

Brownout

It's that time of the semester for us all. The excitement of beginning a new course is long over. The middle of the semester is long, and crowded with midterm exams and other responsibilities. And we won't get a break until Thanksgiving—just before finals.

For many of us, this is a period of potential "brownout"—reduced energy and dimmed lights.

As a teacher, it's around now that I see students who were working on "As" slipping into "Bs", and those achieving "Bs" lapsing into "Cs."

So--fight brownout!

We don't have an exam in Sp Cm 322 until 12th week. But the material we'll be covering in upcoming weeks—on advanced forms of argument, and on refuting arguments—are the key skills required for getting an "A" in this class.

This is challenging, but not impossible material. It takes time and practice to sink in. So:

Keep coming to class!—even if you're not fully prepared.

Prepare! The readings aren't all that long.

Ask for help! If the readings do seem too long, or the class work too much, then talk to me about it. Who knows, maybe I'll eliminate some of it!

Work with your group! Figure out a way to mix things up a bit—that can help with midsemester brownout.

Schedule! Make a list of the *important* things to do, and schedule when you'll do them. Don't sweat the small stuff.

Finally, consider your personal goals for this class. If you're taking it pass/fail, or if you are aiming for a specific grade (like a "C"), come and talk with me. I would *much* rather see you do fewer assignments well, than a whole bunch of assignments badly. We can re-design the course to meet your particular learning needs.

Did you know that teachers experience brownout too? Here's some advice that teachers of teachers offer them about dealing with midcourse droop:

<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/energize.htm>

Check it out—it might be useful for you, too.