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The Winter Reading Project

Background

The winter reading project is simple and should be useful. In order for the students in this class to form some background knowledge and ideas prior to the start of the class it is important that each person reads a bit over the winter break. The book that has been chosen is Ratey, J. (2002). *A user's guide to the brain*. Vintage Books. It is an excellent book that presents complex and important ideas in a simple, highly comprehensible manner and is, therefore, perfectly suited to our purposes.

An excellent text that would be helpful along with Ratey (2002) is the on-line publication called Neuroscience: The Science of the Brain. It provides a very simple guide to the brain and aspects of the nervous system. It is available here: <http://brain.mcmaster.ca/BrainBee/Neuroscience.Science.of.the.Brain.pdf>

Requirements and Guidelines

Basically, the students need to read Ratey (2002) in its entirety. That is the main and most important requirement. In order to extend that knowledge and to get students to try to internalize some of the concepts students are expected to answer several questions about the reading and what they have gotten from it. Students should answer each question as a well-formed mini essay supported by direct quotes from Ratey (2002). A rough draft of the student's answers should be brought to the first class session, where we will use the answers to the questions as a way of reviewing the text in general. The final version of project is due on **March 15th**.

The Questions

Answer each of the questions below in a complete and well organized short essay. Make sure you include quotes from the text to support your answers.

1. How would you best describe Ratey's overall view of the brain?
2. According to Ratey, which specific part/region of the brain plays the largest or most diverse role in brain functions?
3. Which of the many claims that Ratey points out do you find the most interesting?
4. How does the four theatres view work?
5. Using this view of the brain, how can you activate learning more effectively?

Two other very interesting books that one might feel compelled to take a look at as they are more practically-grounded books shown below.

Jensen, E. (2005). *Teaching with the brain in mind* (2nd edition). Alexandria: ASCD.

Willingham, D. T. (2009). *Why don't students like school?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

All of the materials mentioned here provide an excellent introduction to this course and could be seen as complimenting each other. It is recommended that students try to take a look at all of these different resources, but focus on Ratey (2002) first.