# Learning Self-Evaluation Activity #1

Many of my previous students have told me that our class is like nothing they have ever experienced. Perhaps they are responding to one or more of the following features of this class:

1. Flipped learning using [YouTube videos](https://www.youtube.com/c/JeffAndersonMath/featured).
2. Active learning via [in-class projects](http://www.appliedlinearalgebra.com/blog/for-teachers/linear-algebra-laboratory-exercises) and [small group work](https://jeffandersonmath.wordpress.com/2021/10/18/design-effective-groups-for-in-class-activities/).
3. UNgrading processes that focus on all feedback and no grades while giving students high levels of autonomy over their own learning experience.
4. Heavy focus on learning how to learn with research-based learning support via [The Learning Code](https://thelearningcode.school.blog/about/), [Conquering College exercises](http://www.appliedlinearalgebra.com/resources/study-skills-playlists/conquering-college), and daily journal entries.
5. Weekly one-on-one conferences with me (the teacher), your learning partner(s), and your learning groups.

I have made all these design decisions based on deep research on how learning works and the types of environments that are conducive to putting you into the driver’s seat of your learning journey. However, just because I have spent thousands of hours planning and creating resources for you in this class doesn’t mean that my work is effective in guiding you to create significant learning experiences in this class.

Let’s use an analogy to describe what I mean here. Compare the work of a teacher (me) to the work of a brain surgeon. To create classrooms in which great teaching happens is much harder than creating hospital rooms that enable great surgery. A surgeon can, with lots of skill, training, resources, and luck, physically alter the body of another human being to produce desired medical results. However, as a teacher, I do not have the power to open your brain and physically alter neurons, neural pathways, or brain chemistry to produce a specific set of desired learning outcomes. The only person who controls your learning is you. In other words, what matters is not what I say or the decisions I make as your teacher. The most important part of this class is what you do to create learning experiences in our class.

This reality is best summed up in one of my favorite quotes about learning:

“Learning results from what the student does and thinks and only from what the student does and thinks. The teacher can advance learning only by influencing what the student does to learn.”   
–[Herbert A. Simon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_A._Simon)

My task is to empower you to create your own learning experiences. Central to such a task, I believe, is your visions for your world. My hope is that the experience we create together will accelerate your ability to make meaningful progress on problems your care most about.

One of the challenges I’ve noticed over the years I’ve been doing this work is that for many of my students, our class is unique in that I explicitly task you to track, monitor, and reflect on your own learning. These tasks are quite difficult and involve a lot of mental energy. It turns out that grades are a convenient way to shift the focus away from learning and towards performance. The use of letter grades outsources your need to track your own progress to your teacher. Grades also let you off the hook in the most important part of learning: self-evaluation and reflection. Letter grades shift control over learning away from your efforts and, instead, inappropriately center the judgements of your teacher.

Our work together is to re-center you as the most important person in your learning journey. Together, we put you in the driver’s seat to track your own learning and assess your progress in this class. This Learning Self-Evaluation Activity 1 is designed to help you reflect on our first four weeks together.

Remember that this activity is one of only three “required” assignments in the class. In other words, if you choose not to complete this activity, I reserve the right to drop you from this class. I also expect that the work you do in responding to these questions represents an earnest attempt to engage with this activity. I reserve the right to ask you to revisit some of your responses and revise your work in the case that I don’t see that you’ve authentically engaged with the tasks I’ve created for you in this activity. If you have questions about this policy or about what this means for your learning, please ask me about this during class or make an appointment to meet with me during office hours.

## Track your attendance during our in-class meeting times

1. Please fill out the table below to track your own attendance. Do your best to fill this out as accurately as you can.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week Number | Class Number | Day of week | Date | Present | Absent | Arrival  Time | Departure  Time | Please write notes about your work that day. If you arrived later or left class early, please explain why you did so. If you were absent on a particular day, please document what happened. Also, explain what you did to make up for your absence. |
| 1 | 1 | Tuesday | 1/4/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 | Thursday | 1/6/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 | 3 | Tuesday | 1/11/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 | Thursday | 1/13/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 | 5 | Tuesday | 1/18/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6 | Thursday | 1/20/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 | 7 | Tuesday | 1/25/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8 | Thursday | 1/27/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week Number | Class Number | Day of week | Date | Present | Absent | Arrival  Time | Departure  Time | Please write notes about your work that day. If you arrived later or left class early, please explain why you did so. If you were absent on a particular day, please document what happened. Also, explain what you did to make up for your absence. |
| 5 | 9 | Tuesday | 2/1/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 | Thursday | 2/3/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6 | 11 | Tuesday | 2/8/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12 | Thursday | 2/10/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7 | 13 | Tuesday | 2/15/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14 | Thursday | 2/17/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8 | 15 | Tuesday | 2/22/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 16 | Thursday | 2/24/2022 |  |  |  |  | Jeff absent : Do you want to meet with partners in class? |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week Number | Class Number | Day of week | Date | Present | Absent | Arrival  Time | Departure  Time | Please write notes about your work that day. If you arrived later or left class early, please explain why you did so. If you were absent on a particular day, please document what happened. Also, explain what you did to make up for your absence. |
| 9 | 17 | Tuesday | 3/1/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 18 | Thursday | 3/3/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 | 19 | Tuesday | 3/8/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 20 | Thursday | 3/10/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11 | 21 | Tuesday | 3/15/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 22 | Thursday | 3/17/2022 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12 | 23 | Tuesday | 3/22/2022 |  |  |  |  | Regularly-scheduled “final exam” meeting time:  Tuesday 3/22/2022 from 8AM – 10AM in room 4306 |

## Track your help-seeking behavior with your instructor

Please fill out the table below and respond to the questions. This page is designed to help you track your help-seeking behaviors. Do your best to fill this out as accurately as you can.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **EVALUATE YOUR HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR** | | | |
| 1. How many times (approximately) has Jeff actively reached out to speak to for a face-to-face conversation? In other words, how many times have you spoken with Jeff face-to-face so that you and he are engaged in authentic dialog where you felt you can speak and are being listened to? |  | | |
| 1. How many times (approximately) have you actively reached out to Jeff during a face-to-face conversation outside of his attempts to speak with you? In other words, how many times have you reached out to ask Jeff questions about your learning? These could be before class, during class, after class, during office hours, etc. |  | | |
| 1. How many different office hour appointments (approximately) did you schedule and/or attend with Jeff? Usually when you make an office hours appointment, Jeff will write you an office hour appointment form with your scheduled date and time. |  | | |
| 1. Write the dates and times of all your office hour visits? Do your best to remember as accurately as you can but remember, these can be estimates. The point is to help you start tracking your participation. | Appt # | Date | Duration |
| 1 |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |
| 1. How many times did the following scenario arise: you tried to set a time to meet with Jeff in-person and he failed to make an appointment with you or to accommodate your request. |  | | |

1. What have you learned from your office hour visits so far this quarter? If you haven’t yet visited office hours, why have you not attended?
2. What would you need to do to develop the habit of visiting office hours for every one of your professors at least once a week? As you think about that habit, feel free to read Jeff’s [How to Make the Most of Office Hours](https://jeff-anderson-wru2.squarespace.com/s/How_to_Make_the_Most_of_Office_Hours.pdf) handout. When you do make an office hour appointment with Jeff, he will ask you to read this before your first meeting together.

## Track your help-seeking behavior with your learning partner and group

I’ve been using videos to support student learning for about four years in almost every class that I teach. During that time, I have worked with hundreds of students and received tons of feedback on my use of videos. It is very common for students to report that my class is their first exposure to using educational videos as a replacement for in-class lectures. Over the years, I have heard feedback from many students about their process of adapting to videos in our class.

Here are two common critiques that my previous students share with me about my use of videos:

Student critique: Your class is basically an online class.

Jeff’s Response: Hmm… I don’t see that at all. I do agree that there are a few features of this class that are like an online class. For example, you are responsible for working through the course content at your own pace. I also agree that just like an online class, I have created resources that are available to you online 24/7 and host those resources online. Most lecture classes don’t provide this option. In a lecture-based class, the only time you have access to the lecture content is when the teacher is talking.   
  
However, most online classes provide ZERO opportunities to meet in-person with your fellow classmates and your teacher. If you are stuck in an online class, it’s up to you to find help. Perhaps the teacher provides an online forum to post comments. But, I’ve never heard of an online class in which all students meet in-person with the teacher for more than five hours each week. That component of our class is very special and a tremendous resource for accelerating your learning. It does require that each of us be very thoughtful about how to use our shared time together and what we do to prepare before each in-class meeting.

Student critique: I notice that when I watch the videos, it takes me much longer than the video length because I often pause, rewind, and take notes during that time. This is more difficult than what I’m used to in lecture.

Jeff’s Response: I’m so proud of you right now. Welcome to authentic learning. You are breaking down the lie that undergirds lecture-based classes. Specifically, way too many professors pretend that lectures contribute to student learning. I disagree with this assertion on many levels. First, I know of [research-based evidence](https://www.pnas.org/content/111/23/8410) that indicates lectures harm student learning when compared to active learning techniques. Second, I am aware of the math behind the lecture model. People can talk at around [100 – 130 words per minute](https://wordcounter.net/blog/2016/06/02/101702_how-fast-average-person-speaks.html). But most humans can write only [50 -100 legible letters per minute](https://www.quora.com/How-many-words-per-minute-can-a-person-write-on-paper-at-average-with-a-legible-handwriting?share=1) (translating into about 10 to 20 average-length legible words). Moreover, there is a lot more information presented in lecture than just what the professor says or writes on the board. There is visual information and a bunch of nonverbal information available in the room. It is physically impossible to capture that information during lecture. One of my teaching mentors, Patrick Morris, likes to say “when the teacher is talking, you’re not learning.”

When I ask my students to be honest with themselves about their learning in lecture-based classes, most students readily admit that they don’t have the time to think deeply about almost everything the teacher says. Students who report that lectures are not completely useless tend to have sophisticated processes to learn the material covered in lecture outside of the lecture period. In other words, for everyone other than the teacher, the lecture is not when deep learning happens.

When I hear a student say that watching the videos takes longer than lecture, they’re basically telling me: “learning takes me more time than I’m given in most of my lectures. When I have the chance, I need to slow down material and really think deeply about it. Since I can’t do that in lecture, lectures give me a false sense of security. Lectures begin and end at pre-determined times, even if I haven’t learned anything. Thus, independent of my understanding, lectures make it easier to balance my various time commitments. In this class where we use videos, I can’t lie to myself anymore. If I’m serious about learning, I must spend more time than I do in a lecture-based course. Thus, I must be more thoughtful about how I manage my time.” Cheers to your discovery. Now, ask me how I can help you better manage your time. I have a lot of ideas about this that might benefit your learning.

1. How do you prepare for your in-class work with your learning partners and learning group mates?
2. How prepared do you feel to engage in collective learning in your small teams? In other words, how prepared are you to work in your groups?
3. Do you feel you spend enough time outside of class to make the most of our in-class time? As you think about this question, meditate on the following questions:

* How often do you come to class with questions to ask your group mates?
* How often do you talk about learning strategies with your group mates?
* How often do you show your learning partner’s your lesson notes?
* How often do you read your learning partner’s lesson notes?
* How often do you brainstorm new directions to take your portfolio with your learning partner?

1. What do you struggle with when trying to work with your learning partners and learning group mates?
2. How effectively do you feel you use your time in class to grow alongside your learning partner(s), your learning group mates, and with other members in our classroom community?

## Your learning portfolio and your progress in this course

1. Show me what you have accomplished in this course so far. Show me evidence of the work you’ve done in this class so far. This might include, but is not limited to, any of the following:

14A. Your responses to the journal entry prompts

14B. Any reading you’ve done to improve your learning systems. This could be reading Jeff’s blog post, reading Jeff’s Conquering College articles, or from any other sources you use. I’m not asking for an extensive review of all reading or work you do. Instead, I’m inviting you to share the work you’ve directly related to this course that is helping you become a more effective learner.

14C. Any work you’ve done towards finishing the individual videos, lessons, or projects in this course.

* Handwritten notes from the videos
* Your work on the in-class lesson handouts
* Any other project you’ve been working on for this class

Do your best to organize your portfolio so it is easy to read, easy-to-navigate, and highlights all the work you’ve done so far to thrive in this class. I want you to pay special attention to setting up this portfolio so that you can continue to build on your work in the coming weeks and months.

Also, I encourage you to imagine/pretend that you might want to use your work for months, years, or decades into your future. Think about your work in this class as providing a potential foundation for part of your future career. I am not claiming you must continue to work on this material after you finish our course. What I’m asking you to do is to be thoughtful about how you spend your time. Here are two different scenarios that are worth considering as you create your portfolio in this class.

Scenario 0: You treat your work in this class as “required” and expend a bare minimum of effort to learn in this class. You do not think deeply about your learning and put together a portfolio that is teacher-centered (focused on doing what you think the teacher wants). At the end of the class, you give yourself an A in the class and then go on in your education. You don’t improve your learning skills, nor do you take the time to engage with this content for your own benefit. A few years after you finish this class, perhaps when you’ve transferred to your next school and are in upper-division classes or maybe in graduate school, you realize that you actually have a deep intellectual need for the work we did in this class this quarter. When you go back to your work from our class, everything you’ve produced this quarter is useless to your future self because you did not take ownership over your learning this quarter.

Scenario 1: You begin to imagine that the work you do in this course is for your own learning. You work to create an experience that you feel is valuable. Although you do not have an exact vision for how your future self might use this knowledge, you remain open and hopeful that you can transform the 12 weeks we spend together into future learning and growth. As you build your portfolio, you spend extra time making that portfolio valuable for yourself so that you can return to your work for years to come. You keep an eye on creating learning skills that you can transfer to the next stage of your education. You also do work in this class with the hope of building your resume. You dedicate energy towards growing your career capital so that you can create a career that you love while doing work that makes you happy. You don’t worry about having answers to all these difficult questions about your future. Instead, you treat your portfolio as part of the process of learning. A few years after you finish this class, you realize that you need the work we did in this class this quarter. At this moment, you go back to your portfolio, and you can easily access everything you produced. It’s as if no time has passed and you dive right back into your work. You can do this because of how thoughtful you were during our class.

## Learning self-reflections

1. What are your goals for this course?
2. What are your goals for college in general?
3. How do you define learning?
4. What are some of the main things you’ve learned in this course so far?
5. Given your definition of learning above and your description of what you’ve learned so far, assess your learning in this class? What type of learning are you doing in this class? Are you engaged in deep learning or shallow learning?
6. What about this course have you particularly enjoyed? Why?
7. How motivated do you feel to learn in this course? Why do you feel this way? Where does this motivation come from? How do you generate, recharge, and strengthen your sources of motivation?
8. How do you feel about your level of motivation? Are you satisfied with how much work you’re doing? Do you wish you felt differently about your participation in this course? Why do you feel this way?
9. Approximately how much of the videos do you watch before each class?
10. Outside of our time together during in-class meetings, approximately how much time do you spend on working on learning for this class? Besides our time during class, when, specifically, do you tend to work on this class? Be as detailed as you can in your analysis about when you get your work done. Describe your work patterns. What days do you work on your learning for this class outside of in-class meetings? What time during those days? What, specifically, do you do during those study sessions?
11. Do you ever talk about this class outside of class? What do you talk about? With whom do you talk?
12. What do you want to learn for the remainder of this quarter? What do you hope to get out of this class?
13. What do you want to do in this class that you expect to carry with you after the quarter ends? Why do you feel this way?
14. What types of mistakes are you making in your work in this class? Why do you think you made these mistakes? What have you done to correct those mistakes and grow your abilities to perform in this class?
15. If you were going to give yourself a grade right now, what would it be? Why? Remember, you will be assigning your final grade in this course. Your response to this question has no impact on that final grade decision. The point of this question is to help you self-assess your learning at this point in the quarter based on your own standards for your work in this class and in your education.
16. Look at questions 1 – 28 of this worksheet. Then look at question 29. What do you think of the idea of compressing your learning (your responses to questions 1 – 28) into a single letter grade? What do you think of the idea that a single letter can accurately describe everything you’ve written here? Be careful here: I’m not asking you to talk about your understanding of grade from your previous life. I’m asking you to think about the idea that a grade is supposed to represent learning. Look back on your responses to questions 1 – 28. This is a subset of your learning. What is more valuable for your own progress: a single letter or all the work you’ve done in thinking through your responses to these questions? What happens when you use the letter rather than to think about these questions?

## Reflect on the course design and on your learning needs

1. What is challenging about this course? What suggestions do you have for your instructor to help you address your challenges?
2. What are the aspects of this class that you appreciate? What in this class is helping you learn? What suggestions do you have for your instructor for things that he should continue to do in order to help you learn in this class?