Common Academic Terms

(Adapted from A Dictionary of American Idioms and Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, Second Edition.)

**AP/Advanced Placement course:** A college level course that students can take in high school to earn college credit.

**audit:** to take a course not for credit.

**CoOp/Cooperative education:** classroom-based education with practical work experience that provides academic credit for a structured job experience.

**core requirement:** basic courses required of all students for a particular major or program.

**credit hours:** the number of points towards one's degree earned by completing a particular course.

**curriculum:** materials and topics covered in a course or major.

**curve:** grading based on how well students do in relation to each other, not how well they do on actual assignments or tests.

**drop/add:** time during which students can change courses without penalty or affecting their permanent record or transcript.

**elective:** a course not required by university or major program.

**final:** longer test that may cover several chapters at the end of the course or the second half of the semester. Comprehensive final: a test that consists of everything that has been taught during the semester.

**freshman forgiveness:** CWRU policy of "forgiving"---not showing grades of Failure (F) or Withdrawal (W)---on the transcripts of non-transfer freshman students.

**grades:** letter measurement (with numerical equivalent) of how well a student has performed in a particular course, ranging from "A" excellent, to "B" good, "C" average, "D" below average, to "F" failure.

**Grade Point Average (GPA):** a numerical reference on a 4.0 scale (based on the averaged worth of letter grades for courses taken) that indicates a student's overall College performance.

**grader:** Teaching Assistant (TA) responsible for grading only, not class room teaching.

**hands-on learning:** active participation in learning; learning by doing.

**lab:** a place for experimentation/hands-on learning.
major: primary, specialized area of study.

midterm: a longer test that may cover the first half of the course content or is scheduled mid-point in the semester

non-majors: students not majoring or specializing in a subject.

on reserve: books held at the library for a particular course.

overload: when a student is registered for more than the usual 18 credit hour course load.

pass/no pass: a course not taken for a letter grade but simply credit or no credit.

peer teaching: students teaching each other.

prerequisite: a course that must be taken before another.

reading days: free days for study between last day of classes and first day of final exams.

recitation leaders: Teaching Assistants who teach smaller subsections of large, lecture courses to go over the material with students in more detail.

office hours: the set time a professor/instructor schedules each week to be to meet with students in his or her office.


registrar: office where students register for courses.

schedule: courses being taken in a particular term by a student, including meeting times, days, and location.

section: smaller part of a larger lecture course.

syllabus: a description of what will be included and required for a course, including assignments, test dates, books required, and grading and other university policies.

transcript: student’s official record (administered by the registrar) of courses taken and grades received.

tutor: someone who gives individual, extra help to students; but is not an advisor or recitation leader.

under class student: an undergraduate in first two years of study.

upper class student: an undergraduate in last two years of study.

withdraw: grade given when a course is dropped after the official drop/add period; a “W” appears on the transcript.