

## Credit Hour Comparison

Current Student	Possible Future Student
3 Credit Hour System	4 Credit Hour System
<b>Credit Hours</b>	<b>Credit Hours</b>
5 Classes - 15 Hours	4 Classes - 16 Hours
<b>Stress Level</b>	<b>Stress Level</b>
Medium	Medium
<b>Average Class Difficulty</b>	<b>Average Class Difficulty</b>
Lower	Higher
<b>Free Electives</b>	<b>Free Electives</b>
More	Less



## Technology overload causes excess boredom



Molly Skyles

We are losing the battle against boredom. This serious epidemic has taken control of our classes, leisure time and weekend activities. There is no escaping the wrath of those measly words that are said almost daily in almost every setting — “I’m bored.”

Boredom symptoms include mindless scrolling through Facebook or Pinterest, accidentally eating an entire container of Pringles while watching six-plus “Malcolm in the Middle” reruns on Netflix and picking your cuticles for 20 minutes while your unread English book sits next to you.

There is no apparent cure for boredom, but its causes are becoming clear. I hypothesize that technological bombardments have forced our brains into a hyperactive state that nothing can live up to, causing boredom.

I, too, regularly fall victim to boredom. I am not proud of this, but staring at a computer or TV screen all day turns my mind into a texture similar to tapioca pudding, where no books, walks during nice weather or meaningful conversations with friends can reverse.

At least I’m old enough to remember a time when TV and the computer did not overpower my life. I used to not be bored. I used to play outside and find card or board games a feasible means of entertainment. And maybe if I try hard enough, I can revert back to that life. I can turn off everything that rings, blinks or talks at me and learn how to remain content, or if I’m lucky, find enjoyment.

The younger generations don’t stand a fighting chance. Their day begins with cartoons less about education and more about crazy, colorful make-believe creatures with flashy, seizure-inducing lights and sounds. Next, a child’s computer is turned on, and he or she spends hours playing games that, similar to the cartoons, involve high energy all the time. The end result is a child who cannot sit still, read a book or play outside because nothing can compare to the thrill their screens provide.

In defining the cause of boredom for Truman State students, an obvious factor comes into play — location. It’s an easy blame, really. We live in rural northeast Missouri, which, if you haven’t noticed, is not the most exciting location. So, rather than stepping outside our Kirksville comfort zones and exploring what else the area has to offer, we whine about how we are so bored because the obvious solution to be being bored is to sit and complain about it. It’s fascinating if you haven’t tried.

The point of this column is not to tell you to get off your couch and experience life, or go rowing at Thousand Hills to cure boredom. While those probably are good pieces of advice, that’s a column for a much less cynical person, and like I said, there’s no cure for boredom. This, instead, is a much lower form of opinions writing in which I attempt to express my own demise into a technological black hole of boredom. If you are anything like me, which if you are between the ages of 18-22, I assume you are, then I expect to see you in a zombie-like state staring at your respective screens right alongside me until you eventually utter, “I’m bored.” To which I will concur.

While I’ve made it clear technology, and therefore boredom, dominate my life, I often do other things, which is probably the only way I’ve remained sane. I enjoy reading books that are not on a screen, tap dancing and hiking. However, after completing all these seemingly meaningful tasks, I escape to my computer or TV for a moment of relaxing monotony.

I guess I enjoy being bored. It’s so much easier than actually using your brain. My only piece of advice is try not to complain so much, because we all know you secretly love stalking people you don’t even know via Facebook. If you really were bored, you would stop and do something.

Molly Skyles is a senior communication major from St. Louis

## Increasing credit hour system would create issues



Connor Stangler

In terms of potential workability, effectiveness and harmlessness, it actually sounds pretty good.

But the potential switch from a three-credit hour system to a four might harm Truman students more than it helps (see story, page 1).

A reform can increase curricular efficiency, while still enhancing the students’ educational experience. But, the two are also not always bedfellows: Streamlining academics often comes at the expense of classroom quality. Before the student body endorses this switch, faculty and administrators must work together to determine a valid, honest rationale. They must consider three questions:

### Will the plan reduce student stress?

With the new plan, the average student would take four classes instead of five. Ideally, the student then would have more time to commit to a few classes rather than

spreading themselves thin from five. History department chair Thomas Zoumaras acknowledges that students already are unbelievably stressed. Even with the new system, professors will expect us to devote just as much effort and time to our work. So, I doubt stress levels will decrease.

### Will professors sacrifice the rigor of classes?

Zoumaras admits to the threat of reduced quality, but said what the students will lose in breadth, they will make up for in renewed depth.

I can’t count the number of times I wish I had more time to linger a little longer on a book, paragraph or sentence before my other assignments compelled me to move on. But I also can’t measure the knowledge, skills, work ethic, friendships or connections I have made or subsequently would lose in that fifth class. Even if I had the chance, would I exploit the opportunity for depth, or would I surrender to other distractions? Academically, it seems, the plan either would change nothing or everything. If it is the former, by all means, change. If it is the latter, the benefits are not guaranteed to outweigh the potentially devastating costs.

### Is the fifth class that important?

The answers vary depending on the class. With the four-credit system, some major-required classes inevitably will have to be combined with others while some electives

will have to be eliminated. The student will not lose essential skills, but instead will be at risk of losing the non-essentials. Despite the label of insignificance, the “non-essential” skills are just as important in the eyes and heart of a liberal arts education. We value the non-essentials — the classes and interests our intellectual liberty directs us toward — just as much as the essentials required for the professional world. In short, streamlining education seems to limit choice and the tenets of the liberal arts.

Arguments in favor of the plan are sometimes just as persuasive as those against. The negative effects on the student’s experience might be negligent in the long-run, and we absolutely must make big changes to cope with a cut in state funding. It is difficult to avoid some reduction in quality while trimming the academic fat. But, we must consider these technical questions along with the more abstract ones. We need to consider what we want to preserve and how we want to be perceived.

Since I arrived at Truman, I was told and thus convinced Truman was committed to delivering an education that bred thinkers and leaders. Although the times demand change, we should never betray what we told ourselves we valued.

Connor Stangler is a junior English and history major from Columbia, Mo.

## Should the University make some classes worth four credit hours?

“Yes. It would be nice to have less classes to worry about but it would put more pressure on classes.”

Hannah West  
sophomore



“I think it would be fine, especially if you could graduate earlier.”

Rosa Duncan  
sophomore



“The more credits you can get the better, but it should only be done with harder classes so more work wouldn’t be involved.”

Sam James  
junior



“I definitely agree. I’m a nursing major and put more time than I should on three hour classes.”

Greg Taplin  
junior



## AROUND THE QUAD

## High gas prices act as incentive to protect the environment



Zach Vicars

In the midst of climbing national temperatures and soaring national debt, economists and environmentalists finally have something to be happy about — the price of gas.

As academic disciplines, economics and environmentalism seem like strange bedfellows. Environmentalists constantly are lobbying the government for regulations for businesses that might harm the planet. Some of their more publicized, if not a little stereotypical, goals are to stop factory farms, get SUVs off the road and save the whales.

Economists argue the markets operate most efficiently when they are “free” —

or restricted by the government as little as possible. They might not like manure pollution, SUV smog or whaling, but they think the free market should be allowed to adjust itself — or that incentives should be put in the right place to minimize harmful behavior.

The skyrocketing price of gas — which the March 16 edition of USA Today reported could exceed \$4 a gallon by summer — puts the economic incentives to protect the environment in the right place, and economic incentives usually cause a change in consumer habits.

I’ll give you an example from my life. It costs me more than \$50 to fill up my Mazda pickup — that’s about as much as I make at the Index in a year. Obviously, I’m going to do whatever I can to cut back my fuel spending. I’ll walk to school, bike to Wal-Mart and roller-blade to church if I have to.

The main problem with the consumption of petroleum is the transfer of carbon. Essentially, burning a gallon of gas takes carbon previously stored beneath the Earth’s surface and releases it into the atmosphere. Carbon that once had been part of a subterranean triceratops fossil now is floating around as CO<sub>2</sub>, contributing to our buildup of greenhouse gases.

Environmentalists traditionally have tried to tug at our heartstrings to reduce our fossil fuel consumption. Al Gore tried by showing a PowerPoint in which the world basically dies of heat. Disney tried by producing a movie with a dancing penguin. As far as I can tell, neither did much to affect meaningful change.

You might not be able to change the consumers’ minds by attacking their heart, but hit them in the pocketbook, and they are sure to repent. Travelers will take fewer road trips and go on more bike rides. Grocery-getters will buy more local products because they require less petroleum to bring to market, and yes, many Americans will trade-in their Hummer for a hybrid.

Furthermore, when gasoline prices go up, that really is just a function of an increase in the price of crude oil, which is used to make many other goods. Jet fuel, large chunks of Vaseline, grocery bags and a large chunk of the United States’ energy are produced using crude oil. With a hike in prices, Americans — and citizens of our global economy — are going to have to choose how important those goods are to them. Ultimately, most of us will choose to consume less.

I began this column with a statement

that probably is not true. I doubt many economists truly are happy about the rising price of gas. In general, high oil prices are depressive to the economy because oil is an input in the production of almost every good and service. Farmers can’t produce as much grain, truckers can’t afford to ship as much freight and used-car salesmen end up with a bunch of pre-owned Hummers they can’t sell.

However, if the oil crunch continues, there will be powerful incentives for innovation in energy production. The first person to perfect hydrogen energy — or even nuclear fission — will not only be an environmental hero, they will be an economic success. In the short-run, we might see a gas-powered economy falter as the price of fuel keeps climbing, but in the long-run, we might witness the birth of an innovation-powered economy, in which both environmental and economic interests are protected.

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