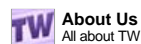


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Subject anxieties plague college students

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By Rafaella Cuff

University students are constantly dealing with coursework and exam stress. Add this stress to a subject matter that a student does not feel particularly confident in, and you get subject-based anxiety. If you have ever felt nervous about a chemistry exam because your mind is not naturally suited to science, you are not alone. If that trigonometry requirement is causing you to squirm, you too are not alone.

Choosing to be an English major because you are not math or science oriented is a great decision, but with general education requirements, you cannot avoid all those unnerving courses. Come exam time, you are stressing more over courses that are completely unrelated to your major. This is something students have to learn to deal with, and obviously, some have to deal with it more than others.

According to a study by the University of Granada in Spain, six out of 10 students experience math anxiety. This study draws from a pool of all majors. The research was deepened by further deduction that men generally experience less math anxiety than women. To define what the university calls "math anxiety," we assume that sufferers experience stress-related symptoms such as mental-blocks in the subject matter, tension, worry and impatience while dealing with course-related homework and examinations.

The study further goes on to say that students sometimes pick their degrees based more on the coursework than what they truly wish to study. For example, a student with math anxiety who would like to work in marketing may choose a psychology major instead, in order to avoid the math-related statistics course necessary to receive a business-related degree. Therefore, these anxieties often have a great impact upon students' life decisions.

Even though math is the most common anxiety-inducing subject, students often experience stress in other courses such as science or classes that involve a lot of memorization such as history.

Christina Hebert is a general studies senior studying music, international studies and English, who feels less at ease with science courses than other subjects.

"In preparing for a science-related exam, I often felt extreme anxiety," said Hebert. "Obviously, as a science course is a Gen

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Ed requirement, it is a necessary course needed in order to graduate with a degree from LSU. The grade acquired in the science course, whether good or bad, carries equally as much weight as a grade acquired in any other course. In order to do remotely well in the science course, I had to study twice and even three times as hard as any other course in my major, which included being a part of several study groups."

Of course, professors of general education courses should understand that not every student feels comfortable in their classrooms. There are things professors can do to make those who are suffering with a little subject-related anxiety feel less queasy.

"I actually enjoyed one semester of my science course," said Hebert. "It was due to the professor being especially sensitive to students in the class who were not comfortable with the subject and making an extra effort to explain the material in a way that would make sense to the average, right-brained thinker."

Students should understand that the majority of their peers experience some type of subject anxiety. They should also not feel embarrassed, for even a student who is naturally great at math can easily draw a blank during a stressful math exam. Study groups, regularly meeting with the professor and extra studying can all help to ease the stress.

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