

The Water Resources Planning Masters Program: A Follow-Up

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My full-time semester at Johns Hopkins is over and I am back in the office. I have completed four of my classes (and have a 4.0 GPA, I might add!) with seven classes remaining. This spring I will be taking my first on-line class – Environmental Impact Assessments. I am hoping it will be fairly straightforward. I have been warned that Hopkins' on-line classes are very demanding. There will be a lot of reading and writing involved. I will have to register early so that I can enroll in the required "On-Line Orientation" class, which will begin on 14 January. The class itself will begin the week of 20 January. The bureaucracy of registration rivals anything I have ever seen in government service!

I am glad I had the opportunity to take the full-time semester. It was quite an experience! It took approximately five weeks for me to get into a routine – to get back into the groove of being a student. By midterms I was feeling a little more confident that I wasn't making a HUGE mistake in thinking I was ready to go back to school! I found the other students were all feeling similarly inadequate and unprepared – and they had almost all been full-time students at some point in the previous two or three years.

After the midterms, the Economics Foundations class started looking more like economics and less like calculus, which made it a whole lot more fun! Unfortunately, the Ecology class field trip that we had scheduled to go to Assateague Island was rained out. We then rescheduled to go to a saltwater marsh a bit closer to home, and that trip was cancelled due to ice, so we only had one field trip. My Ecology class was offered in the evening, so all of the students were working professionals. It was a nice break to talk to "adults" once a week! The professor was a terrific teacher, as well as being an expert in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

The Water Resources Development class was a consistent joy. The professor, Red Wolman, is the son of Abel Wolman, Chairman of the Water Resources Committee of the Natural Resources Committee (1935-1941). Dr. Red Wolman is an amazing lecturer whose depth and breadth of knowledge is awe-inspiring. Our class topics primarily covered hydraulic civilizations. Hence, Dr. Wolman brought in slides of his many trips to China, Israel, Mexico, Brazil, and Egypt. The extensive reading lists he provided are a resource in themselves! We also discussed water rights in the western United States. Even though the semester is over, he has promised to make up a lecture that was cancelled due to snow. We will be discussing either flood control in the Midwest U.S. or else navigation on the Mississippi. Either way, I am looking forward to the lecture.

There is a part of me that would have liked to stay in school for one more semester to finish most of the class work. There is another part that is anxious to get back into a "normal" routine and start applying some of what I learned. I strongly encourage anyone who is interested in taking this opportunity offered by the Corps for an advanced degree to seriously consider it. The experience is, at a minimum, mind-expanding. I still recommend that if you are looking at starting next September, sign-up for a calculus refresher course this spring. I will be taking Differential Equations and Linear Algebra this summer; not having had the course already was an impediment to signing up for courses for the spring. Good luck!