



piled higher and deeper
**a graduate student
comic strip collection**

by

Jorge Cham

Piled Higher and Deeper Publishing
Palo Alto, California

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For Suelika



Foreword

It is 4am in the morning, and I am procrastinating. There is a group meeting in a few hours and a guest lecture later in the afternoon that I need to prepare for. Camera-ready copies of two papers I am first-author in are due in a few days. I am supposed to defend my thesis in two months, but I haven't written a single chapter yet. And yet, I find myself working day and night to get this comic strip collection to print. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that my advisor is on sabbatical in Europe.

Piled Higher and Deeper the comic strip started in a conversation over dinner with my brother (who I will always argue is the better cartoonist). Between stuffed chicken wings and pad thai, he was complaining about how college comic strips are limited by the silly problems that undergrads face, and didn't they know that grad school is where true pain really begins? Now, at this point, I had never really drawn a comic strip (not counting, of course, the few pages of "ShazHam, the mild-mannered pig-turned-thunder god" or "Guppy-man, who wields his fantastic yo-yo to fight crime" that I drew in the sixth grade), but I had just recently read the 25-year Doonesbury retrospective and I was inspired.

Five years later, with Chapter 1 of my thesis “almost started” and with the prospect of becoming a professor myself, I am thankful to the people who have encouraged me to express my anxieties as cartoons and speech balloons in this comic strip: Suelika, without whom this comic would just be about some bitter old grad student. My labmates and friends, who gave constant inspiration for the characters in the comic: Michael C., Sanjay, Maria, Beth, Michael T., Allison, Chris, Weston, Krista, Sean and Jonathan. My advisor, who was never a model for “Prof. Smith” and who has always been supportive and even a fan of the comic himself. My family, for their love. Finally, I am thankful to the fans, who, despite my lack of effort to advertise this comic strip, have helped spread the comic’s website to the point where grad students from over 300 universities and from around the world (including countries like Brazil, Turkey, India and Egypt) now come to *phd.stanford.edu* for their weekly dose of procrastination.

Back to my present situation, maybe I *am* procrastinating from the things that I “should” be doing. In graduate school, there is always something that we “should” be doing. But the truth of the matter is that I wouldn’t want to be doing anything else right now. In addition to being dutiful, rigorous, rational scholars, we all have our secret lives. Some of us draw comic strips, others make blown-glass art, play the jazz oboe, or even practice competitive roller-skate dancing. Graduate school is as much about discovering truth in science and culture as it is about discovering truth in ourselves.

So get out there and procrastinate. Procrastinate with purpose and with pride.

Jorge Cham
Stanford University, May 2002

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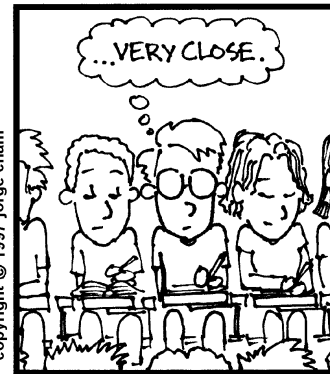
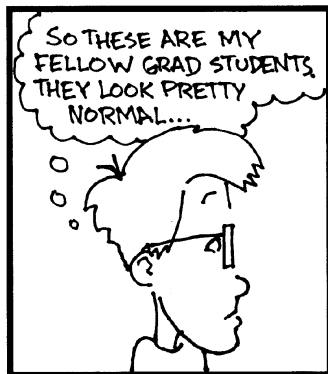
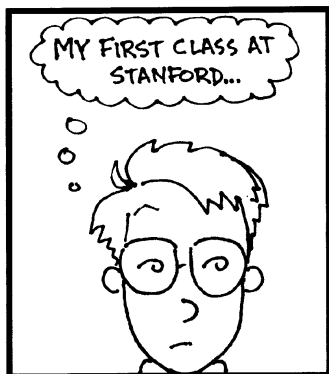
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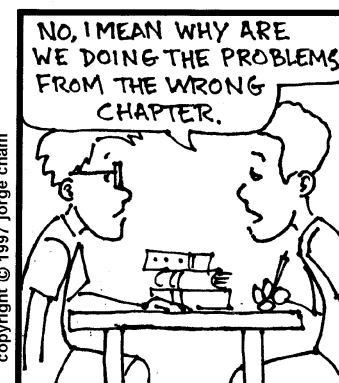
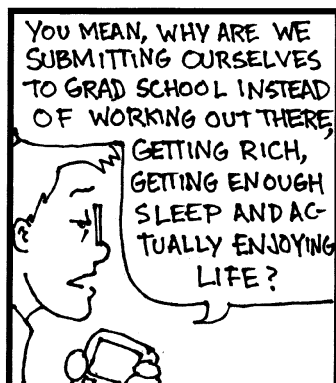
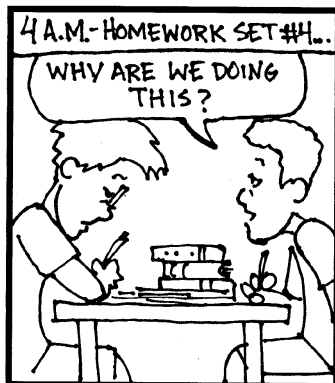


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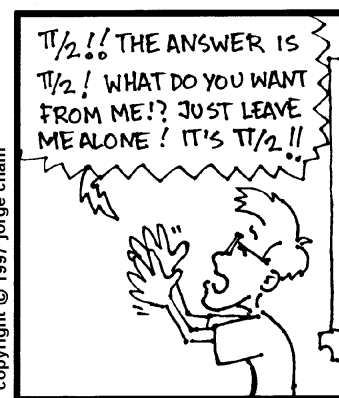
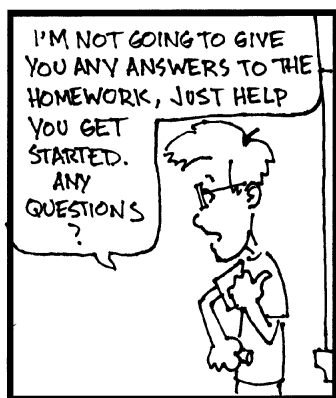
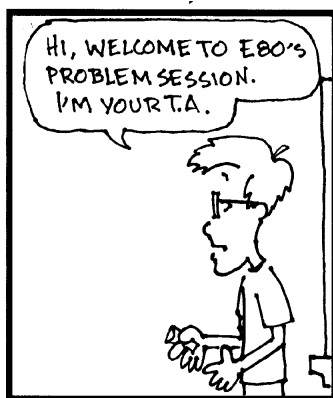
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