

Fasten your seatbelts

BY SULEMAAN AHMED

Well here we go again, that wonderful week of the year that we students revere so fondly: Reading Week. Then again, seeing how we students don't even bother to break the covers of our books during this period, it should be more appropriately referred to as Spring Break. During the break we blow what little money we don't have and worry about it later. I mean, that's what a student loan is really for, right? Everyone needs a break to get away (kinda like that Calgon soap commercial), so as we come down the home stretch towards Spring Break, I thought I'd share a couple of travel tips with you.

You see, I have the fortune of working with an airline, while going to Dalhousie, and have gained some insight as to how things work. So before you take-off for that "Coppertone tan", here are some ideas that may save you valuable time and serious aggravation.

First of all, when purchasing a plane ticket, look around! Don't just call one airline and book a ticket. The fact is that there are seat sales, and just because flying standby on Canadian is cheap doesn't mean that it is always the cheapest. Seat sales are often quite substantial and you never know when they might come up. For example, flying confirmed on American Airlines, because of a seat sale, may be cheaper than going on standby on Continental.

Let's say that you decide to fly student standby. Been there, done that, and it is often the way to go when you don't have the

greenbacks or Daddy's airmile points to count on. But here are a few things to remember. For starters, standby means exactly that. If you purchase a standby ticket, you are on the bottom of the list. So if another flight gets delayed or cancelled, you are in for a world of wait because full-revenue paying customers move ahead of you. But there are ways to counter the threat of not getting on your flight:

1. Call the airline and check what the passenger loads are like (i.e. how full is the plane?). Give the dates, times and flight numbers (if possible) of when you want to go. If, two days before the flight to Orlando is leaving, the plane has 4 seats available, odds are that you will not get to see Mickey, right? Not always. Passenger counts can change at any given moment. One minute the flight is empty and now it's full, or vice-versa. So it might mean a little sacrifice on your part. That's right, you may have to get the red-eye to see Mommy and Daddy in TO and that means a departure at 6:30 am! <Collective groan>

2. Always check-in one hour prior to departure. Now I may seem to be a bit of a hypocrite since I always flew by the seat of my pants and arrived ten minutes before departure. Not a smart move, especially during peak travel periods (Christmas, Spring Break and any time there is a long weekend). Reality is that with standby, there is a waiting list. And the first people who check-in at the gate are the first people who will get on-board.

3. If one were at the gates of Heaven, wouldn't it be unwise to start badgering St. Peter? Harassing gate agents with a continual bombardment of "Will I get on? Will I get on?" does not help your case. Leave them alone, they're pretty busy at boarding time and do not need or want the hassle.

Once you give the agents your ticket to register at the gate, chill out. Do not hover around them like a pack of vultures waiting for the kill. All you end up doing is irritating the hell out of them. (I'm guilty on that count as well.) Just smile, say thanks and take a seat. If there is room they will get you on board, if there isn't — they won't. It's that simple.

The agents are literally what you call the "Gatekeepers" and if you piss them off, forget about +25 Daytona Beach and go back to -25 Dartmouth. There have been times (by my own witness) when over-persistent standby passengers have been left behind and the plane had empty seats on board. Gate agents would never knowingly do that to someone getting under their skin, now would they? Heaven forbid...

4. Fly in first class? Yes, my fellow students, it can be done and all for the cheap price of a standby ticket! "How?" you ask? Dress up.

Often if economy is full, people get moved up to first class. But, and this is a BIG but, you have to dress the part. If everyone in first class looks like they belong in GQ or Cosmo, you are not going to get on with ripped jeans. Grunge might work at the Birdland, but it doesn't work here folks. Believe it or not, there still exists a dress code for almost every airline in the world.

If you were shelling out \$5000 to fly first class return from Toronto to London (England), wear whatever the heck you want. But

for most of us peons who are not part of the royal family, we don't have such a luxury. Dressing up doesn't guarantee you squat, but it definitely doesn't hurt your chances either.

5. Don't fly stupid! Do not attempt to drink anything alcoholic that you have not been sold on-board the aircraft to drink. BYOB does not apply (i.e. don't guzzle down the JD in the Flintstones thermos that belongs to your little brother).

On a flight this summer, **Cont'd on pg.13: "Seatbelt"**

Get out of class

BY KAREN DENSMORE

Lecture: an informative talk to an audience on a subject.

Don't let this dictionary definition deter you because a lecture can be so much more. I'm not talking about your everyday class lecture, although those are good to attend sometime during the year. I'm talking about a special lecture, one with a special guest speaker with a special topic in mind.

Non-class lectures are a fabulous place to gain a wealth of information. They may spark an interest in your abstract thought process that you thought died with your last trip. Or you can simply schmooze with the speaker afterwards, whoever it may be: scientist, musician or renowned public figure. Just think of confronting your least favorite politician during your own afterhours question period.

When I was assigned to cover a few International Development Studies (IDS) lectures I was amazed at the variety that was offered. I looked at the list of topics and circled a few that looked really interesting. I then found myself paying attention to other notices around campus advertising lectures. There were IDS lectures, women's studies lectures, and a biology lecture which ended up with a packed audience. Many societies also host a slew of guest speakers.

This week I attended two lectures. The first one, hosted by the Law Society, was called "Women and Politics", given by the Honorable Mary Clancy, MP for Halifax Central. Clancy talked about the pros and cons of being a woman in Parliament; the pros out-weighed the cons, of course. She emphasized how being an MP came down to everyone being on the same team — the Liberal team, but the same team nonetheless. As a woman, she was very encouraging to listen to.

The second lecture I attended was an IDS lecture entitled "Women's Employment Opportunities: the case of Zambia" given by Raj Bardouille from the United Nations Development Agency. She spoke mostly of the economic situation of post-colonization North Africa, incorporating, towards the end, the Zambia case study. It was a pleasant economic history lesson.

Just think, if you went to one new lecture a week, you would become the intellectual elitist amongst your friends. They would flock to your side instead of a thesaurus.

OK, so maybe not flock, but don't you want that knowledge for yourself?

So get out there and attend a lecture. It's more interesting than standing in the Grawood line-up, trust me.



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