

Diego Dominguez

Dr. Weaver

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How I Wrestle with Reading

Reading has never been my pastime. Rarely will you ever catch me reading a book, especially when there is an iPhone 13 next to me. I admit, I am addicted to my phone, but who isn't nowadays? However, I do read, just the unorthodox way. Reading for me is scrolling through Instagram, reading soccer captions about the latest news. You will catch me mindlessly scrolling until I get to Real Madrid's account where I read captions about the current transfer, Jude Bellingham, breaking records that have not happened since the last club legend, Cristiano Ronaldo. Once I get my daily fix of Real Madrid, I will make my way to Twitter, or X, whatever the hell it is called, and get the latest transfer and general soccer news from Fabrizio Romario-- hence the picture, in figure 1, of one of his tweets about the latest news for the World Cup in 2030. Soccer is a part of who I am and a sport I have grown up with all my life. For me, I need to read and stay updated on what's going on in the soccer world. Without it, I don't know what I would do.

Just like how soccer is important to me, so is reading what is going on with the latest immigration events in the United States. During my senior year of highschool, I wrote a senior thesis about immigration, a topic that I come back to weekly. I will read the latest immigration articles about what is going on at the border and current issues. Following that, I will read the mini articles posted by Border Patrol on Instagram to see the latest apprehensions of sex or drug traffickers. Immigration is tied to my family's heritage, as a lot of my family has migrated to the

United States, so I like to follow up with what is going on because it is important to know how the country I live in is responding to these issues.

Although I love catching up with soccer news and immigration events, life isn't always fair and sometimes I have to read for school. Reading for school can make me feel bipolar: sometimes it can be really exciting where I want to keep reading more, or the complete opposite, where I want to go to sleep and erase whatever it was that just wasted space in my brain. What I found interesting upon arriving at Virginia Tech is that there are so many places to read and get work done. Back in high school, there were really only two spots I could read: my living room table and the school's library. This forced a toxic relationship between reading and me because none of the spaces fit my description of what I wanted in a reading space. Once I came to Virginia Tech, I started to develop a neutral relationship with reading.

What is my go to place at Tech?

Well, it is Sandy Hall. It is a reserved space for neuroscience majors with bright white modern walls, perfect lighting, comfortable rolling chairs, and a private study room to really focus. The only problem? I'm not a neuroscience major, and I need my girlfriend to swipe me in. Sandy Hall is the place I'll read my sociology professor's lecture notes, trying to understand the simple yet complex concepts. It is a place where I will sit down and grind out my earth science chapter

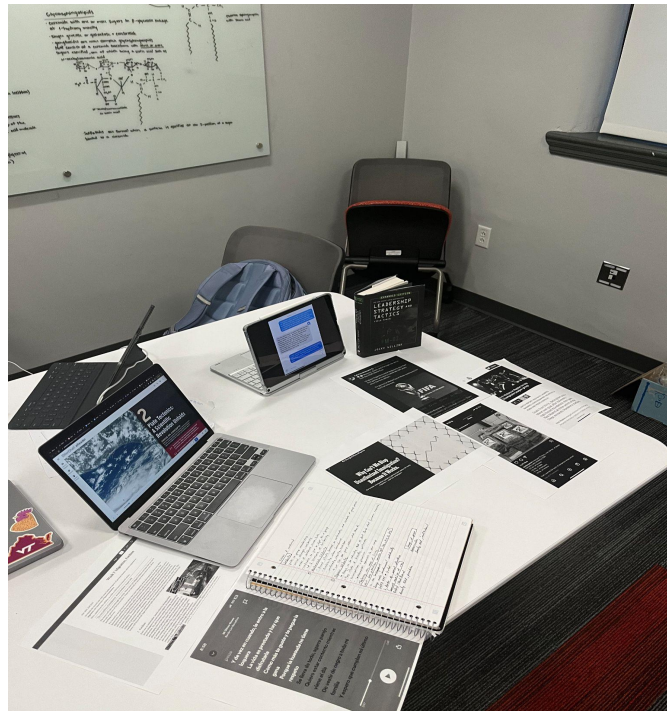


Figure 1. 10 Items at Sandy Hall

quizzes. It is a place where I will be deep into my black spiral bound notebook writing down notes. While I am knocking out these assignments, you will most likely find me listening to music. I am not some lofi or classical music type of guy. Sometimes I really like listening to Banda (Band) music in Spanish. So when, sometimes, I come across a line that is unfamiliar to me, I will read the Spotify lyrics to try to memorize and understand.

When it comes to reading habits, mine are not the greatest. I often find myself getting distracted by things like my phone or simply even just day dreaming and getting lost. This often results in readings being read, but not understood. It feels like cramming for a test but forgetting all the information once you finish taking it. I need to be in the right headspace to read. If I am too tired, just forget about it because there is just no way. During high school, I would play travel soccer. In winter, I had 9pm practices and a forty minute drive home *and* homework to do. It was very overwhelming. Math, I was at least able to do, even though it was a struggle; however, reading killed me. I would catch myself doing the head nod from constantly drifting asleep and sometimes even wake up drooling on my dining room table. I realized that I need sleep to read. If not, my brain is too foggy to truly comprehend the words in front of me.

This semester, I have found a new form of reading that I enjoy, which is reading for self improvement. My desire for wanting to excel academically is just as important as me wanting to excel as an individual and being the best person I can be. A great way to do this is to read from authors who have wisdom and guidance to give. The book pictured above, in figure 1, called *Leadership, Strategy, and Tactics* by Jocko Willink was given to me as a gift by my girlfriend's father. Also pictured above, next to the book, is a text message that I received from him. It was inspiring and motivating and in the last sentence of the message he said, "Just trying to help set you up for when you become a leader of people." The author, Jocko Willink, served in the U.S

Forces and had gone through great adversity, being tested mentally and physically as he was figuring out what it means to be a leader. He then takes the disciplines that he learned from serving and translates them to how those same disciplines work in the business world. For me, this is the perfect starting point since I am about to switch my major into business and also since I am trying to better myself as a man. I realize I have to put my ego aside about reading and accept that it can be beneficial. I want to take advantage of what the book has to offer and apply it to my daily life as well my future life.

As I review this essay, I am looking at all the items and what I had to say about each one and needless to say I am grateful to have done this. This assignment has brought a great deal of attention to my overall reading habits, which to me is important because as long as I am a college student, I will be reading. I read in three different types of ways, and I decided to categorize my items based on those three different types. I went from speaking of my fun unorthodox—unorthodox meaning no books—reading, to my dreaded school reading, and then lastly to the reading I do for my own personal growth. Reading to me is important whether I like it or not. It is how you grow academically and personally, so to me, if that means reading even though I don't want to, I just have to deal with it because I know the benefits of it.