

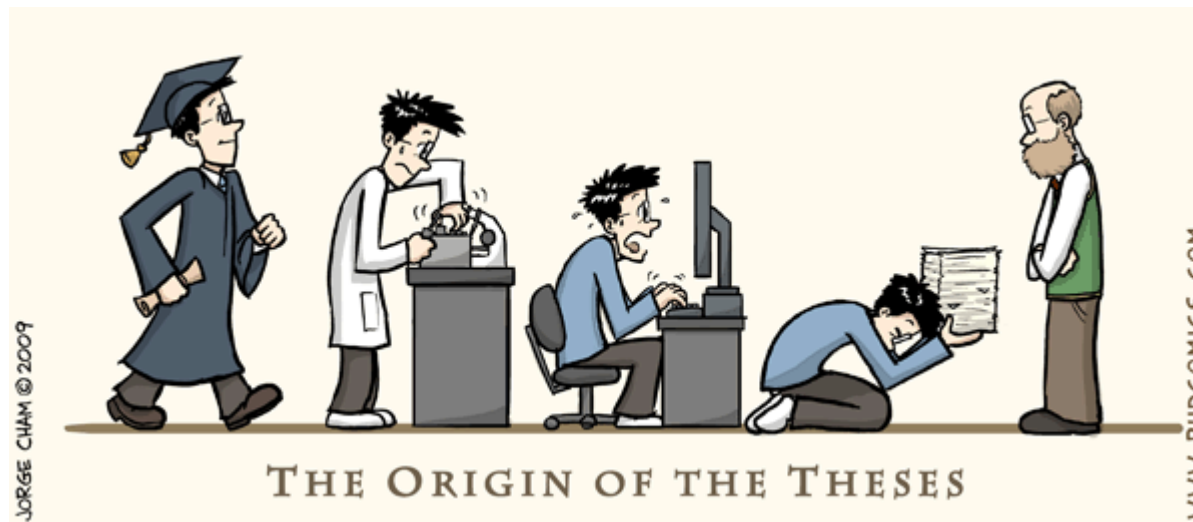
# Common mistakes in graduate research projects

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# Stages in a research project

- Selecting a topic and an adviser
- Literature review and defining the project
- Research proposals and Data collection/ Analysis
- Thesis writing and defense.



# Early stages of the research

- Selecting your advisor and the topic: Not making an informed decision.
  - Select the topic you like and discuss with potential supervisors before starting.
- Not keeping record of what you do.
  - Start a logbook and document as much as you can.
  - Applicable for all stages in the project.
- Starting with a very big and complex project.
  - Follow baby steps. Start with a smaller project and tackle the complicated problems as you progress.

# Literature review and other things

- Not using tools to manage papers:
  - Dont print out all the papers you need to read.
  - Use various software to organize papers: Papers (not free), Mendeley, EndNote, RefWorks etc.
- Learning too much.
  - E.g. Taking too many courses outside your department or field.
- Not backing up your data/ research work.
  - Back up everything that you have on your computer (research related at least.)

# Time Management

- Multitasking : Taking on too many tasks
  - DONT!!
  - Pick only a few tasks at a time and prioritize them.
- Giving priority to less important tasks.
  - Dont give priority based on deadlines. Give importance to tasks helpful in achieving your main goal.
  - eg. Focusing too much on coursework/TA work and not doing any research.
- Procrastination!!!!
- Distraction.
  - Keep blocks of uninterrupted time

# Proposal writing and application

- Relying on department for funding.
  - Apply to as many places as possible.
- Let the deadline slip.
- Being vague and too broad about your research problem.
- Using jargons/ Acronyms too extensively.

# Communication problems:

- Working all by yourself and not asking for help.
  - You need to communicate with your advisers, committee members, peers and other faculty members.
  - They will be able to provide new perspective to your project.
  - Don't hesitate to ask for help. You cant do it all by yourself.
  - Set up a weekly meeting with your adviser. Keep your committee informed.

# Communication problems:

- Not attending other's presentations and talks
  - Be part of department discussions. Talk about your research problems.
  - You will learn a great deal by talking and listening to others and their research.



# Middle-life problems of Grad-school:

- Writer's block
- Let yourself burnout and neglect your health.
- Loss of interest in research and lack of motivation.
- Feeling of isolation
  - Talk openly to your adviser and fellow graduate students.
  - Balance your life and take breaks
  - You need to form a support system to get through the graduate school.
  - Time management could help with these problems.

# Thesis/Paper writing

- Making topic too broad.
- Not citing the sources.
- Dont let anyone else proofread your work
- Relying just on the computer for spell check.
- Expecting the thesis to be perfect
- Writing your introduction only once.
  - This is the mostly read part of your thesis/paper. Keep modifying/editing till the end. Dont just write it once and forget.

# In conclusion:

- Select your adviser and the research topic wisely.
- Take your time and be clear about your research goal.
- Time management :Keep blocks of uninterrupted time.
- Keep logbooks and backups of your work
- Make sure you apply for funding and observing time as much as you can .
- Stay focused and take breaks.
- Seek your adviser's as well as graduate students' help.



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