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# COMMENT

## **Making the most of college: studying ourselves to life or to death?**

*June 2006 - V. 29 I. 4*

by Calvin Seerveld

A few suggestions for a Christian student at a secular university . . .

1. Major in the best profs, who make you think self-critically and who give solid course content in a field-area that you have gifts for or can be busy with, without noticing the passage of time.
2. Take a double major, if possible, to promote the ability to do interdisciplinary thinking, a kind of informal philosophy major (if the philosophy available is sophistic, skeptical or "undeeep").
3. Get in-depth knowledge of a certain period: 5th to 4th century B.C. Athens, Renaissance England, Europe around the time of the French Revolution, or America during the 1920s. That is, rather than staying with survey knowledge, get close to a slice of cultural life somewhere, once upon a time, in many of its facets—a form of encyclopedia-historical study. Maybe work for a couple summers or part of a year in an African village, do volunteer work in Central America, or take a job on the south side of Chicago or in Toronto's Regent Park.
4. Do your thesis or long paper, if possible, on the history of the

### **Comment Recommends**

Every week the editors and various contributors of Comment submit links to their favourite things.

It is our intention in these weekly suggestions to point you to resources that we have found interesting, compelling, or disconcerting.

### **This week:**

For an introduction to the school of Christian philosophy elaborated by Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, see *Roots of Western Culture*. For a more accessible introduction, see "Neocalvinism 101."

In "Making the most of college: Studying ourselves to death," Calvin Seerveld recommends reading the medieval, Christian storyteller Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury*

discipline you are interested in. Normative problems turn up in the decisive turns and crises an area of study undergoes, and such changes face you and your prof with the fact that the status quo did not drop out of heaven but is a response by humans driven by spirited love and philosophical commitments.

5. Find a group of kindred spirits with whom to read books of Christian philosophy together, any kind of communal deeper reflection on current problems, so that you exercise in community how to pin down the idolatries of our day in theory. We need to help one another detect ideas that lead thinking programs into dead ends, or unpack concepts that foster self-righteousness.
6. Read a novel every month or so, to gather in the breadth and richness of the big Russian writers, the French authors like Balzac and Flaubert; get to know George Eliot, Melville and Faulkner; read Gabriel Marquez, Chinua Achebe, Ursula le Guin, go back to the Christian Chaucer—it's all there to sift and learn from, an incredible treasury of insights and errors.

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### **Reverberations**

What are people saying about 'Making the most of college: studying ourselves to life or to death?'?

The MacLaurin Institute: Cal Seerveld on Making the Most of College

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