

Academic Advising

General

I am available to act as both a "pre-major" advisor for all students and a "major" advisor for students who have elected a sociology or anthropology, and certain college majors. Except for students assigned to me as first year advisees, I require that you've taken a course with me before accepting you as an advisee.

My "Advising Philosophy"

I believe that the purpose of education is to change us. I also believe that the best educations are "custom made" rather than "off the shelf." The advisor-advisee relationship, when it works best, facilitates education as a change process and helps the student to craft an education that is uniquely her own. I do not see my role as indoctrinating or forcing a particular version of the liberal arts on you, but I will be quite persistent in pushing you to educate yourself both broadly and deeply, to try things you don't think you will like or you don't think you can do. I'll suggest courses to you because I think highly of the teacher, that s/he will be "good for you" or "is someone you should experience." I'll have ideas about where your education or your career interests seem to be heading.

Audacity and Credibility

Nothing is sacred. Rules are meant to be broken. The only thing that matters in the end is that we get out of the way of the student who really wants to learn. I also believe that exceptions and leeway are earned through the establishment and maintenance of credibility. Education is made of attempts, successes and failures, victories and defeats. These things do not harm credibility. Bamboozling, bullshitting, excuse making, and persistently making bad choices do. I will encourage and support your audacity in a similar measure to how you maintain your credibility.

Learning Contract

As a condition of having me as advisor, I require you to complete an ["advising contract"](#) each semester. This is an unofficial document between me and you about how the coming semester fits into your education. It consists of four parts.

In the first part you articulate your long and short term goals as they stand at this point in time. This is a chance to re-think what you are trying to get out of your Mills education and to think about what, in terms of your personal and intellectual developmental trajectory, you hope to put into and get out of this semester.

In the second part you list the activities that you will be undertaking for transcript credit.

In the third part you describe what other activities you have on the agenda for the semester. What things are competing with school work for your time? What are you doing to stay healthy and sane? What are you doing to make college fun and exciting as well as intellectually challenging?

Finally, you get to specify criteria that define what would make this a satisfactory semester for you. It might just be a particular GPA or it might be specific grades in specific courses. Or maybe you'll call it successful if you come out of it with a decision about your major or a successful proposal for your senior thesis or getting the committee on academic standing to accept your college major petition.

Learning and Advising Contract

Name _____ Mills ID _____ Email _____

Fall 2015

Semester (including this one): at Mills 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 and to Graduation 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Goals

Long Term (*Why are you in college? What do you want to be "when you grow up"? What are we working towards here?*):

Short Term (*What do you hope to accomplish this semester? What are your performance targets? How do your immediate goals fit into your overall educational trajectory? Why these courses at this time?*)

Academic Activities undertaken this semester for credit

Dept	Course Number	CRN	Section	Course Title	Instructor	Pass/Audit	Credits

Other Activities (*What other things (work, extracurriculars, family, etc.) will you be doing this semester that contribute to your education, round out your life, and/or compete with your schooling?*)

Criteria for Evaluation (*How should we evaluate this semester both as a satisfactory educational experience for you and as a satisfactory performance by you.*)

Signatures

Student Date Advisor Date

The point of the contract is to encourage pre-reflection on your part and discussion about your aspirations as the semester begins. It is an opportunity to articulate your current version of "why am I here at Mills" and a chance for me to push you to higher levels, encourage you to reach your targets or, perhaps, warn you about some potential bumps in the road on the path you've laid out. After the semester is over, the contract gives us a guide for looking back over the semester's work and asking what we've learned and how your education is unfolding and where you want to go next.

Staying in Touch

The fastest way to trash a semester is to lose touch with your teachers and advisor. I will keep an eye out for you over the semester but it is ultimately your responsibility to keep in contact with me. Send me updates; let me know how things are going (both when they are going well and when they are not); come talk to me when you're first thinking of dropping course X rather than after you ignored it for three weeks and have no choice but to drop it. Don't worry about disappointing me when academic things don't work out as planned. I have had more extensions, incompletes, re-takings, and renegotiations than you ever will. If we can talk about it, there is a solution. Email danryan@mills.edu. And you see me biking around campus all the time — flag me down.