**Student Responsibility & Accountability**

This class may differ from your previous high school experiences in several fundamental ways:

1. **Work load** (daily reading, assignments, notes, etc.)
2. **Responsibility** (ask questions, get help, actions have consequences)
3. **Accountability** (no spoonfeeding, no telling “the answers”)

Let’s elaborate briefly on each:

1. You will need to keep up with the reading, notes, & assignments. If you want to succeed in the course, these are **not optional activities. Cramming the night before won’t work**. **Skimming the reading before or during class will not work either**. You need to think of this class as a *marathon*, not a series of wind sprints. Steady, sustained, quality effort wins the race rather than waiting before running as quickly as possible to try to catch up. Keeping up with quality study time is a minimum requirement. You can easily **expect 10-15 pages of reading per one hour of class meeting** (not per week). If this is more than you are accustomed to, then you may need to make adjustments and/or get outside assistance. A reading workload of **40-45 pages per week** is appropriate for college level courses.
2. If you are putting in sustained, quality effort and still struggling, then it is up to you to ask questions and seek assistance. It is not your instructor’s responsibility to tell you things that are readily available in the course syllabus, for example. Avoid making excuses for why you can’t do something. Don’t blame others for lack of performance. Own up to weaknesses, attempt to improve, and get help. I’m more than willing to clarify & assist, but I will not do the work for you. Finally, **remember that no one can *force* you to study or learn**; as independent adults we are all responsible for our own actions and their consequences: good or bad. **Success in school is a *choice***.
3. This course is designed to help you become an independent learner and improve in important skills: note taking, reading to learn, writing to show the big picture. Don’t expect me to ***give you*** the notes or Powerpoint, expect to make your own notes in an active way. Don’t expect high grades for little effort or achievement, you will be rewarded for doing the work. Don’t expect me to tell you “the answers,” or lecture straight from the textbook. Expect many different opportunities to demonstrate how much you know. **Rewards will come for putting in hard work, but you’ll need to take an active role in your education rather than sitting passively waiting to have something done to you**. If you’re waiting, but not doing anything, then nothing meaningful will happen.

If this sounds a bit harsh and intimidating, then that’s okay. Every semester, **I see numerous students who *could* succeed but *won’t* put in the effort**. Don’t be a victim making excuses for why you can’t do something. Don’t give up on something just because it’s new or challenging. **Most students who end up dropping *could* have succeeded, but they *chose* not to**. They opted out of an opportunity to earn an education and learn independently.

Finally, keep in mind President Obama’s words from his address to American schools during Fall 2009:

But at the end of the day, we can have the most dedicated teachers, the most supportive parents, the best schools in the world—and **none of it will make a difference**, **none of it will matter** **unless all of you fulfill your responsibilities**, unless you **show up** to those schools, unless you **pay attention** to those teachers, unless you **listen** to your parents and grandparents and other adults and **put in the hard work** it takes to succeed. That's what I want to focus on today: the **responsibility each of you has for your education**. . . . I want to start with the **responsibility you have to yourself**.

In short, this class will treat you like a responsible college student, not an immature high school student. If you have bad study habits, then the structure of the course is designed to break those bad habits (e.g., procrastinating, not reading, not taking notes, skimming, etc.) and replace them with independent, disciplined college-level habits.

p.s., if you find this approach odd or insulting, consider the following:

1) According to ACT’s [**report for 2013**](http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/education/2014/08/21/act-test-report-fraction-iowa-graduates-ready-college/14375763/), only 31% of Iowa high school graduates were college-ready in English, reading, math and science. At Kirkwood, **50% are NOT college-ready in writing**, **62% in reading**, **80% in math**. About 70% of must take at least one developmental course in basic skills. These are non-college level courses to get students up to speed for credit-bearing coursework.

2) At Kirkwood in 2013, **39% of students reported studying only 2-5 hours per week**. **Almost 70%** of students spent 10 hours/week or less preparing for classes. This is well below a *bare minimum expectation* of studying ***at******least* 1 hour outside class for every hour spent in the classroom**.

3) In a 2013 [**nationwide survey**](http://www.ccsse.org/survey/bench_student.cfm) of community colleges, Kirkwood ranked below average in **student effort** as perceived *by the students themselves*. In that same survey, **46% said they rarely or never use any tutoring resources**. And **31% haven’t read any books** for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment

**QUESTIONS:**

1. **Why am I telling students this information at the beginning of the semester?**
2. **What specific things do you think will be or have been the most difficult in adjusting to college?**