

Student Writing Concerning the Book Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.

Reading Assignment Changed From Required to Optional

Fall 1997 & Spring 1998

In the fall 1997 the Zen book reading[1] "requirement" was changed to "optional", but reading the book was still urged as being very helpful to improving physics learning. As in previous years, students read the "Zen Book" and wrote occasional brief "Zen Progress Reports" in their Lab Report Books. Some of the more interesting reports are of presented in **Section A** below. This document is complimentary to and follows same outline and editing standards as two other companion documents.[2]

When the Zen requirement was chanced to optional, content of the student writing remained approximately the same, but overall, fewer students read the Zen Book, and a larger percentage of those that started the book, did not finish it and/or read a smaller portion.

In the Fall of 1997 an opinion survey concerning the Zen Book was included in the APHY 201 Final Examination. The student written responses to this survey are presented in **Section B**, starting mid-way in this document.

Section A. Student Zen Summaries as Appendix to Weekly Lab Reports.

KB

Physics 201 Lab Book Appendix Fall 1997

I am now on chapter 11 in my Zen novel. These past few chapter have really puzzled me, but I'm sure as I read on things will become more clear. I was smiling when reading in chapter 9 (p. 95) when the author goes on about using experiments for [to achieve] mechanical testing. "If the horn honks, and the mechanic concludes that the whole electrical system is working, he is in deep trouble." This reminds me of trying to do problems in our chapters. One must test and test and try again, and form new hypotheses in order to gain knowledge and find the correct way to approach or do a problem.

I also had to laugh when the author said, "By far, the greatest part of a [mechanics] work is careful observation and precise thinking", (p. 96). Need I say more? Finally (p. 98) Phaedrus' goal kind of caught my attention:

"The state of mind which enables a man to do work of this kind is akin to that of the religious worshipper or lover. The daily effort comes from no deliberate intention or program, but straight from the heart."

That passage totally describes my feelings about my education. I do not feel like I have to go to class, or do assignment, because I don't. Deep within myself, there is a driving force that keeps me going, yearning for more and more knowledge. Am I making sense?

JBAPHY 201 Lab Book Appendix Fall 1997

I went to the book discussion even though I didn't read much. Then I came home and read the part that talks about science as ghost and this really made me think. Well it is true that science is like ghost. It's all in your mind. I know that we are taught about [biology] speciation and [physics] black holes, but we don't actually know or have proof. It's like faith. Well, I believe in God, but I don't actually have proof. But it is something I was taught and it's in my mind, but it is something that I believe and feel strongly about.

TP

APHY 201 Lab Book Appendix Fall 1997

I chose the excerpt: "the study of the art of motorcycle maintenance is really a miniature study of the art of rationality itself" from chapter 8 as my topic today. I chose this quote because I felt it was ironically correlated with our lab and its correlation with everyday life. Likewise, I chose this quote from Chapter 9 which states, "an experiment is never a failure solely because it fails to achieve predicted results." I found this quote appropriate to both the lab and real life.

RP

APHY 201 Lab Book Appendix Fall 1997

I started reading Zen a week ago. I have enjoyed the book so far. The characters John, Sylvia, and the narrator are really good representatives of people today. There are people like John and Sylvia that take things for what they are and don't bother to read into things to understand why they don't work. For instance, [take] John's motorcycle, he does not know how it works or even how to fix it. It is a BMW, which isn't supposed to require a lot of maintenance. This is the reason he bought it. The narrator, on the other hand, wants to know how things work, and likes to put things together. He also talks about keeping a notebook in order to keep up with maintenance on his bike. This is when he talks about how important the scientific method is to discovering what is wrong

with his bike and then a method to fix it. He says that his motorcycle is a system like the government. Certain pieces of equipment run different areas [in the machinery] on a motorcycle just like in the government, and they all work together to form one system. He also explains that steel can be made into anything, because it is something that came from someone's mind. There is no steel in nature. The narrator relates this to what Phaedrus says, "that it's all in the mind," like the ghosts.

Some things [in the Zen book] are straightforward and others are things that you have to think about and make into something. Phaedrus is someone that the narrator relates to. I'm not sure of how the narrator knows Phaedrus. There are some things in the book that I don't understand. A help session would clarify many of the different situations that the narrator has experienced. [A discussion group was started.]

I finished Zen. It is a very interesting book. It took me a while after I read it to have a full understanding of its meaning. Bad things happen to many people. It is important that we are aware of these things so that we may prevent them from happening to us. In the end, Chris was murdered, which was painful for his father, but his wife was pregnant again with a little girl. Life is very unpredictable and things are confusing sometimes, but there is a reason that things happen. You learn from mistakes and if you totally understand what happens and except it, it will make you a stronger person in the end. For example, the narrator went insane and was hospitalized, and afterwards was a totally different person. He carried with him many fragments of his past life, but he also gained new knowledge because he saw life from somewhat of a different perspective.

One thing from the book that I learned or really have experienced is one of the ways that Phaedrus taught his class. At the beginning of the semester I was concerned about what grade I received on my 1st lab. Dr. Gurr told me to not be concerned about my grade but show him that I'm learning or have grasped the information. I was concerned about my grade and not about learning the information. In Chapter 16 Phaedrus talks about how his A&B students were not concerned about their grades. They were more concerned about learning the information. The D and F students were concerned about what grade they were receiving. I started the semester out wanting to know what my grades were and I feel that I have surpassed that and concentrate more on the material than my grades. Phaedrus also discusses what the definition of Quality is. He later defines it as "the sense of what's good. That is what carries you forward. It is something that you develop. It's the direct result of contact with basic reality." I feel that the quality of my work has increased since the beginning of the semester due to more of an understanding of Physics.

After reading this book you feel like you aren't the only person that bad things happen to. It gives you the determination to make your life the best that you can by doing what makes you happy and learning from past experiences. [RP came into physics from a background in arts and literature. She was very confused by the disorienting demands of a science class. Her fall semester laboratory notebook writing demonstrates how far RP had progressed since she started physics. Her laboratory writing showed steady improvement as the semester progressed. In the last Physics Laboratory of the semester for example, RP was the one student in twenty that was able to correctly (and fully) show a graph of the acceleration of an elevator as a function of time. (This is a very difficult topic.) Her written explanations of the elevator motion, shows how she could naturally explained her elevator observations and measurements. She went on to show how the elevator actions were related to other real world actions she had experienced. These abilities were not present at the beginning of the semester. In

addition to my guidance on her lab reports, it is clear from Rohnda's above report, that the Zen Book assisted her in her efforts.]

LC

APHY 201 Lab Book Appendix Spring 1998

I am still in chapter 19. I agree with something the author says..."Don't base your decision on romantic surface appeal without considering the classical underlying form. In other words, use emotion as well as reasoning. One can't exist without the other. If you use one without the other then there will be trouble." I suppose the question should be how do you find the right balance of the two to make the best decision?

AH

APHY 201 Lab Book Appendix Fall 1997

I have just gotten into the Zen book really good. I've started reading a chapter a day, because I have found that by setting small reachable goals, more things are accomplished. I really envy John, Sylvia, Chris and his dad. I have to do so many things that even when I'm doing something as solitary as taking a walk, others intervene in my quest to be close to nature. I am constantly bombarded by thoughts of what I need to do and have not done. Unlike their leisurely travels, mine are mind boggling. However, I can still take my own meaning from his words. As he explained the importance of maintaining one's own cycle and John's fear of the technology. I likened it to the way I have dealt with the pressures and stresses of my life. Briefly, I think it's good to be able to handle things on your own, and learn how to be happy just being with yourself. It's kind of my very own motorcycle maintenance. I used to be more on the level with John ---- afraid to be alone and handle my own problems. Perhaps I wouldn't do it right and would lose too many screws in the process.

Now, however, I know that it's better to handle things on my own instead of relying on a shop (person) that just might put my mental "cycle" out of commission. The first three chapters reminded me just how important this concept is.

KM

APHY 201 Lab Book Appendix Fall 1997

After reading chapter one in Zen, I have already become more aware of my surroundings. He is right that most of the time we are so busy we don't notice the simple, pleasant things in life. We are also very stubborn sometimes, just as John is about his motorcycle, and need to realize when it's time to admit defeat. Being humble is a hard thing to do, once you realize you are humble, you aren't anymore!

JJ

APHY 201 Lab Book Appendix Fall 1997

The author starts talking about his motorcycle messing up, getting a new noise so he decides to work on it in the morning. He states that it is something to reason out. He states that it is not a knack for machines but instead it is a reasoning process and I really like what he said here, that sometimes it is called "ghost between the earphones." In other words, use your brain and reason it out and you can solve any problem.

[continued later] The author is again talking about Phaedrus and is talking about the meaning of quality. He then talks about the mountains and parks that were common [in the area]. He then goes on to say that if Jesus (or Moses) was alive today and no one knew who he was, he would probably be institutionalized for preaching the same things that we have come to respect. He also states that no matter whether we accept their idealism or not, it does not mean that it does not exist as the mountain still exists even though signs are there closing it [these areas] off.

P. S. I peeked to the last chapter to see what the end is like, Chris dies, how terribly sad!

DL

APHY 201 Lab Book Appendix Fall 1997

When I realized that this ghost that the author kept mentioning was him at one time, I was dumbfounded. It was a shock to realize that he had dropped out of college, and drove himself "insane". And ended up in an institution receiving shock therapy.

Another thought was the fact that the doctors had pronounced that he now had a new personality. To me, western medicine and its practitioners are very interesting entities, especially when it comes to the ones who play with the mind. It is interesting to think on who decides what is insane and what is sanity. I have personally met a few people that have been labeled as insane by society, but I found them to be more sane than a number of sane people that I knew. This brings me to trying to realize what is important to this author. As I read this book, I keep asking myself what is he trying to convey to me as the reader? Maybe, as I keep asking and reading, it may come clear.

Another thought that was interesting was his views on science and the scientific method. It is true that science is busy trying to determine truth through the scientific method, but there is so much that we don't [and can not] know yet, nor can it be explained (some of it can't even be tested yet). Does that mean that we should be skeptical about it? How did life come to exist when it is a mathematical and scientific improbability? Maybe some day we will know. Until then, I continue to learn, grow, and live. Who is to decide what is right? Only I can decide what is good or right for me based on my information, or input data.

[continued later] After our discussion group, I read the part where they discussed the building of the grill. It is true that many people would not consider the building of the grill as sculpturing. But, this idea does make sense; much in the same way that cooking is a form of art, and a type of creation. Any form of art is a form of creating. I think that building the grill is a simplified form of art, much like creating a dinner from frozen foods is a simplified form of cooking. If you haven't guessed, I like to cook, and I enjoy good food. One of the things that makes food good is if it is pleasing to the eye, as well as all of the other senses. Another point that interested me was the question of quality. How does one teach quality? I have heard of good teachers, good works, and good ideas;

but how can quality be taught? Or, how can one have quality ideas? Then, on the next thought, who decides what that quality is? This also brings up who decides what is good? I guess that is something that each person has to think about and decide for himself.

[continued later] I find his [the authors] thoughts on the train of thought interesting [freight train analogy]. Here we find that in our "Western" way of looking at things we try to define everything as a static system or [a static] train, but it is more than that. Nothing remains the same and is therefore dynamic, not static. Although slowly..... all things change. I seem to recall that some people get bored with life and fall into the idea that life is static, [whereas in reality] each day, each hour, each minute, each second is something new. Something to look forward to and to do something with, unless we get stuck into the frame of sameness or being stuck looking on [or inside] the train when we should be out in front, looking ahead.

[continued later] It is always easy afterwards (in retrospect), to see the "traps" or places where our energy or peace of mind are drained. But it is easier to talk about it than to actually do much about it while in an energy draining situation. Especially since we can not often step back until we do have peace of mind again in a world press-on with deadlines and appointments. It is too easy to get stressed out and in our ever pace increased world harder to get unstressed.

HR

APHY 201 Lab Book Appendix Fall 1997

While I was reading *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* I noticed a passage, in page 100, which caused me to think. "If all hypotheses can never be tested, then the results of any experiment are inconclusive and the entire scientific method falls short of its goal of establishing proven knowledge." This passage caused me to think about the experiment that we just completed on Newton's Laws. Within the parameters of the experiment that we attempted Newton's Laws hold true. However, if there are an infinite number of hypotheses and [if] they all cannot be tested, then his laws might not always work. This quote showed me the importance of testing and retesting laws like we did in this experiment, because along the line someone may think of a new hypothesis among the infinite number where the laws don't work.

Lastly, this weekend while I was reading *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* I found another quote, which made me think. "He couldn't follow any known method of procedure to uncover its cause because it was these methods and procedures that were all screwed up in the first place." This made me think of early inventors and how hard it was for them to create what they created. I mean anybody can follow a procedure and carry out an experiment but to invent and create a method for doing things in much harder. They did not have procedures to follow because nobody had ever done what they were trying to achieve. After reading and thinking about this quote I have an even greater respect for inventors and scientists who extend the borders of science to the point we know today.

Also this weekend while I was reading *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* I found yet another quote, which made me think. "Right. Eliminate the whole degree-and grading system and then you'll get real education." After reading this quote I started to think about what it really meant. I thought about how so many people, including myself, just study to get a grade. When this happens you learn whatever you need to get a good grade and after the test/exam/class you let the information drift away from your mind. If there were no grading system people would learn based on much they themselves want to learn. It would cause people to create their own level of understanding and not live up to someone else's standard in order to determine if they are knowledgeable enough. However, if the world were a perfect place, then I believe that there would be no grades as said in this book. The saying that, "One rotten apple ruins the bunch," comes to mind

[continued at end of semester] I have finished reading the book. It [is] almost amazing how he had been running so long and furiously from Phaedrus only to run right into him at the end. That is when he finally connected with Chris.

The story behind Phaedrus, The Wolf, was also interesting. Sometimes we find ourselves surrounded by sheep when we shouldn't be. But, the answer is not to simply withdraw as Phaedrus did. How to handle it is probably to try to avoid the traps, as was suggested earlier.

The final chapter of the book is saddening to hear that Chris was killed just before his 23rd birthday. All of this, after [his father] finally making contact with him. I don't believe in his view of "migration of souls" but I believe that we have or did exist before we gained our mortal bodies, and will continue to live after we lay aside these tabernacles of clay. Life, as we call it, is but a temporary stay.

Anyway, the book has made me consider what I am focusing my time on, and what it is that I consider good and a part of quality.

Section B. Student Responses to Zen Survey Questions on Physics Final Exam.

In the Spring of 1997 It was brought to my attention that students had complained to USCA Administration concerning the book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*: "Students could not see the reason for the requirement that they read this book" in order to get a grade of "A" in physics." Because of these complaints, I conducted a survey of student sentiment as part of the Final Examination in the Fall of 1997. In this class of 31 students, 29 students chose to write a response to a series of optional questions. See below for transcript of all 29 responses.

These student responses are significant because 1) This is one of my largest & best APHY 201/202 classes and 2) Students had a chance to say what they thought. and 3) This class had the benefit of a well functioning Zen Book discussion group.

These responses for the most part are positive with less numerous negative statements. Please note: The strongest negative student concerns[3] relevant to the Zen Book that I have ever directly received are in these final examination responses and are given below.[4] Read for yourself how the "vote" comes out. The complete and unabridged student responses to this survey are given below. Of course you may conclude that the students are substantially altering (or withholding) their true sentiments so as not to lose grade points. If this is the case, then we must seriously question just what kind of educational out-come is being fostered at USCA.

Zen Survey Questions on Physics Final Examination Fall 1997.

The following three questions were placed at the end of the Physics Final Examination Fall 1997. The Underlining and Capital Lettering actually used on the examination are shown. Students clearly would know that their response was optional both by the lettering of the questions and by my pre-exam instructions as the exam as it was given to the students. The complete responses of all students in the class are given. The students supplied the question number to indicate which question they were answering.

14) OPTIONAL. What have you heard people say about the book Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance? All opinions.... good or bad....spurious or well founded.... are desired. Of course your own opinion, of what these people have said, should be indicated. An analysis of your professor's opinion is also invited! Things you have already stated in your lab book or in other writing, need not be repeated.

15) OPTIONAL. How far have you progressed in this book? What have you gotten out of the book so far? Do you see why I asked you to read it? Discuss.

16) OPTIONAL. The reading of the Zen Book, although highly recommended, is in fact extra credit and optional. However it is of some interest to me why some of you have decided not to read Zen. Of course 1) Not having enough time or 2) You do not see how the book would be of any benefit, are valid reasons, but I would like to hear if there are specific reasons beyond this.

Student Responses

DL

APHY 201 Final Fall 97

14 & 15) I have heard many different things on my reading of Zen... Some people say it was a great book and others say that it was or is a stupid reading. Personally, I didn't mind the story line or some of the philosophy contained in it. I did find sections that were laborious for me to wade through. But that was mostly the deep philosophical discussions that I could not find relevant to me. As for the book, I did read the entire book and I did begin to look at my life a little differently. The book didn't change my life, or save it, but it did make me stop and think a little. When I asked you today about what grade I needed to get on the final in order to get an "A", I expected the answer that you gave me. I was interested in how you would respond. As to anything else in the book, I have recommended it to my father who happens to read an awful lot. It deals a lot with how I look at things, or should, especially in the section of problem solving (which is what physics has been mostly about).

JJ

APHY 201 Final Fall 97

14) Actually, I haven't heard too much discussion. I did hear Delwyn talk to you about the end of the book and how the author finally found himself and that is all that Chris wanted, but he found himself too late because Chris dies in the end. Isn't that the way most of life is? You make promises and you want to keep them, but time runs out on you. "Caspem diem", seize the day.

15) I got as far as Chapter 14. I see why you wanted us to read it. It gives you a different perspective on life. I'll try to finish it before the semester starts back up and give you my thoughts. I learned that I need to get past my own fear of technology and grasp it straight on.

16) I have read some but it does take a concerted effort to read and really understand the underlying message. If you had a "do nothing" day where you could sit and drink a cup of coffee and just read, it would be more meaningful.

LS

APHY 201 Final Fall 1997

14) I have heard that the book is a Must! It will change your view on everyday life; helping you to see the things that you take for granted or that don't hold your attention. It touches on ideas concerning the disadvantages of modernization and laziness. It talks of experiencing more by doing, instead of [merely] observing. I think the professor's [Dr. Gurr] opinion was right on target. The book was great and enlightened my thoughts!

15) I have read the entire book. [As a consequence of reading Zen,] I have not been such a procrastinator. I

try to do things for myself and figure them out myself. I've become more resourceful. I notice a lot more and I want to learn b/c I want to ----- not for grades. It has really changed my outlook and perspectives of life concerning what's important and what's not. Yes, I see why you asked us to read it. It is like a guide to everything your need to know about life in a story.

LC

APHY 201 Final Fall 97

14) From people who have previously taken this course, I have heard them say the book is interesting. I agree with this opinion. I don't like the comparison of the motorcycle, but I like the other parts of the book. Who would have thought to compare the maintenance of a motorcycle to logic and life? If you think about it, the author could have used a number of other things. But I suppose he understands motorcycles best. I have heard people say that the author thinks too much. I disagree. We all think too much. It's just the degree to which we think. The author goes into serious detail often times losing the reader. I think this is because he doesn't analyze himself enough to say that people won't understand this analogy because they aren't as familiar with philosophy and ancient logic. I have heard of most of the people [philosophers mentioned in the Zen book] but some people just don't understand classic and modern logic.

15) I am in Chapter 20. I think everything that the author says applies to life. Instead of using a motorcycle, I would just replace it with the idea of life. Life, just like a motorcycle, your maintenance of it determines the quality of the ride. But, as humans, we all have our separate ideas of how to proceed in life and how to take care of a motorcycle. We have to decide or assign what we believe to be "important" or quality. To some people, quality is money, to others quality is knowledge. Both of these things are important. We have to find a happy medium. That's what we as individuals haven't figured out. The most important thought is; we give life quality. But I suppose, do we really know what we are "thinking". Are these just empty thoughts and things we just make up? Do we really have a life? Are all things we propose necessary? What is quality?

I know that by me reading this book, I've become more analytical. I think: "do the decisions I make really have any value or meaning". But, I do know it's up to me to decide and set my own set of quality standards.

16) I haven't gotten any farther in my reading because this semester is so hectic. I'm about to graduate and I'm trying to work and go to school, maintain a personal life, and everything else that pertains to life. I just feel rushed and exhausted. I'd like to slow down and enjoy reading, but with exams and other classes, it has just hindered my reading.

AH

APHY 201 Final Fall 97

14) [My fiancée'] Chad, (like me) didn't find the time to read (ZMM) thoroughly during 211 and 212, but finished reading during the summer. He said it was like a soul searching novel, and well worth reading. The only problem is (from the little I read) that you need to be at a point where all distractions are gone and you can concentrate on Zen [the book]. Unfortunately, Fall is not it.

16) I think reading Zen is an excellent idea. It goes along with physics and life in general. However, it seems that I've also learned a lot (seeming to mirror this book's ideas), without reading it fully. Perhaps Zen is a book about one man's life, but extends to others via ordinary experiences. We all have our own version of Zen to tell, I realize..... but some just don't take the time to notice!

PS

APHY 201 Final Fall 97

14) I have heard different things about Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. I have heard a few speak highly of Zen and how much they enjoyed reading it. Tim Allen, (although I know he isn't a student, but an interesting example) says that he lives by Zen and it's his most important reading. I know a couple of students that may not feel as strongly, but thought it to be enjoyable reading. I agree that it's a good learning experience and would have only positive results to the person that reads it. I have also heard a few negative remarks from people who don't understand or can [not] connect it with physics. I suppose it depends on the person and on their way of viewing things.

15&16) Honestly, I didn't read the whole book. I can honestly say I intended to and would have really liked to, but I only read a few chapters at the beginning of the semester. I didn't get to finish it simply for lack of time. For what I managed to read, I got that people don't take time to see things for what they are and appreciate them. That they let life lead them instead of them leading life: (His son not seeing the greatness of seeing the ducks, ---- I think, ---- it's been awhile since I read it. [And] the couple who let others fix their motorcycle rather than do it themselves.) I would really like to read it and hopefully I'll have time to do so once finals are over. I don't like to start a book and not finish it.

KB

APHY 201 Final Fall 97

14) I wish I could have had more time to read Zen, as I hope to over the holidays and next semester. I admit, I was skeptical at first, when I read the title, but once I began to read it, it really

caught my interest, as it related to my life. My advisor, Dr. Yates, told me he thoroughly enjoyed it and is now reading another of his [Pirsig's] novels, something about when the author's son dies, mentioned back in Zen.

15) I have gotten through Chapter 12, and then I kind of got bogged down (the author would understand). I think the most influential thing I got out of the book is that I finally realize why I come to school. Why I make myself read instead of watching TV, why I get up early to study instead of sleeping in.... I'm not doing it for anyone but myself. Something inside of me is driving me to excel and get an education.

SJ

APHY 201 Final Fall 97

14) I have heard many compliments on the book "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" from friends who have read the book. I've not yet finished but have enjoyed the book thus far, and have found I share a lot of the same philosophies as the author. Dr. Gurr recommends this book highly. I'm sure he has seen it's benefit as well as experienced it in others.

JBC

APHY 201 Final Fall 97

14) I have heard both good and bad opinions on the book from previous students. However, I feel that the bad opinions were due to the fact that reading the book was required [in previous semesters]. The negative comments came from a person who hadn't finished reading the book so that could have had a lot to do with it. I will admit that the book is difficult to get interested in at first. This may be what kept others from reading the book besides the lack of time. I cannot give a good opinion since I have not read the entire book, but so far I have found the book to be interesting. The author is a great writer, and so far I can clearly see why the professor [Dr. Gurr] is so fond of the book. I think it's great that he encourages his students to read the book. His enthusiasm concerning the book makes me want to read it even more.

15) I am in chapter 6 of the book. I plan to pick up with the reading as soon as finals are over and papers are turned in. I see why you asked us to read the book. The book is about life and problem solving and our beliefs. It will help us to learn about our own selves. I will see you after completing the reading to discuss my opinion.

JB

APHY 201 Final Fall 97

14) People say that the Zen book is a great book. RP said that the main character reminded her of you. All the opinions are mostly good and one bad. That is from of course Jamie who thinks the author is egotistical and only what he [the author] says is correct. I think it is a great book from what I have read and heard from the discussion groups. It helps you find yourself. I feel the same way about you and this class. I have learned more about myself in this class than I have ever before.

15) I have only read up to Chapter 6. From this book so far I have gotten the thought that everything is a question and you have to solve it. You have to become problem solvers if you want to understand the world. I have also learned that almost everything can be considered an art. Even Science! There is a particular art to understanding knowledge! Yes I see why you want us to read it. Because it makes you see things through different eyes that become your own.

16) I'm sorry but the only reason why I didn't finish the book is because of lack of time. Also which I am ashamed to admit that I needed for some reason to be behind in something. I don't know if it is just because I know what a horrible slacker I am or because everyone else was behind in something. I don't know, I guess I'm just trying to rationalize that I have failed to read it.

PW

APHY 201 Final Fall 1997

- 14) Those that have read the book had mixed opinions. Most, however, could see the wisdom hidden within the book. Others could not because they had trouble comprehending the material.
- 15) Unfortunately, my senior research and other responsibilities must take precedence over the book. Despite this, I managed to progress to the beginning of chapter 5. I'm beginning to see some of life's answers being revealed in the text, and so I'm beginning to understand your reasoning behind the assignment.
- 16) There is no reason, other than an already saturated schedule, why I didn't read more. However, I plan on finishing it over the Christmas holidays.

CS

APHY 201 Final Fall 1997

- 14) I have heard some people from past classes say that the book, Zen, will help you with your studying. They say it tells you how to reason with your own difficult problems. Other people have said it was a waste of their time. Though I didn't get through the entire book, I have found it very interesting, more so in the second part than the first part. I have heard Dr. Gurr say that if you truly want to learn Physics, this book can help you.
- 15) I have read through the second part of Zen. I haven't had enough time to finish yet, but I have gotten out of the book that each person should learn all that he/she can about everything in life and all of life's experiences. Also, grades don't prove how smart a person is. For example, Phaedrus was thrown out of school because his grades were so bad, but yet he went through life filling his head with facts about everything and anything and he turned out to be a great philosopher. So, I've gotten that if we learn everything we can throughout our lives we will be

better off as far as wisdom goes. Wisdom will develop quicker. I have not gotten so far or far enough yet to see why you have wanted us to read it, but I plan on getting there over the holidays.

RS

APHY 201 Final Fall 1997

- 14) Most of the people I have heard having read Zen have stated that it was a good book and had important information for life, morals, etc. Not many have expressed any realization of how reading this book can help with understanding physics, but recommend reading it anyway.
- 15) I got as far as chapter 11. I have gotten that perception is different for everyone and that you should try to understand or take time to figure out those things that you do not understand.
- 16) I have not finished reading the book because two jobs and five classes have reduced my time to unfortunately only those things absolutely required. I am, however, intrigued by the book and reviews I've heard so I will finish it during my future leisure time.

MB

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- 14) I had a conversation with the manager of a B. Daltons in the Aiken Mall about this book. He said he had read it years ago and that he was unsure of the actual plot of the book but he did remember that it was a book that was about living life at its fullest everyday. I also talked to some previous students who thoroughly enjoyed this book. I have not spoken with a lot of people, but all the reviews I have received have been favorable. I think my professor, Dr. Gurr, regards this book as a teaching tool to teach students to get the most out of everyday & class and not to worry about the "minor technicalities" such as grades. As long as you understand the material, aren't you and overall better person with more insight of the universe? That is what I got out of this book.
- 15) I understand why anyone should read this book. It is a tool that helps individuals reach on understanding that life is there to be lived and learned from. Bad things do happen but if we let them overcome us, life will pass us by. I think I should re-read this book because I was reading a different book at the same time. This book was truly a surprisingly interesting book, not at all what I expected.

RP

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14) I have heard that the Zen book was a waste of time and really had no meaning. [However] I read the book and I feel that it has great meaning. Some of the parts I didn't understand, but in the end they were clear. It is a simple story with a lot of meaning. Maybe the individuals that I heard from didn't really catch the full meaning: Learn while you can and pay attention to mistakes because you learn from them.

15) I finished and wrote about it in my Lab Book. [See above for Rhonda's report.]

DS

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14) I haven't heard many people comment on the Zen book. The couple of people I have heard comment have been fairly positive. The others have been short and derogatory. When I first started reading it, I found it tedious and uninteresting. It wasn't until after I read it that some things started to make sense and click.

15) I have finished book. Read it before class started. I enjoyed his analogies. They were very "deep", and forced me to think about what he was saying. I vividly remember the mountain part. As he and his son were climbing the mountain, he was telling of Phaedrus' experiences of going to the top, he was declared insane, and his family was without him. Now, as he climbs the mountain, he hears the crumbling of rocks. He turns them around to head down the mountain instead of continuing to the top, remembering what happened to him the last time he reached the "top". Also, moments of insights were discussed. The paper by Dr. Gurr helped me to understand what was going on in Phaedrus' mind. He had many flashes of insight to gain his knowledge. They built on one another.

HR

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BADToo condensed with philosophy

Chapters sometimes forget the story.

GOODLots of good points on life

Teaches how you should think analytically, constantly questioning.

Shows how "knowledge is power".

15) I've gotten 3/4 of the book completed. The most important thing I got out of the book is

mainly the attitude of the main character is much like myself. "I start to question my

weakness now and ask why". Yes it provides a framework of how every student in the

sciences should act.

JD

APHY 201 Final Fall 97

14) I have heard from former students that reading Zen will earn the student an “A” in physics. My opinion is that the student’s understanding of physics increases as a result of reading this book, thus resulting in a good grade. The student that told me this, didn’t read it, but also didn’t get an “A”. I like Dr. Gurr’s opinion. This book opens up new “doors” of understanding to the student, and is beneficial to his/her learning.

15) I honestly haven’t read [Zen] since September. I plan on having read it by the middle of 202. At least I hope so. I do see how much this book relates to everything around us. It relates to both Physics and life in general.

BB

APHY 201 Final Fall 97

14) In all honesty, I have heard no comments about the book outside of class [discussion]. From your statements about the book in class, you send the message that the book is very helpful in teaching new ways of learning, thinking, and making us more aware of our environment.

16) For me personally, it had nothing to do with the quality of the book. I was a little pressed for time, but basically I was against reading books. I have a very hard time concentrating on the material, my eyes usually begin to hurt, and I have a hard time reading. Even if the book was interesting and I wanted to read it.

JB

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14) As you know from our many Zen discussions, I certainly have an opinion on the book (and almost everything else). The comment that I have heard the most about the book is that people do not have enough time to read it. I know this is true in my case, although I read as much as I could. I have also heard a few people say it is a good book and if they had not finished it yet, they felt like they probably would. I agree with this also. The book certainly is not bad reading, in fact many parts of it I enjoyed. I have not been able to put my time into reading this book not to go ahead and finish reading it. As for my opinion of this book, it is interesting and provides a basis for thought. I have read through Chapter 11 or so. I have started to understand what the author’s point of the book is. He offers many good thought-provoking points. The author also seems to be somewhat egotistic in believing that his thought patterns are correct and all others are wrong. The way he treats his friends and his son provide examples of this. He does not live in the mainstream world of reality. It’s almost like he thinks he has moved to a higher place of reality. I often feel he is trying to push his

views upon the reader with a mightier than thou attitude. Yes, I do see your reasoning for having us read the book. I also am quite sure you and I have differing opinions on the value of reading this book. It did nothing to motivate me or make me think differently. You should take into consideration that I do not like to be told how to think by someone who thinks he has all the answers.

CD

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[No Zen writing.]

KM

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[KM chose not to read the Zen book and did answer any of the Zen exam questions.]

DG APHY 201 Final Fall 97

14. My older brother loved this book, and I certainly plan to finish it during break. Maybe I shall do an appendix for next semester. I have never heard anything bad about this book.

15. I only read the first 2 chapter.

16. I plan to read it over break. It seemed interesting, but I couldn't get my homework done, let alone optional reading.

Brandi Brown

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14) I can not honestly say that at this point I have an opinion at all about the book, because I have not read it. I looked forward to reading it because Dr. Gurr seemed to think so much of it and correlated it to just about everything we did. I did ask other people's opinions of the book and they ranged from okay to bad. I think perhaps this response was due to the fact that the book reading came in addition to so much other work, or that some people just don't like to read. I was actually told by someone, a former student, that with the completion and discussion of the Zen book and turning in of the star [photography] project, that I would pretty much look forward to an "A" in the class. I found this somewhat discouraging because I had not read the book, but had enjoyed and put much more than my share of time into the night [star photography] project (which turned out to be just 3 lab grades). I would actually like to go back and read the book in the future. I don't know when it will be, but I love to read and have after all, paid for the book anyway

15 & 16) As I said before, I have not read *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. I did read about two chapters while sitting in the hospital with my grandfather. However, other than that I've had not other free time. To begin with I wanted to read it because I found the title interesting and I was curious. After that, I hoped to read it for extra credit purposes. However, I work 20-25 hours each week and some days didn't get home from school until 3:00 a.m. because of Physics work and other classes. It has nothing to do with my choosing the book, I simply had to put my priorities in order and so my required work before I did any extra credit. I think that the book must have some benefit or valid reason, or it would not have been assigned at all, even for extra credit. I would hope that it would not be mentioned if there was no benefit to us or if it would not help us in learning Physics or better understanding ourselves.

16) The reason I have not had time to read Zen is because this is simply my hardest year in undergrad. I truly do have the desire, but there simply aren't enough hours in the day. Christmas break will probably be a "catching up point".

HH

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14) Time constraints, due to my father's health problem, have put a strain on all of my classes. I do want to and will read the Zen. I would like to recommend another book I read two summers ago. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* by Annie Dillard.

AT

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16) I read the book last year. I was to analyze it from a psychological view. The character psyche harmony was my interest.

TP

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14) Truthfully, I have not received much positive feedback from my colleagues on this book. I have read half of it and often got confused in the philosophies. A chapter class discussion would be very beneficial, even if a student group can't be found—maybe the instructor could make handouts. [See note at end of this entry.] Discussing philosophies and correlation with life that were to be seen in the literature. You seem to be fond of the book. Maybe you can help us acquire this fondness as well.

15) I read to chapter 12. I mostly could follow the straight forward, factual parts of the story, not the philosophical parts. I have seen some correlation with everyday life, but have not been able to learn from them. Help will be accepted & welcomed. [A discussion group did meet weekly, for most of the semester. The meeting time was chosen to fit the schedules nearly all students who expressed a desire to attend.]

Larry Cushman

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14)-16) Zen [and Art of Motorcycle book] is known by many people. Most people say it is a confusing book. But I think they do not understand the Zen sides to the book. There is the logical/analytical side and the compositional/story side. I read Zen 3 times already and each time I catch something new. You ask if Zen is a good book. As Phaedrus would say, "MU!" I can't answer yes or no because it depends on the reader and what he/she needs from it. I got much insight the 1st time I read it, Now it is a book I use for pleasurable reading. The book gives us the insight that by doing things on our own, by seeing, not [merely] looking, we can understand things, have our own insight, and learn what we (or the world) are all about.

Stephanie Still

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- 14) I have heard over the airways that Zen is an astrological field of learning. People who are believers of the stars are associated with Zen. The book has been interesting to some people I know that read the book. I did not get much of a response from outside resources.
- 15) I did not read this book. I really don't see why you made us read it. You probably were so into it yourself so you wanted your class to get into it, too.
- 16) If I had time to read it, I would have. If it were a major part of the grade, I would have. If I did not have so much other work in physics to do, I may have read it. If I thought the book was not built in astrology, I may have read it. In my opinion, the book was intended for people who did not have a religious organization of another sort. Maybe I'm wrong, but astrology is some people's religion.

SG

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14) & 15) No response.

16) I would have liked to read the book Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, but this semester I have had so much work to do. Besides the work-load in this class and my other classes, I have been working 40 hrs. a week at my job. I just recently moved into a new place and that has also taken a great deal of my spare time, which is almost nothing.

SP

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14) You [Dr. Gurr] seem to like this book. I don't know anyone that read this book. I started reading it in the beginning but stopped. It didn't seem so bad in the beginning when they were riding on the motorcycle. I started back reading it Friday. I want to finish it by the holiday.

15) I haven't finished reading the book but I want to have the book read by next month. The beginning don't seem so bad.

16) I had started reading the book, then you wrote in my lab book that it was optional and don't read the book before my other assignments. I stopped reading the book and concentrated on my other studies. The last 3 week in the semester I got a job so that slowed down my progress in the last 3 week. That's why my last two lab write-ups wasn't great. But I can really do the work, if I took the time like I did when I wrote up my other labs.

[1] As part of the requirement to get an "A" grade, physics students, in Fall Semesters 1993 through 1996, were required to convince me that they had read the book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.^[1]

[2] See document *Student Writing Concerning the Book Zen and the Art of Motorcycle*

Maintenance. Fall 1983 thru Spring 1996. Also see similar document for Fall 1998 and Spring 1999.

[3] Please note that this statement sets an upper limit on the extent of negative student sentiment. Truly negative student responses to the Zen Book, have never been expressed directly to me. Over the years, as a teacher, I have gained a 6th sense as to when a large portion of students in a class, really do not like certain class activity. I did not detect this kind of undercurrent of negative sentiment concerning the book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

[4] Suppose for the sake of argument, that there were large negative reactions to the Zen book, and that such reservations remained unexpressed to the professor. The professor should have been the first person to be informed, even if by student anonymous letters & notes. Does USCA foster the unhealthy educational atmosphere where important (direct) communication is avoided? A successful educational program would foster (and exhibit) direct, open, honest, communication even in face of disagreement or controversy.