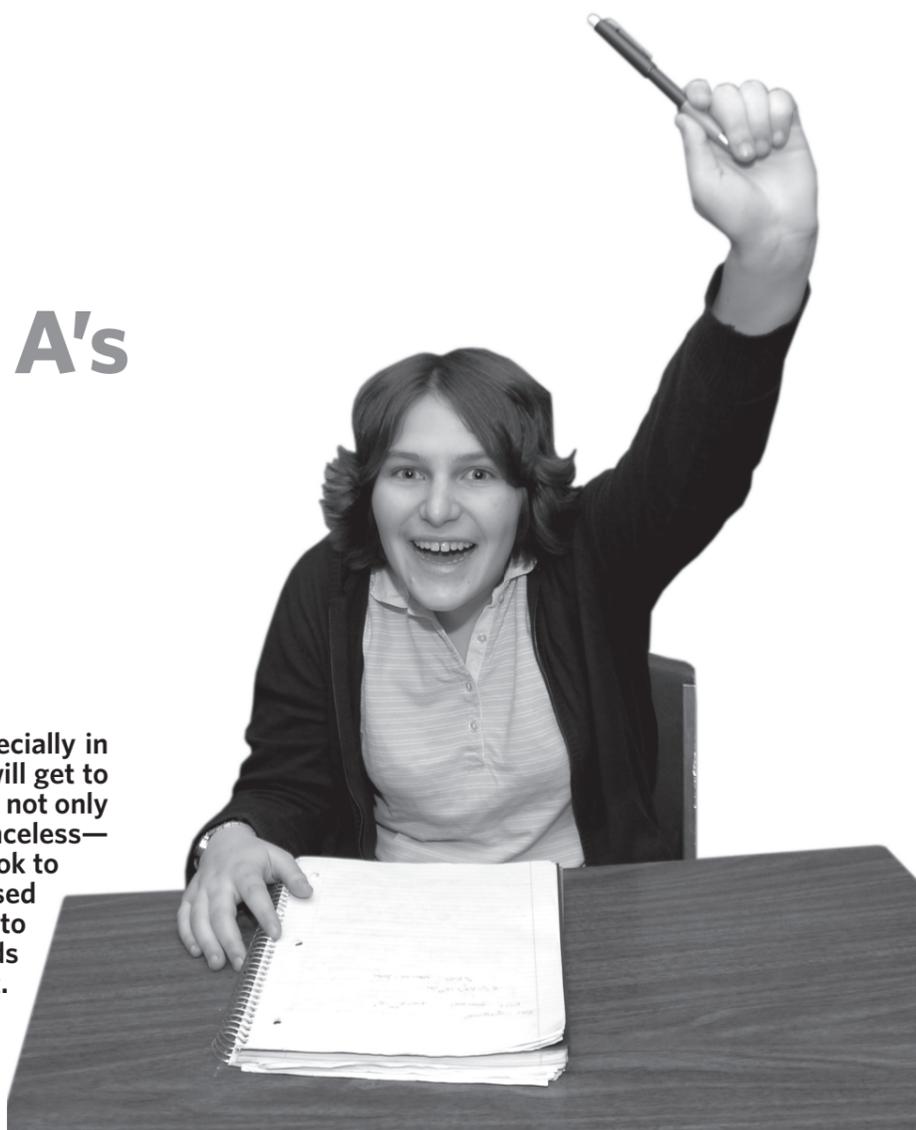


Class Act

Dissecting the U of A's larger courses

Large classrooms are the norm on this campus, especially in first-year courses, where it's rare that a professor will get to know even a quarter of its students by name. In fact, not only do students remain nameless, but some also remain faceless—an element of large classrooms that the Gateway took to the test. A handful of undercover reporters immersed themselves in the largest lecture halls on campus to observe learning unfold—or in some cases, eyelids droop. Read on to find out which classes scored best.



As I walked into Dr François Larose Anthropology 101 class, I found it hard to find a seat. Tory Lecture B1 was full of eager students who already had their pens and paper out, ready to take down notes. Only a few groups here and there were having discussions about the past weekend's events, but as soon as Larose began to speak there was an immediate hush in the class. All you could hear was the rustling of paper.

Throughout the entire class, students paid great attention to the lecture and laughed at the few random jokes told by the professor. Larose interacted well with the students by asking questions to test their understanding. The two boys next to me would quietly debate the answers. The lecture style ranged from open discussion, using the white board to write down key words, to a PowerPoint lecture. This allowed for the young students to learn the fine art of note taking, which all the students appeared to be quite proficient at—except for the only girl in the class who was writing “Dear Diary...” a few rows ahead of me and giggling with her two friends over a drawing she had done of a boy. I do sincerely hope that Miss Diary has nice enough friends who will share their notes with her. On the whole, I much enjoyed my first experience in an anthropology class, and would recommend attending Larose’s section.

—Nathalie Nadeau

Anthropology 101

Introduction to Anthropology

MWF 2–2:50pm

TLB 1

Prof Francois Larose

Biology 107

Introduction to Cell Biology

MWF 1-1:50

TL 11

Prof Michael Harrington

Let me start off by saying that at 450 students, the sheer size of this class was absolutely astounding. Imagine arriving at one of your lectures five minutes early and having to scan the room feverishly in a desperate attempt to find an empty seat. This is the challenge that some students in Michael Harrington’s Biology 107 class must face. With this number of students, it comes as no surprise that the entire lecture was accompanied by the constant hum of side chatter. Despite this, Harrington spoke very clearly, and even though I was seated at the very back of the theater, I never had any trouble understanding what he was saying. Every few minutes, he would pause and ask, “Are there any questions or comments about [insert topic here]?” Alas, no inquiries were ever made. At one point a student raised his hand but apparently he was seated too far back for the professor to take notice. I found it interesting that several students didn’t even bother to open notebooks and I even noticed that some were involved in what appeared to be text message conversations. My favourite part of the entire class was when the fellow beside me gave up on the lecture entirely and began playing solitaire on his iPod. Although the professor was doing his best, the immense class size was not at all conducive to student participation.

—Joel Tiedemann

For the first time in two years, I stepped into ETLC and walked into the very room that once held my very dull Biology 107 class. It’s a nice lecture hall, no doubt, but the location of the building is terrible—as could be seen by the numerous latecomers arriving within the first 20 minutes of the 90-minute class.

The students were attentive overall and they continually took notes. Farias encouraged class participation by asking questions, but students seemed rather shy to answer.

Nevertheless, Anatomy 200 is a surprisingly interesting. The topic of the day was the skeletal system and as someone who flunked the “name all the bones of the body” test in junior high, I was prepared to get completely lost. However, simple, colourful diagrams and the occasional use of a plaster skull projected on the screen (who knows? It could be real, as the professor mentioned later that the skull was a “she”), I found the concepts easy to follow and understand.

Farias spoke clearly and had a good sense of humour saying, “I hope no one gets nightmares tonight,” as she positioned the bony face to stare (and smile) at the class in a rather lively but creepy manner.

—Kristina De Guzman

Anatomy 200

Human Morphology

TR 3:30–4:50

ETL E1 001

Prof Anna Farias