

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS
FRESHMAN LECTURES 1

THE BUSINESS-LIKE USE OF STUDY TIME

It may seem that a carefully planned schedule of study time is a good deal of trouble to begin and more trouble to continue. Haphazard use of our time is easier, at first, but returns very poor dividends. A great American psychologist and teacher, William James, reminds us that "There is no more miserable human being than one in whom nothing is habitual but indecision, and for whom the lighting of every cigar, the drinking of every cup, the time of rising and going to bed every day, and the beginning of every bit of work, are subjects of express volitional deliberation. Full half the time of such a man goes to the deciding, or regretting, of matters which ought to be so ingrained in him as practically not to exist for his consciousness at all. If there be such daily duties not yet ingrained in one of my readers, let him begin this very hour to set the matter right."

Unquestionably there are excellent students who do not, consciously at least, budget their time, and there are poor students who do. System is not the only factor, but it seems to be the most important controllable factor, and it is only the stupid person who believes that a messy studio makes an artist, irresponsible behavior a prima donna, or lack of sleep an inventor. If we are common people our success will depend on common sense.

The purpose of these pages is to suggest some of the common sense considerations which will make it easier to make a reasonable time budget and to keep to it after it is made. There are fifteen of these suggestions.

1. Determine how many hours each week you will need to do your work satisfactorily. This will vary with your ability, but for the average student, two hours of study outside of class for each hour of recitation and one hour for each two hours of laboratory, will allow ample time in most cases. If you are taking 15 hours of course work you should spend about 45 hours a week in class and in study, 48 hours if you are carrying 16 hours, and so on.

2. Make up your mind whether this is fair, and whether your education is worth this much trouble to you. Probably less than half the students actually work this long, yet this is less than you would be spending if you were working in a store, factory, or office. If you believe that this is a reasonable requirement, you will probably find that it will be almost impossible to meet it without some sort of schedule.

3. Decide that you will not let a 45 or 50 hour week become a 12 or 14 hours a day job. "Midnight oil" is a picturesque phrase, well thought of, but it usually describes the useless result of wasted time. Unless you are working long hours on the outside, your school work should hardly ever keep you from a worth-while concert, play, athletic event, or from active participation in one or more organizations. You have probably known the good student who has plenty of time for everything; he usually spends more time really working on his lessons than the poor student who is too busy for anything.

4. Make a plot of the time you want to spend in study, including your class periods, plus enough extra time to make up the necessary total. For a 48-hour week this might look something like this: