

Over the course of my time at Iowa State, I have gone through a number of experiences through my courses. Some felt monotonous, and others felt like I would never use the concepts learned in them, but others prompted my curiosity and taught me a set of valuable skills.

My favorite engineering courses I've taken all centered around working on projects. I've heard many times through the years at Iowa State from students who avoided the courses because they thought they were difficult and a challenge to do well in. I've never feared failing. To fail is to learn, and these courses set me up to learn more than any other course. The first project course I took was CPRE 186. I didn't even know the class existed until the end of my first semester. It sounded fun, so I took it. In there, all I did was make a simple game for phones, but I learned a lot that would carry me forward. That project was the first one I worked on that involved version control, and it involved doing a lot of external research about the technologies we were using. I also made a few friends, some of which I still talk to from time to time.

This love for a self-made challenge continued through COMS 309 and COMS 319. Both courses are project centric. I was also the leader of each of my groups. In COMS 309, I was tasked with being a leader for the first time. There were a bunch of issues that arose from this, like not picking a set of technologies for my group to use that would leverage all of their skills. That left me answering a lot of questions late at night. But it forced me to think about the bigger picture of projects, something that I've seen is important to keep in mind while working in industry. Our project in that class ultimately failed, but the TAs of the course awarded me with a distinction that I was one of the best project managers in the course. Knowing how to manage a project was helpful when I took COMS 319. In there, I managed a team of eight people with varying amounts of technical skill. Again, I had a lot of questions to answer after going to sleep, but I was able to better steer our direction. I took full ownership of the roll of project manager too, pushing back against TAs and even the professor about unreasonable deadlines. Our project ended as a complete failure; it was hardly usable. But our professor and TA recognized that we were the group setting the standard for everyone else, so we still got a good grade.

As I transition out of college, I look forward to starting my career. After my first apprenticeship in 2016, I've felt trapped in time, each day lasting forever as all I wanted to do was return to my new home. Sometimes, the courses I took would make the time go by faster by serving as a playground for some of the skills I was learning over the summers. As I phase out of school, I won't have those isolated environments to fail in. But I will have communities of other engineers I can learn from and lean on more than I did here. For that reason, I don't fear my future career. Instead, I hope to keep on learning more.