

Autumn Quarter Reflection

I have done well so far in autumn quarter for what I can say. My grades are doing well in the majority of my classes, I surprisingly haven't yet turned an assignment in late yet, and I haven't had a mental breakdown or some large crippling problem yet, unlike many of my friends. I have *something* of a social life here, though anyone who observes me would definitely say that there's a lot of room for improvement in that regard.

Beyond that, though, I've had many expectations here subverted. While homework and general course material have been manageable, exams are another beast entirely. The CSE 143 midterm in particular was quite the wake-up call for me. After the relatively relaxed MATH 126 midterm, I didn't think I'd have to study particularly hard for the 143 midterm. I imagined that having a strong understanding of the course material and enough speed to finish everything on time (which I did work on developing the day before the 143 midterm) would be sufficient. However, I was caught off-guard by the how difficult the questions were compared to the practice midterms, the unfamiliarity I had with the question types, and how many dumb little mistakes I made when I got my test grade back. After talking to people, including one that got a 98/100 (!) on their test, it seems like the right way forward was to study a bunch of different variations on each category of problem and learn the subtypes by heart, since there were only so many subtypes and many of them were available in the practice resources. In short, I needed to study more and with a larger variety of problem sub-types (recursion over strings, recursion over numbers, etc.) in order to do better on the midterm.

Speaking of CSE 143, I will say that I'm a bit tilted at the internal grading system there—it's very nitpicky and punishes you with -5% for so much as putting an exception after one insignificant line of code. As a result, I'm somewhat disappointed in my grade in CS right now (as an 85ish%), but I'm not sure whether I could have done better, or whether it even matters given that I'm already in the CS major and have many more classes ahead of me—though GPA does affect standing in Honors and scholarships, so maybe my stress is justified after all. It's safe to say that I'm a bit surprised at how much weight exams are given here as well—the upcoming final could make or break my grade.

Now, how well have I done in keeping up? I've done well with homework and decent with studying, but both sleeping at a reasonable time and waking up in time for classes has been a major hurdle. In trying to attain a social life (either in-person or online with distant friends), I've stayed up significantly later than I used to in high school, often until 2 or 3 AM. I've also discovered that I am terrible at waking up to an alarm clock and either fall back asleep after taking 10 minutes to shut it off or

completely ignore it. As such, I have adjusted my winter class schedule accordingly to have classes start at 11 AM. Time management is still something I'm learning, though—there's a lot to juggle.

After looking back, I have a few goals that I'd like to fulfill for next quarter. First of all, there are some underutilized resources out there—office hours, for example—that I need to and most likely will seek out as classes get harder. I'd also like to figure out how I can ad-hoc Honors classes, for that matter. Most importantly, however, I want to become better at managing my time, because time is everything in college and my grip on how well I manage my time is slippery at best.

Word Count: 643