

On Motivation and Non-Majors: What Students Think Can Be Done to Encourage Learning

The Motivation Problem

Negative motivation involves undertaking tasks because there will be undesirable outcomes, eg. failing a subject, if tasks are not completed.

Positive motivation is a response which includes enjoyment and optimism about the tasks that you are involved in.

→ Many students fulfill their institution's core curriculum because they fear negative results.

1. Intrinsic Motivation

Engaging in an activity for its own sake;
the drive that comes from within

Intrinsic motivation is higher when

- A) students have a sense of academic *self-efficacy*, i.e. they have the belief that they can produce effects (e.g., influence learning activities).
- B) students attribute their educational results to internal factors that they can control (e.g., correlation between effort and outcome).
- C) students wish to become proficient in a topic to the best of their ability (mastery orientation).

2. Extrinsic Motivation

Students believe that participation will result in desirable outcomes such as a reward, teacher praise, or avoidance of punishment

Why does it matter?

Students who have been raised on a reward system will not immediately rely on intrinsic motivation alone.

Perspectives on Interest

1. Personal Interest

This individual disposition is relatively stable and directed toward some specific activity or topic.

2. Situational Interest

The interestingness of the context should result in the generation of situational interest.

Phase 1: Catching interest

Phase 2: holding interest

→ Examples: Type of texts, features of texts (e.g., novelty, surprise, ambiguity), types of themes

3. Interest as a Psychological State

Actualized individual interest reflects an interactive and relational perspective of interest

Research Question

Since intrinsic motivation is associated with higher educational achievement and satisfaction by students, what do they think can be done to increase it?

1. Do students agree with the focus of UGA's core curriculum?
2. Generally speaking, what can instructors do to increase students' motivation?
3. What can be done in the classroom? Material, teaching methods, types of texts used in class, interdisciplinary learning, student assessment

Results of Student Survey

	Frequency	Percent of Respondents
Male	32	30.77
Female	72	69.23
Years in School		
1	33	31.73
2	60	57.69
3	5	4.81
4	5	4.81
5	1	0.96
Self Reported High School GPA		
<3.0	1	0.96
3.0 – 3.49	9	8.65
3.5 – 3.74	18	17.31
3.75 – 3.99	33	31.73
4.00 or higher	43	41.35
Took Advanced Placement Courses in High School	90	88.24
Expected grade in current course:		
A	28	27.18
A-	15	14.56
B+, B, B-	36	34.95
C+, C, C-	11	10.68
D, F	13	12.62
N=106		

Mandatory Courses

2.1	Percent of Respondents Ranking First	Percent of Respondents Ranking Second	Percent of Respondents Ranking Third	Percent of Respondents Ranking Last	Sample
Effective communication	38.61	37.62	12.87	10.89	101
Reasoning scientifically	26.73	27.72	27.72	17.82	101
Interpersonal skills	7.92	17.82	28.71	45.54	101
Integrating knowledge	27.45	17.65	29.41	25.49	102
2.2					
Effective communication	37.25	27.45	24.51	10.78	102
Reasoning scientifically	23.53	25.49	32.35	18.63	102
Interpersonal skills	6.80	22.33	24.27	46.60	103
Integrating knowledge	33.65	24.04	18.27	24.04	104

Motivation

3.1	Percent of Respondents Ranking First	Percent of Respondents Ranking Second	Percent of Respondents Ranking Third	Percent of Respondents Ranking Fourth	Percent of Respondents Ranking Last	Sample
Knowledge and enthusiasm	56.86	23.53	12.75	3.92	2.94	102
Organization	13.10	27.38	21.43	10.71	27.38	84
Effective communication	26.67	30.00	16.67	5.56	21.11	90
Positive attitude	4.60	13.79	25.29	14.94	41.38	87
Fairness	10.00	20.00	40.00	6.67	23.33	90

Students' Interest

4.1	Percent of Respondents Ranking First	Percent of Respondents Ranking Second	Percent of Respondents Ranking Third	Percent of Respondents Ranking Last	Sample
Foundations	20.39	26.21	29.13	24.27	103
Institutions	4.85	18.45	35.92	40.78	103
Political participation	52.43	21.36	11.65	14.56	103
Public Policy	22.33	34.95	22.33	20.39	103

Class Time

4.2	0-10%	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%	Sample
Lecture	3.92	19.61	43.14	29.41	3.92	102
Current events	17.00	52.00	22.00	8.00	1.00	100
Class discussion	6.93	51.49	28.71	11.88	0.99	101
Small group	55.00	38.00	6.00	1.00	0.00	100

Assigned Texts

4.3	Percent of Respondents Ranking
Very helpful	19.42
Helpful	51.46
Somewhat helpful	25.24
Not very helpful	0.97
Not helpful at all	2.91

N=103

Text Preference

4.5	Percent of Respondents Ranking First	Percent of Respondents Ranking Second	Percent of Respondents Ranking Third	Percent of Respondents Ranking Fourth	Percent of Respondents Ranking Last	Sample
Traditional text	36.67	26.26	22.22	2.22	12.22	90
Reader	28.57	30.00	18.57	8.57	14.29	70
Scholarly articles	11.11	17.28	39.51	8.64	23.46	81
Newspaper	30.85	35.11	23.40	4.26	6.38	94
No text	16.00	9.33	16.00	2.67	56.00	75

Interdisciplinary Approach?

4.6	Percent of Respondents Ranking
Very helpful	24.75
Helpful	41.58
Somewhat helpful	27.72
Not very helpful	4.95
Not helpful at all	0.99
N=101	

Disciplines Related to Political Science

4.7	Percent of Respondents Ranking First	Percent of Respondents Ranking Second	Percent of Respondents Ranking Third	Percent of Respondents Ranking Fourth	Percent of Respondents Ranking Last	Sample
Sociology	19.59	23.71	28.87	21.65	6.19	97
Economics	28.13	33.33	21.88	10.42	6.25	96
History	52.94	20.59	15.69	4.90	5.88	102
Psychology	1.04	6.25	10.42	32.29	50.00	96
Statistics	1.05	12.63	18.95	26.32	41.05	95

Testing Method

4.8	Percent of Respondents Ranking First	Percent of Respondents Ranking Second	Percent of Respondents Ranking Third	Percent of Respondents Ranking Last	Sample
Multiple choice	77.45	15.69	5.88	0.98	102
Short answer	10.89	35.64	48.51	4.95	101
Essay	4.00	4.00	18.00	74.00	100
Quizzes	9.00	44.00	27.00	20.00	100

“Favorite” Assignment

4.9	Percent of Respondents Ranking First	Percent of Respondents Ranking Second	Percent of Respondents Ranking Third	Sample
Short answer	43.69	36.89	19.42	103
Term paper / project	11.65	34.95	53.40	103
Class presentation	44.66	27.18	28.16	103

Appendix. Survey of Students' Attitudes About Mandatory Classes and Motivation

1. Student Information

Year in college: ____

Gender: ____ Male ____ Female

Major: _____ ____ Undecided

High School(!) GPA: ____ <3.0 ____ 3.0-3.49 ____ 3.5-3.74 ____ 3.75-3.99
____ 4.0 or higher

Did you take Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high school? ____ Yes ____ No

Expected grade in course: ____ A ____ A- ____ B+/B/B- ____ C+/C/C-
____ D/F

Which model best describes your learning style? ____ Auditory ____ Verbal/Visual
____ Tactile/Practical

2. Mandatory Courses

Core curricula amongst American universities and colleges are designed to foster critical skills in a broad range of academic disciplines, ranging from the humanities to the social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics. This section of the survey will ask you about your perception of UGA's core curriculum and what you would make a top priority.

2.1 Which of the following would be your first choice if you had to rank the focus of UGA's core curriculum in developing students' skills in these areas? Rate (1) as UGA's highest priority, and (4) as the lowest.

- ____ Effective communication (reading, writing, listening, speaking)
- ____ Reasoning scientifically and numerically (critical thinking, problem-solving, analysis of synthesis of information)
- ____ Interpersonal interaction (teamwork, collaborative and cooperative learning)
- ____ Integrating knowledge, skills, and values that students can see the "big picture" of learning

2.2 If you could design a core curriculum, which of the following options would be your first choice in developing students' skills? Rate (1) as **your** highest priority, and (4) as the lowest.

- ____ Effective communication (reading, writing, listening, speaking)
- ____ Reasoning scientifically and numerically (critical thinking, problem-solving, analysis of synthesis of information)
- ____ Interpersonal interaction (teamwork, collaborative and cooperative learning)
- ____ Integrating knowledge, skills, and values that students can see the "big picture" of learning

3. Motivation

Motivation is of particular interest to educational psychologists because of the crucial role it plays in student learning. Motivation in education can have several effects on how students learn and their attitudes towards the subject matter.

3.1 Which of the following is the most important characteristic or skill for you when you evaluate an instructor in terms of his/her effectiveness? Rate (1) as the most important characteristic, (2) as the second most important, and (3) as the third most important.

- Knowledge of and enthusiasm for the subject matter and teaching
- Good organization of subject matter and course
- Effective communication
- Positive attitudes toward students
- Fairness in evaluation and grading

3.2 Few students look forward to taking mandatory courses. Generally speaking, what do you think can instructors do to increase students' motivation?

Your comments:

4. Introduction to American Government

In the following section, I will ask you to answer several questions related to political interests, teaching methods, interdisciplinary learning and educational assessment.

4.1 What material most interests you in this class? Rate (1) as the highest level of interest, and (4) as the lowest.

- Foundations of American government (e.g., the constitution, federalism, civil rights and liberties)
- Institutions of government
- Political participation / behavior (e.g., voting behavior, elections, media, parties)
- Public policy (e.g., social, economic, foreign policy)

4.2 In your opinion, what percentage of class time in a basic American government course should be given to the following?

	0-10%	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Lecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Current events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Class discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Small group discussion / group work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.3 Do you think that the assigned texts are helpful and increase your understanding of the subject? They are

- very helpful
- helpful
- somewhat helpful
- not very helpful
- not helpful at all.

4.4 Your comments in connection with the assigned readings:

4.5 For this class, which type of text do you prefer? Rate (1) as your favorite choice, (2) as your second favorite choice and (3) as your third favorite choice.

- Traditional class textbook
- Reader
- Scholarly pieces which may be accessed online
- Newspaper / magazine articles
- No text at all

4.6 Some instructors take an interdisciplinary approach (integrating concepts across different disciplines) to teaching American government courses. Do you think such an approach is useful for a basic American government class? It is

- very useful
- useful
- somewhat useful
- not very useful
- not useful at all.

4.7 Political science has moved toward a closer working relationship with other disciplines, especially sociology, economics, history, psychology, and statistics. Which discipline do you see most closely related to political science? Rate (1) as the closest connection, and (5) as the furthest.

- Sociology
- Economics
- History
- Psychology
- Statistics

Student assessment of educational progress is important as a way of certifying that standards have been reached, informing the student of progress made, and providing evidence to inform teaching decisions.

4.8 For an introductory course to American government, what do you think is the best testing method? Rate (1) as your “favorite” choice, and (4) as your least favorite.

- Multiple choice test
- Short Answer test
- Essay test
- A series of quizzes

4.9 One of the most challenging jobs as a teacher is developing engaging assignments. How do you rate the following assignments? Rate (1) as your “favorite” and (3) as your least favorite.

- Short essay
- Term paper / project
- Class presentation

4.10 Other comments you feel would improve this class: