regurgitate classrooms are faced with nowadays. I feel that I can walk away from this course with a knowledge intended for the real world and a more firm understanding and awareness of who I am as well as what my skills are. If every twenty-something year old had the privilege of assessing their abilities and transferrable skills, then they'd have a greatly improved chance of finding a career about which they are immensely passionate. Personally, the tremendously insightful piece of knowledge I take from this course will be the ability to uncover a world of jobs available, that before taking Career Planning and Exploration, of which I was not aware. Professor Gerson's willingness to help each student individually and on a truly personal and sincere level also made a huge impact on me. It is quite obvious when a professor truly enjoys the subject for which is the maestro. If ever I encounter a young student like myself in the future, I'll be sure to take Professor Gerson's advice and get them talking. It's an incredibly simple task, finding out a person's skills. Armed with an ability to find transferrable skills and to apply them in real life, I feel this course has not only helped me, but indirectly helped those around me. And for that, I am ever grateful.