São Paulo, the “Land of Drizzle”

by Ana Carolina Benito Barduco

Have you ever heard about the “Land of Drizzle”? Do you know where this place is? It is São Paulo, the city where I was born and raised. It is a big city in Brazil, and there are about 12 million people. Their citizens call it Terra da Garoa (Land of Drizzle) because almost every day in the afternoon, there is light rain. Maybe this city reminds you of London or New York, but for me, there is no other place in the world like São Paulo. Because of history of colonization, immigration, and tourist industry in São Paulo, we have people from different parts of the world and they bring different cultures into the city. If you walk in the street of São Paulo, you can enjoy different varieties of restaurants, various styles of architectures, and hear multiple languages. So, now I will introduce some characteristics about São Paulo, and I hope you enjoy this lovely city.

If you are looking for a restaurant to eat in São Paulo, first of all, you need to think about a district. This city was colonized by many countries like Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany, Holland, and Japan; each one left to us a little about its culture. For example, if you are looking for traditional sushi you can go to Bairro da Liberdade (District of Freedom). There we can find a piece of Japan where there are a lot of Japanese people, authentic food, and festivals. During the weekends, there is a traditional fair where you can find souvenirs and many traditional foods made in the same time like sushi, sashimi, yakisoba, gyoza, tempura, tofu, manju and many others.

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museums in Brazil and oldest in São Paulo, founded in 1905. It was designed in neo-Renaissance style and is linked to the architectural tradition of Europe. Second, the sinuous shape of Edifício Copan, that looks like a wave, is a symbol of Brazilian Modernist Architecture. The Copan (above left) is a recreation center that was inspired by the Rockefeller Center in New York and where residents can live and shop at the same time. In addition, Copan was built by Oscar Niemeyer in 1966 and today is considered the biggest residential building in Latin America. Oscar Niemeyer was a Brazilian architect who is considered to be one of the key figures in the development of modern architecture.

The last one is MASP (The São Paulo Museum of Art, above right), which is famous for its structure that is a 70 meters rectangle building that sits on four huge pillars standing eight meters above the floor. This building was constructed by the São Paulo City Hall and inaugurated in 1968, with the presence of Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom. It is famous because of its outstanding brutalist structure, and it is considered to be one of the symbols of the Brazilian modern architecture.

Besides delicious food and remarkable architecture, you can also enjoy listening to various languages in São Paulo. Because of the large population of immigrants who live here right now and also because of its colonial heritage, you will be able to hear more than half a dozen of languages. Currently, São Paulo is the city with the largest populations of ethnic Italians, Portuguese, Japanese, Spanish, Lebanese, and Arabs outside of their original countries. And their cultures are well preserved until now in this city.

Today, São Paulo is considered the most multicultural city in Brazil and one of the most diverse in the world. Also, São Paulo is the largest destination of the current Bolivian immigration. Most Bolivians are working in the textile industry in São Paulo, although there is also a smaller percentage in trade. Other than Bolivians, there are a lot of Chinese people working in trade, too. They sell their imported products at Rua 25 de Março (March 25th Street) that is the place where you could find all the stuff you want with a low cost. Furthermore, because of its relevance in the world trade, many businessmen from different parts of world travel to São Paulo. And especially at commercial centers, you could hear many people communicate in English too. So, be prepared to hear a lot of Spanish, Chinese, and English beyond Portuguese when you visit São Paulo.

Finally, if you want to know more about my hometown and if you could travel to São Paulo, there are some easy ways for you to get to know this city. There are thematic tours which will present to you the most attractive things about this magnificent city. Take the tour buses and travel around the city, go down to different districts to eat some of the traditional food, and admire some unique architecture. It is impossible not to fall in love with this city; at least, it is what and how I feel. Lastly, do not forget your umbrella when you visit São Paulo, because it probably will be raining! Perhaps, that is even better, because you could say that you have a really typical day in the “Terra da Garoa”.

Note: Ana is a Level 4 student from Brazil.
Since the first time I came to Flagstaff, I totally changed! I experienced a culture shock that changed my way to see many things. I am completely amazed with the culture of this city, like the food, the sports, and the climate. Although Flagstaff is very small in comparison to my hometown Belo Horizonte, this city has many features that can be compared to a big city. There are features that are not in Brazil and that is the main reason that my daily life has gone through a massive change completely.

In my first attempt to find a place to eat, I was surprised about the options of restaurants. For example, I did not find a meal with rice and beans like in Brazil. The main foods that are found here are sandwiches and other junk foods. In Flagstaff, I cannot find a place where the customers can choose the amount of food they wish to eat. This is very different from Belo Horizonte, where it is easy to find buffets. I think the food in Flagstaff is the same all over the USA. The dishes have many calories, and the meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) served in restaurants are very different from Brazil. For example, Americans eat eggs and meat for breakfast. Brazilians eat bread or cookies with coffee. I have to eat carefully while I am here, or else I will return to Brazil looking like a fat ball.

Since I came to this city, I have had to adapt to the climate because it snows here. Brazil never gets snow, so I never learned how to live in cold weather before coming to Flagstaff. One nice thing about Flagstaff is that it has four very distinct seasons. It really appears like most color books with the illustration of the four seasons.

Although Flagstaff is a small city, there are many sports people like to play: baseball, basketball, hockey, ice skating, soccer, volleyball, and others. In contrast, Belo Horizonte is limited to soccer and volleyball, not as many sports as Flagstaff, or the rest of the U.S. Basketball in the United States is more popular than in Brazil. Although my country has basketball practice centers, it does not have the same popularity as in the U.S. Soccer is popular in both countries. Most important, there are sports that do not have a center of practice, like hockey, or baseball, which is one of the most famous sports in Uncle Sam's land.

Flagstaff is a city that has many features of both big and small cities. There are so many great things about this city that I and other people love about it. It is almost a perfect city, except the disadvantages of the buses. I think that living in Flagstaff is better than Belo Horizonte because of the reasons that I explained. I love this city so much and I will always remember my time living here.

Note: Rafael is a Level 5 student from Brazil.
In a future where everything is artificial, the movie *Her* tells a story about a depressed and lonely guy named Theodore who starts a relationship with an operating system (OS) named Samantha. This leads to a strange path for Theodore and the people surrounding him. Theodore realizes that his relationship with Samantha is not healthy, which makes him even sadder.

Throughout the film, he struggles between happiness and depression and that the only true love that he found in this life is with an OS. He learns more about himself and more about life as he continues moving forward.

*Her* is a self-discovery film, and it shows a possible future of our world and whom we love. What we have here is a movie that captures the soul of the decade. With all the visual effects in movies nowadays, it is a rare thing to see such a simple and beautiful movie. *Her* shows the true meaning behind how we allow technology to separate us from each other. It was written and directed by Spike Jonze, an American filmmaker who is known for independent films. He made films like *Being John Malkovich*, *Adaptation*, and *Where the Wild Things Are*. *Her* is what I consider his masterpiece. I found Jonze’s film well-written with an original screenplay and a dialogue that was realistic in terms of love in the future of a life controlled by machines.

Outstandingly acted by Joaquin Phoenix, he held the whole movie on his shoulders and showed us the meaning of depression and loneliness. Once he met his love interest, he understood the meaning of joy and appreciating life after he met her. Scarlett Johansson, as Samantha, delivered one of the finest performances of her career even though she only voiced her character. Her voice created a real character that I related to strangely. She became more than just a voice in the movie and to the story; she became a hope to Theodore. Even though her part might seem simple, it held much deeper emotions.

The cinematography was beautiful, capturing the beautiful skyscrapers, colorful walls, and street lights. At the beginning of the movie, the cinematography was dark and colorless, and then after Theodore met Samantha, it became colorful and bright. Simply, it shows us how Theodore’s life changed from a life of depression to a life filled with hope and love. The darkness and colorful scenes are symbolic of Theodore’s life between the beginning and ending of the film.

In my opinion, the directing was the film’s best feature. Jonze’s visionary eye and his creative mind were displayed in *Her* perfectly. As I consider it the film’s best feature, the directing of the film was perfect. Spike Jonze as a director provides the feeling of simplicity and realistic visions of life without relying on CGI and visual effects. Unfortunately, the film was not recognized for the directing among both critics and audience.

The movie *Her* is my favorite movie of 2013 and one of my top 5 of this decade. I rated the film 10/10 which only two films of 2013 received from me (*Her* and *Gravity*). I highly recommend it for those who enjoy drama. The film received nominations for 5 Oscars, including Best Picture, Original Screenplay, Music Score, Song (the moon song by Karen O), and Production Design. It managed to win only one, which is Best Screenplay by Spike Jonze. Nonetheless, the movie is not about the awards and money that it received, but about the true meaning behind it and what it warns us viewers about our possible future.

*Note*: Fawaz is a Level 6 student from Kuwait.
Capital Punishment:
A Camouflaged Brutality
By Larize Bezerra de Melo

About two thirds of all countries have abolished capital punishment as a law and a practice. However, in the United States, the death penalty is still a legal sentence in 32 states and the federal civilian and military legal system. The fact is that there is a lot of evidence for the confirmation of this punishment as something controversial in a lot of aspects. Statistics and research have shown that the death penalty is racially biased, it claims innocent lives, it costs more and diverts resources from genuine crime control, it disregards mental illness, it is arbitrary and unfair, and it is not a deterrent for criminality. So when will we stop committing a crime to justify another one? The death penalty should be extinguished immediately because it is camouflaged brutality and a result of a failed prison system, and because paying for a life with another one will not solve the crime problem.

The first reason to extinguish capital punishment as soon as possible is that the death penalty is a camouflaged crime legalized by some constitutions. This means people keep killing each other because it is their right as stated by their constitution. We are living in the 21st century, but some countries keep reviving one of the oldest and most outdated laws: the “Law of Retaliation”, arising from the kingdom of Babylon, around 1780 BC. According to this law, people could make justice for themselves, so they used to commit crimes to avenge others without being punished, under the “eye for an eye” principle. This is what the capital punishment does: the judiciary system in some countries can kill people if they are found guilty of a barbaric crime.

Another problem found with this punishment is that it is a result of a failed prison system. People say that keeping criminals locked up does not work because when they are released, they usually commit even worse crimes. So, people think that this is the perfect excuse to defend capital punishment. However, instead of being used as an excuse for the legalization of the death penalty, this problem should inspire people to improve the system. For instance, if an adequate treatment was offered for prisoners while they were incarcerated, they would have more chances to improve their conduct before being released (which they do). What is more interesting is that to modify the prison system costs the public coffers less than continuing the death penalty, which costs a lot for investigation, verdict and for the procedures involved in the execution of a person. In other words, capital punishment diverts resources from the original crime prevention such as mental health treatment, education and rehabilitation, meaningful victims’ services, and drug treatment programs.

Finally, paying for a life with another one will not solve the crime problem. Capital punishment only creates an endless cycle of revenge through which people will continue to kill each other. Gandhi, one of the wisest persons in the world, once said, “An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind”. This means that if we keep avenging crimes in the name of safety or justice, we will only be committing other crimes, fueling hatred instead of stopping it.

Should letter grading systems be replaced with pass/fail grading systems?
By Jose Reinaldo Pereira dos Santos Filho

The only person who people should compete with is themselves. This is the most fair challenge. However, almost everyone was born with a purpose of being better than others surrounding them in life. That is not different in elementary, high school, and college. Those periods use a letter grading system that stimulates competitive behavior. iddu Krishnamurti argues, “Real learning comes about when the competitive spirit has ceased.” Therefore, this system should be replaced with pass/fail grading systems because letter grades may encourage cheating, does not prove our knowledge, and is not an individual method to evaluate.

The letter grading system encourages cheating. Life in school is a kind of game, which nobody wants to lose (having low grades). Once you need to have high grades to be known, people usually try to find a way to bypass the system through….

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cheating and pretending to be a good student who fits the purpose of this model. Since they are receiving grades, people will be pushed to be better than others, not better for themselves. That is, they will not enjoy as much as they can the subject because the focus is not to increase their knowledge; the focus is to increase the grades in any way. Companies have faced a hard problem to evaluate the academics of people who want to apply for a job. In other words, how could employers be sure that the grades from prospective employees are solid proof of their knowledge and ability? How can they know if this student had cheated all the time in school/college to gain the status of a great student?

Moreover, letter grading systems do not prove our knowledge. The grade will represent the day on which people take tests, and you may not feel good when you are taking them. In other words, the knowledge that people may have will not be used during the time of the test due to the disruption of illness or loss in their family. Letter grading systems push us to focus on grades and people keep in mind that if they have great grades, they consequently fulfill the requirements of the subject. Also, this system may not help to increase knowledge in some cases because grades may disrupt some goals in the life of some students. They spend their time trying to improve their methods of study or time management in order to be the best student in class. Instead of that, they could be thinking about what subjects they need more counseling on and about how to go deeper for specializing in an area in the near future.

Another advantage of the pass/fail system is because this one is an individual method. A quantitative way to evaluate students does not show students' true skills, such as how they develop their ideas in class, how they persuade people in their lectures/presentations, how they lead people in their work. People may think that since they are not receiving grades by their effort, consequently they will be more comfortable to face their objects and goals in class. The reason is that the society in which we live has thought that people need to be pushed by something/someone, in this case the grade system, to do a better job. However, when you are in a pass/fail system, you have a concern to learn something to have a "free mind" and to show for someone, for instance, in an interview for apply for a job, how you did/how was your behavior as a student during your school/college life. After all, students are not all the same; they are different and individuals. Thus, they will react differently to teachers, school objectives, content (materials), teaching methods and forms of assessment. Those different reactions will lead them to learn differently. Therefore, the personal characteristics of the students deserve more attention.

To sum up, grades do not turn someone into a better person compared to another because this is not a method to measure our behavior, commitment, effort, knowledge, efficiency and other important skills which define a person. One fact is that our society is still impressed by numbers. Changing the current system will take a long time for people to have the habit of being valued through different tools. Also, it will be difficult for professors to determine specific characteristics of each student in a huge class, for instance. However, as a new idea, other people could contribute with enhancements to improve the pass/fail method as other ways to have tutors to help professors in the evaluation of students during the class. Although it seems radical, the pass/fail system will finally abolish the overemphasis on human quantitative grading and change education as regards qualitative evaluations.

Note: Jose Reinaldo is a Level 6 student from Brazil.

Diamantina: A journey in history

By Paulo Ricardo Silva

Diamantina is a Brazilian city in the state of Minas Gerais, which played an important role in the history of colonial Brazil from the eighteenth century. With almost three centuries of foundation, from village to city, Diamantina is rich in history and traditions with a strong architectural heritage. Due to its mineral wealth, the city became the largest center of diamond extraction in Brazil. At the time, the region called Arraial do Tijuco came to be called the Diamond District with its own government, run by a contractor, who was the richest man in colonial Brazil.

Diamantina is also the birthplace of renowned Brazilian citizens. It was in this city that one of the most famous and controversial love stories in colonial Brazil took place: the love between Chica da Silva a...
The Importance of Solar Power

By Gabriel Luiz Lisboa de Sousa

Using environmental resources to produce energy is an outstanding option for a sustainable development in countries that have a high sun incidence. One example of solar energy use is found in a village in Freiburg, Germany. The buildings in this village were designed to generate the most efficient electrical energy through solar power. The electrical energy produced there is sufficient to provide all of the village’s demand and the surplus is sold to a public network. This is an example of crucial technology for several countries once all the energy is produced with no environmental impact. Brazil is another country that has a high potential for using this technology. But if this kind of electrical production has such advantages, why is Brazil not using this technology on a bigger scale? The response is the lack of financial incentives by the government.

There are other sources of environmentally friendly energy sources in Brazil, such as hydro-power and biomass. However, this is not a reason to ignore investing in solar power and to depend mainly on these kinds of energy. A recent incident in Brazil proves this. The lack of rain in some places in the country has decreased the level of water reservoirs and consequently affected electricity production. Such events require the activation of thermal plants, which produce more expensive energy and release pollutant gases in the atmosphere. Even though using solar energy is necessary, it is not easy for most Brazilians to install solar panels on their houses. The current cost of a complete and installed residential system can vary from R$ 7,000 to R$ 15,000. Because of this cost, the owner has to be willing to wait at least 10 years to receive a return for this investment. This initial cost and the long time to receive the monetary return is demotivating for Brazilians to invest in solar energy. Therefore, a greater incentive by the government is necessary to expand solar energy use.

There are some factors that would facilitate such an expansion. For example, crystalline silicon, the raw material for solar cells, is found in large quantities in Brazil. Furthermore, this system decreases the energy loss caused by energy transition once the electricity is consumed in the place where the panels are installed. And most importantly, this system produces more energy in high demand hours. During the hours of high solar incidence, the energy demand is equally high due to the use of electrical devices. The use of this technology on a larger scale would help to decrease the demand required at electric companies. All these reasons are more than sufficient for the government to take action to facilitate the access to solar energy.

It is undeniable that the investment in solar energy is necessary for Brazil. It has plenty of natural resources to produce electricity and the sun is disposable in high intensity throughout the year.....
Moreover, the lack of some of energy resources can affect the country’s economy substantially. Therefore, it is necessary to diversify the methods of energy production. The use of green energy is the basis of a country’s long-term development and solar energy is the most important one. I strongly believe that encouraging the use of this kind of energy in Brazil is necessary and has to be put into action as soon as possible.

Note: Gabriel is a Level 6 student from Brazil.

**Enjoying More Than the Nice Weather**

*By Lais Gabriela Caldas Lopes*

Flagstaff is a small city, located in the North of Arizona State, with around 65,000 inhabitants. This city has an incredibly beautiful landscape and it is an amazing place to live. Flagstaff is known as a tourist spot, especially in the winter, when it starts to snow and the Arizona Snowbowl, one of the oldest run ski resorts of the US located in San Francisco Peaks, opens for those who love outdoor adventures. In addition to the attractions of the city, there are many other places to visit around Flagstaff. Even those who are unfamiliar with the outdoor life will fall in love with the natural sights of the rich Arizona State.

In September 2014, I visited the Grand Canyon National Park. It was my first outdoor experience in Arizona and the U.S. The Grand Canyon is 73.5 miles away from Flagstaff and it is a natural geological formation, divided into the North, South, West and East rims. The South rim is the most visited and accessible during the year. The Grand Canyon has a great diversity of animals and plant species. Research registered the existence of more than 1,500 plants, 355 birds, 47 reptiles, 9 amphibians, and 17 fish species (National Park Service, 2014), making this place interesting not only for visitors, but also for researchers.

Another wonderful place around Flagstaff is the Slide Rock State Park, near Sedona. It is 24.9 miles away from Flagstaff. I went there in October 2014. It is a nice place to go with family and friends and spend some time appreciating the nature. Although it is a preserved park, the fire that happened in the last summer has damaged the park in crisis proportions, and we still can see how the fire affected the area, because the trees are regenerating and the river is black because of the ash.

The Horseshoe Bend is located in Page, 131 miles away from Flagstaff. It receives this name because of the shape of the Colorado River in this specific point. In this place, those who visit it needs to park the car and walk for about 1 mile to get to the place where visitors can appreciate the view, which is very beautiful and a little scary because it is like a cliff, but the pictures you can take there and the sensation of being there is worth the risk.

The last place I visited was the Antelope Canyon, which is also located in Page. Although it is called canyon, its structure is completely different from the Grand Canyon. It is not a big hole, but a cavern where in some times of the year floods occur, being responsible for the different shapes and appearance of the cavern. On the walls of the cavern, we can see some curves made by the water, and the rocks have different colors. The time that you go into the cavern affects how the colors will appear, and the best time to go there is between 11 am and 1 pm, when the light of the sun comes directly from above, lighting all the rooms and making everything clear inside the cavern.

These are some places where I visited in Arizona that can show how wonderful it is and how many things we can do outdoors in here. As a fun fact, The Grand Canyon, The Horseshoe Bend and the Antelope Canyon are some of the places on the lists “29 Surreal Places In America You Need To Visit Before You Die” and “27 Surreal Places To Visit Before You Die” (Buzzfeed).

Note: Lais is a Level 6 student from Brazil.
Do people, especially the younger ones, know about the danger of piercings? In the recent years, people have been getting more and more piercings on their bodies. Piercings are becoming the most popular accessory to identify people. Despite many people getting piercing, this accessory can cause several problems in the human body or even cause some diseases and infections. There are three reasons people get a piercing: to be popular among their group of friends, to protest against their parents or their society, and to have an accessory that they think makes their appearance better.

First, people get piercings to be popular among their friends. According to the article “Complications of Body Piercing” by Donna I. Meltzer (2005), most of the people that get piercings on their bodies are between 16-24 years old. It means that piercing is most used for teenage boys and girls, and normally teens like to be accepted by a specific group of people that are well-known for radical attitudes. For instance, when teens start in a new school and they want to start new friendships, and sometimes new friendships means doing something someone else has done.

Second, besides the use of piercing to be acceptable, teenagers get piercings to be a rebellious person, and to oppose their society or their parents. Some youth use various kinds of fashion tendency to protest against their parents or the idealism of what is right. Piercings are one thing that recent youths have found that gets attention from others. Some people that got piercings are known as the specific person (a girl/boy that has piercings), so it is a way to create an identity and be an uncommon person.

Next, piercings are used many times because people want to be fashionable, and piercings help to complete a style they want. For example, the famous singer Miley Cyrus has piercings. Many fans are inspired by her, so then they get piercings just because Miley has some. People that have piercings use them to appear more attractive. People use piercings to improve their appearance, so they usually use a discrete one, and normally in the eyebrow and sometimes in the nose. Some people claim that piercings can highlight their best features. In fact, some piercings are beautiful and if used correctly can help them to enhance their beauty.

In conclusion, these three reasons are why people get piercings: to be popular, to protest against their parents or their society, and to be fashionable. Many people think that piercings can help to follow the trend that the media shows them. According to the book The Piercing Bible: The Definitive Guide to Safe Body Piercing by Elayne Angel (2009), some standards of the actual beauty are being shown by the media, and many times this notion is not real. People should be careful and analyze if they are only following the trend, or if the use of piercings is for concrete and acceptable reason.

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**Is Caffeine Addiction Very Dangerous?**

By Valesca Bettim Feltrin

Can you last one day without coffee? If the answer is no, you may be addicted to coffee. However, it’s not the coffee you are addicted to but the caffeine. Caffeine is used in other drinks too, like soda, tea, energy drinks. Sometimes, candy is even filled with caffeine. You can be addicted to either thing. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) researchers show that 80% of Americans adults consume caffeine every day (Stromberg, 2013). There are three effects of caffeine dependency: it makes the people more attentive, it makes the people over time need more and more caffeine to maintain the same attention, and it makes the people feel symptoms of withdraw if you try to reduce the quantity of the caffeine.

First, the caffeine changes your physiological system, making you more attentive. According to “This is How Your Brain Becomes Addicted to Caffeine” by Joseph Stromberg (2013), caffeine creates an alert feeling. The molecule of caffeine is very similar to adenosine, one natural molecule present in the brain. Therefore, the caffeine has the right shape of the cells in the brain. Caffeine makes the brain create energy and a sense of alertness a long time. So, many people drink coffee because they want to stay more awake.

Second, in order to maintain the same attention, you need to keep the same amount of coffee intake. As Joseph Stromberg (2013) explains to us, “The underlying chemistry is complex and not fully understood, but the principle is that your brain is used to operating in one set of conditions … that depends upon regular ingestion of caffeine.” This explains why people drink a lot of coffee, or other drinks that contain caffeine have to drink it daily. Thus, your body needs larger amounts of caffeine to keep the same activity.

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Finally, if you try to reduce the quantity of caffeine, you will feel some symptoms of exhaustion and light pain. In the article “Caffeine Addiction: Can You Quit” by Melissa Stoppler and William Shiel (2013), the author talks about how the effects of caffeine withdrawal can persist until 7 or 12 days after the last quantity of caffeine. The symptoms when you try to stop drinking these drinks can be severe. However, the effects of caffeine withdrawal do not last long like other addictions. The effects without caffeine start around 12-24 hours after the last quantity of caffeine. The symptoms can persist until 7 or 12 days if you do not have any caffeine in the body.

In conclusion, caffeine can be addicting like drugs because it stimulates the brain. The more people drink it, the more they need it. And, if you attempt to stop drinking it, you will experience many symptoms of withdrawal. However, the symptoms do not persist a long time, just for a few days. If you like drinks that have caffeine, you need to be prepared for a few symptoms when you try to stop drinking these drinks. This addiction does not have many bad effects on your body, but it is easy to become addicted.

Online or Face-to-Face Classes?

By Leone De Oliveira Araujo Freire

With the advancements in technology, there are many things that we can do nowadays without leaving our homes, just sitting in a chair. And getting an education is one of these things. Online learning is becoming more and more common today. In this type of education, you can “go” to classes by just turning on your computer and logging on the internet. But how effective and useful is this? Many people have concerns about this type of education and wonder if it can truly substitute the traditional face-to-face classes. In fact, I believe this type of education cannot substitute the traditional one, but it can be helpful to students and be part of the whole system of education. So, if we analyze the effectiveness, the cost, and the time a person can save because of this type of education, we can see that it might be really helpful to the entire system.

First of all, depending on many factors, a person can spend less money by taking online classes. For example, with increasing gas prices, using a car can really take a lot of a person’s money. Of course, people can use the public system of transportation, but there are many students who already are parents or have jobs. So, they have to take their children to the school before going to class, then they have to pick up the children at the end of the day. In this case, it is almost impossible to use public transportation, and if it is not impossible, then it probably takes a long time to do all these things.

Additionally, online classes can save the university money. Some people say the universities cut corners so that many majors need less resources to provide education online than with face-to-face classes. The university can provide online tests, online materials, and they can pay the professors less since they do not have to go to classes. In fact, they can do their job at home.

The second point is the effectiveness of the online classes. If the classes are really effective and can provide a great knowledge to the student, then online classes might be an interesting way for students who cannot go to university. However, we know that there are majors that a person cannot study by just taking online classes. For instance, engineering and medicine would not be great online. How can a university make great doctors if they do not actually practice, and they just read materials and take tests online? This is why I believe online learning should be taken with the traditional face-to-face classes.

However, there are some majors that a person can really do well only with online classes. For example, law and economy could be good over the internet. I believe that these kinds of majors can be taught online, but in order to succeed, they must be taught effectively, with tests, good materials, time to talk with the professors, and answer some questions that the student might not find in the textbooks. We know that an amazing characteristic of the face-to-face classes is the easy contact the student has with the professor, so the universities must find a way to not lose this in the online learning.

The third and last point is the time the student can save by taking online classes. Tom Snyder (2013) said in his article that online learning helps student learn at their own pace, and some problems like parking at the university can be eliminated. So, we can say that in the online learning the student can save time, and his or her graduation can be easier in these little aspects. The student can save time in many ways; for instance, the student does not have to spend time getting dressed to go to the university, or moving to the university, etc. Another interesting point is that the student can take his or her classes at any free time (after work, on weekends). The student just has to have a computer and internet access.

To conclude, online learning can be really helpful to increase the knowledge of people, and with the digital world that we have today, it can be a wonderful way of learning altogether with the traditional face-to-face classes. However, there are some majors that cannot be taught by just taking online classes, and the universities must know this and still maintain the traditional classes in order to always make great professionals. So, online learning becomes an additional way for people to learn, and it does not let their problems interfere in their dreams of getting a diploma.

Note: Valesca is a Level 4 student from Brazil.

Note: Leone is a Level 6 student from Brazil.
Fall Activities and Field Trips

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